

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
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.
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.
Vacant	Fort Whyte	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 28, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Speaker's Statement

Resignation

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the House that John Loewen, the honourable Member for Fort Whyte, has resigned his seat in the House effective September 26, 2005. I am therefore tabling his resignation, and my letter to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as an MLA, one of our responsibilities is to identify what we believe are critically important issues to Manitobans and do what we can in terms of making sure that there is a legitimate opportunity for Manitobans to be able to express their will. That is done in many different ways. One of those ways is, in fact, through petitions.

Mr. Speaker, we all know inside this Chamber that the Crocus file has generated a great deal of public interest as millions, 60 million-plus dollars, have been lost because of government neglect. I took it upon myself to write a petition and to circulate that petition advising Manitobans that it was my intent to do what I can, as one member of this Chamber, to ensure that this issue is getting the type of attention that we believe it should get. We believe there should be a public inquiry. Having said that, what I am going to do maybe is provide for the Chamber and, in particular, the House leaders, get one of the pages to come and circulate it to the House leaders

and maybe a copy for yourself, and then it can be tabled after they have taken a look at it.

What I have done, Mr. Speaker, is members of this Chamber will be aware that we actually made some changes to our rules. One of the changes that we had a great deal of discussion on was the issue of petitions. As a consensus I had agreed that we would increase the number of signatures required on a petition in order to present it to this Chamber. In keeping with those changes, what I would like to be able to do is to reflect on some petitions that in fact have been rejected.

What I am looking for is for the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) and the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) to express to this House what the intent of what I believe took place during these discussions, Mr. Speaker, because, after all, what we are really talking about is what Manitobans felt strongly enough to put their name and their signature on a very important issue, that being the Crocus file.

Mr. Speaker, our rule states, in reference to the petitions, in part: "Form of the Petition, A petition must be in the form set out in Appendix A."

You will find that the form or the format that I have used is in fact quite acceptable, and later on this morning I will be presenting one of those petitions and using that form.

It must be signed by at least 15 petitioners. That is the new component to the rule. "The names and addresses of the first 15 petitioners must be legible. "If more than one page, and it is important to recognize, one page is required for signatures of a petitioner, "the subject matter of the petition must be indicated on each page. The signature of the Member must also appear at the top of the original petition."

Mr. Speaker, what I have provided the members, the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and yourself is a copy of some of the petitions that I have been told do not meet the requirements of our rules. Now, what I am suggesting is that in the discussion, what I am suggesting to you does not contradict our rule. In fact, it is the intent of the discussions that I had that

the petitions that I have shared with members are in order and should have been accepted.

Let me expand, Mr. Speaker. This petition here was rejected because on the petition where it has, for example, I will use the name of Paul Landry, 2 Waterfront Road, and then he signed. Right below that was Elizabeth Landrey. Well, below 2 Waterfront Road she wrote the word "same," and then signed it E. Landrey. It was rejected because she used the word "same."

Then, if I go on to another petition that was rejected, Mr. Speaker, you have, again, two individuals, and it is one address tied to both individuals. Again, it has been denied.

*(10:05)

I trust and I see that the House leaders are looking at these petitions as I am speaking, Mr. Speaker, and I am encouraged by that.

The next petition shows signatures, three individuals, two from the same house, right below the address. Again it is a check mark. Very, very clear indication, Mr. Speaker, that this is in fact who the person claims to be.

The next petition, Mr. Speaker, is one in which the individual signed and because they wanted to get more signatures what they did is they continued onto the back of the page. Same page but the signatures are on the back. Again, because it was on the back, it was ruled out of order. Not only that, but the individuals that are on the front are ruled out of order.

The next one and this is one, let us think about recycling for a moment, Mr. Speaker. You know, someone took the time to print off a petition from my Web site, and what happened is they had printed it off on the back. It was on what I would suggest to you is recycled letterhead. On the front it is very clear it is the petition, and there are two signatures that are on that petition. Again, that petition has been rejected.

What I am asking for, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to recognize and give credit to Manitobans when they take the initiative to sign a petition. Whether we agree with the petition or we disagree with the petition what is important is that we recognize that these are Manitobans that deserve the integrity of what they bring to the table by signing a petition of this nature and where it is very clear, as each and every one of those petitions I believe is,

that those petitions should be accepted. That would have been my understanding when we had discussions about petitions back in May, April. There were other things that we had talked about at that point in time. This was a compromise to have 15 signatures as opposed to the three. I did that in good faith, and what I would ask is that the House leaders recognize those discussions and agree with me and what it is that I am presenting and suggest that these are in fact petitions that should be acceptable.

Beauchesne's, Mr. Speaker, says that you have to bring it up at the first opportunity, and I have done just that. The second thing that *Beauchesne's* says is that you have to conclude with a motion, so I will conclude my comments with a motion.

I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that the Chamber accepts that the intent of Rule 132 does allow for petitions such as the ones I have shared with the House leaders and have tabled today be deemed as being acceptable in accordance with our rules.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I am just a bit embarrassed even having to stand up on this. If this is the issue that they were excited about coming back to the session for, if this is their big hurrah, this is their big lead issue, so be it. I think this is an issue that is a matter of order and rules and, Mr. Speaker, if you can perhaps look at this and make a ruling and if you have to call the rules group together then we will do so.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): It is unfortunate that a matter like this needs to be dealt with as a matter of privilege because it is clearly a procedural issue as a result of some new rules that we all agreed to. Unfortunately, our forms for petitions did not coincide perhaps with the changes of the rules and that is something that perhaps all of us have overlooked and I think that there is a way around this. I know that our member from Emerson was caught with the same situation.

Although the rules are clear that there has to be a new page with the petition at the top of it, I think we had a preliminary discussion about ways in which we could make this more acceptable to members and to residents in the province, but I believe that we should simply find a solution to this between us as House leaders and you, Mr. Speaker, and then perhaps these could be put on hold for the time being, and once we have clarified it then we can proceed without this having to be dealt with as a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable Member for Inkster, I would just like to inform the House that the petitions that were deemed not to be in order were done so on the basis of past practice and precedence that were used in the past and these same criteria were applied to all members of the House in the past. I know that we have new criteria, we have new guidelines for petitions, and I was intending to set up a meeting with the House leaders and with the honourable Member for Inkster because I treasure all members' input. With that meeting I am hoping that we will resolve some of the issues.

I will set up that meeting so I will have to rule that the honourable member does not have a matter of privilege. I will be setting up a meeting, and I will ensure that the honourable Member for Inkster and the House leaders that represent their caucuses are involved, and we will come back with guidelines for all to follow, so that should take care of the matter.

*(10:10)

PETITIONS

Insulin Pumps

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Insulin pumps costs over \$6,500.00.

The cost of diabetes in the province of Manitoba in 2005 will be approximately \$214.4 million. Each day 16 Manitobans are diagnosed with this disease compared to the national average of 11 new cases daily.

Good blood sugar control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50 percent, blindness by 76 percent, nerve damage by 60 percent, cardiac disease by 35 percent and even amputations.

Diabetes is an epidemic in our province and will become an unprecedented drain on our struggling health care system if we do not take action now.

The benefit of having an insulin pump is it allows the person living with this life-altering disease to obtain good sugar control and become a much healthier, complication-free individual.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider covering the cost of insulin pumps that

are prescribed by a medical doctor under the Manitoba Health Insurance Plan.

Submitted on behalf of Lori Enstrom, Wendy Enstrom, Terry Enstrom and many, many others.

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

Amending of The Architects Act

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

On September 16, 2005, the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench revealed a significant conflict between The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act and The Architects Act.

Currently architects are exempt from The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act, but engineers are not exempt from The Architects Act.

This decision will have a negative effect on the province's building and construction industries, increase costs to municipalities and other levels of government, lead to a brain drain, increase red tape and delay projects.

Previous to the ruling, a choice existed between engaging architects or engineers to perform specified work according to their disciplines while protecting the safety of the public as guided by the Manitoba Building Code.

Over the last seven years, the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) has rejected the two negotiated solutions. Therefore, legislative change is the only reasonable and sustainable solution.

Given that the ruling's implementation date is immediate, we call on the government to take appropriate steps in changing the legislation during the current session.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending The Architects Act to provide engineers an exemption similar to that enjoyed by the architects under The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act.

Signed by R. Silver, M. Silver, R. S. Merrell and many, many others.

* (10:15)

Crocus Investment Fund

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 Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring the red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated, "We believe the department was aware of the red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Joanne Gallant, Walter Gallant and Dan Malchuk.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations First Report

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Friday, February 20, 2004

Friday, February 27, 2004

Thursday, September 29, 2005

All meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2002

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2003

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 29, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2005, (not originally referred but considered with the unanimous consent of the committee)

Committee Membership:

Committee membership for the September 29, 2005, meeting:

Ms. Brick

Mr. Cullen

Mr. Cummings

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Faurschou

Mr. Jha

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Mr. Martindale (Chairperson)

Mr. Penner

Mr. Reid

Mr. Swan

At the September 29, 2005, meeting your committee elected Ms. Brick as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record:

Marilyn McLaren, President and Chief Executive Officer

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee has considered and adopted the following reports as presented:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2002

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2003

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee has considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 29, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ending February 28, 2005

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations Second Report

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Thursday, September 16, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, October 6, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

All meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development also met on Monday, December 3, 2001, (3rd Session – 37th Legislature) at 10 a.m. in Room 255 to consider these matters.

Matters under Consideration:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2000

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2001

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2002

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2003

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2005 (not originally referred but considered with the unanimous consent of the committee)

Committee Membership:

Substitutions received prior to commencement of the September 16, 2004, meeting:

Mr. Jha for Mr. Dewar

Ms. Irvin-Ross for Ms. Korzeniowski

Mr. Eichler for Cummings

Mr. Goertzen for Faurschou

Committee membership for the October 6, 2005, meeting:

Ms. Brick (Vice-Chairperson)

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Eichler

Mr. Faurschou

Mr. Jha

Mr. Martindale (Chairperson)

Mr. Reid

Mr. Rocan

Mr. Schellenberg

Mr. Schuler

Hon. Mr. Smith

Officials speaking on record at the December 3, 2001, meeting:

Winston Hodgins, Acting President and Chief Executive Officer

Peter Hak, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

Officials speaking on record at the September 16, 2004, meeting:

Winston Hodgins, President and Chief Executive Officer

Officials Speaking on Record at the October 6, 2005, meeting:

Winston Hodgins, President and Chief Executive Officer

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee has considered and adopted the following reports as presented:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2000

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2001

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2002

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee has considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2003

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the year ending March 31, 2005

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
Third Report**

Ms. Marilyn Brick (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Friday, February 13, 2004, at 10 a.m.

Thursday, October 13, 2005, at 9 a.m.

Both meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

The Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs also met on Friday, February 27, 2004, at 10 a.m. in Room 254 to consider these matters.

Matters under Consideration:

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2002

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2003

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2004

Workers Compensation Board Appeals Commission and Medical Review Panel Annual Report – December 31, 2003

Workers Compensation Board Appeals Commission and Medical Review Panel Annual Report – December 31, 2004

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2001-2005

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2002-2006

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2003-2007

Workers Compensation Board Five Year Plan – 2004-2008

Workers Compensation Board Five Year Plan – 2005-2009

Committee Membership:

Committee membership for the October 13, 2005, meeting:

Mr. Aglugub

Hon. Ms. Allan

Ms. Brick (Vice-Chairperson)

Mr. Cullen

Mr. Cummings

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Goertzen

Ms. Irvin-Ross

Mr. Maloway

Mr. Santos

Mrs. Taillieu

At the October 13, 2005, meeting your committee elected Ms. Brick as the Chairperson and Ms. Irvin-Ross as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials speaking on the record at the October 13, 2005, meeting:

Tom Farrell, Chairperson

Doug Sexsmith, President and CEO

Harold Dueck, Vice President, Finance and Administration

Alice Sayant, Vice President

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee has considered and adopted the following reports as presented:

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2002

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2003

Workers Compensation Board Appeals Commission and Medical Review Panel Annual Report – December 31, 2003

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2001-2005

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2002-2006

Workers Compensation Board Five-Year Plan – 2003-2007

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee has considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Workers Compensation Board Annual Report – December 31, 2004

Workers Compensation Board Appeals Commission and Medical Review Panel Annual Report – December 31, 2004

Workers Compensation Board Five Year Plan – 2004-2008

Workers Compensation Board Five Year Plan – 2005-2009

* (10:20)

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
Fourth Report**

Ms. Brick: I wish to present the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Thursday, September 9, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

Monday, October 17, 2005, at 1:30 p.m.

All meetings were held in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2003

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2005 (not originally referred but considered with the unanimous consent of the committee)

Committee Membership:

Committee membership for the October 17, 2005, meeting:

Mr. Aglugub

Ms. Brick (Chairperson)

Mr. Cullen

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Faurischou

Ms. Irvin-Ross (Vice-Chairperson)

Mr. Maguire

Mr. Maloway

Mr. Schellenberg

Mr. Schuler

Hon. Mr. Smith

Officials speaking on record:

Don Lussier, President and CEO

Carmen Neufeld, Chair, MLCC Board of Commissioners

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee has considered and adopted the following reports as presented:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2003

Reports Considered but not Adopted:

Your committee has considered the following reports but did not adopt them:

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2004

Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year ended March 31, 2005

Ms. Brick: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Fort Garry, that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have the six individuals who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the year 2005-2006.

In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months. They will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignments in September and will complete them in June.

They are, working with the government caucus, Mr. Andrew Clark of the University of Winnipeg, Ms. Jessica Kelly of the University of Winnipeg and Mr. Mark Rosner of the University of Winnipeg. Working with the caucus of the official opposition, Mr. Philip Gass of the University of British Columbia, Ms. Lisa Hutniak of the University of Winnipeg and Ms. Kathleen Ross of the University of Winnipeg. Copies of their biographies have been distributed to members.

The interns are accompanied by Professor Friesen, who looks after the academic portion of the internship. The administration of the program is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) and the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all the members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and to hope they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Debt Reduction Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Since 1999, this Premier has operated

with very little accountability and very little fiscal responsibility. In fact, his unprecedented spending has now plunged Manitoba into a situation where he has increased our debt by over \$3.5 billion in six short years. The debt in Manitoba now stands at over \$20 billion, an all-time high.

This major crisis and this burden are being dumped on our future, on our children and on our grandchildren. It is like taking \$760 million to service this debt under this Premier. It would be like a family of four, this Premier going into their house and taking \$3,000 out of that family's income.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Throne Speech not one word of debt from this Premier. We know he has a spending habit. My question is what is his plan to service this historic debt in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member to page 53 of the summary financial budgets of this year. He will find his number is incorrect on net debt and, secondly, it is factually incorrect. It is in the Auditor General's report. Secondly, he will find the net debt going down by over \$450 million in this fiscal year.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that when the member opposite talks about the overall debt in Manitoba there is no question that some of the debt that was off the books when we came into office, Centra Gas—

* (10:25)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Centra Gas, health capital, school capital, those off-the-books debts have been placed on the books, Mr. Speaker. You will note that is why the credit rating in Manitoba is better today than when we took office in 1999 because members opposite borrowed money and kept it off the books. We have put it on the books for all Manitobans to see.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, under this Premier's watch, every single day in Manitoba, the debt goes up by \$1.5 million a day. Just think how many hip replacements, how many knee surgeries could be gotten for \$1.5 million, how many more police officers, how many teachers could we hire, how many more doctors could we hire in the province of Manitoba. Instead \$1.5 million a day is added to our debt under this Premier's watch.

Yesterday, again, we heard the Throne Speech with hollow rhetoric and not one mention of a plan to deal with this debt crisis. Everybody knows that this Premier has a spending habit. I ask him in the House today what is his plan to deal with this debt crisis.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, page 53 of the summary financial statements indicate that the net debt in Manitoba was \$11 billion in '04 and it is \$10.555 billion in '05. I would point out that one of the first events we had with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and myself when we visited with the debt rating agencies in New York and in Toronto—

An Honourable Member: Another trip? How was your trip?

Mr. Doer: Well, our trip, actually, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the debt reductions, our credit rating today, to the member of Steinbach, who is just a—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The credit rating today is enhanced and the cost of borrowing money is lower because of our practices. Now we have balanced under the balanced budget legislation for six years and that, of course, Mr. Speaker, is tax-supported revenue and tax-supported expenditures. That number has gone down in terms of net debt. Members opposite know that.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that, just this last summer, we have had three rating agencies speak out on the situation in Manitoba. Moody's in August: Manitoba's A2 rating reflects sound fiscal policy that has contributed to considerable improvements in its debt ratios over the past several years; Dominion Bond Rating agency: Manitoba is one of the only provinces in Canada with an explicit debt reduction plan. The province continues to display—*[interjection]* Hold on. Hold on. Do not get excited.

An Honourable Member: There is more good news.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The province continues to display fiscal discipline supported by, God forbid, conservative debt management policies, Mr. Speaker. Standard and Poor's also goes on to say that the level of tax-supported debt fell to 23 percent of nominal GDP at the end of last fiscal year reaching levels not seen in decades. That is why our credit rating is better today than it was when we came into office in 1999.

* (10:30)

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, not only under this Premier are Manitobans the highest taxed in Canada, and not only under this Premier is Manitoba going to have the dubious distinction of being the last have-not province in western Canada, but because of this Premier's spending he is basically mortgaging not only our children's but our grandchildren's future. Basically, this Premier has a spending habit, he has a debt crisis. He did not mention it yesterday in the Throne Speech. I simply ask him today what is his plan to deal with the debt crisis that he has created.

Mr. Doer: As I reported, and I would refer the member to page 53, it is a document that probably all members of the opposition should read on an annual basis, Mr. Speaker. It actually provides independent advice to this Legislature, and they should not squander the advice that is provided to them. I would point out, by the way, that the Auditor General did report for the first time in decades this government not only reported under the balanced budget legislation, but further went to report under the summary financial budgets a commitment we made a year ago. He also reported that the surplus was the highest amount in the history of Manitoba.

Now one of the issues is that there are legitimate issues the member opposite raises because the accounting practices have been changed dramatically to properly reflect the actual off-book debt on to the on-book debt. So if we can be accused of being transparent we are guilty. Addressing the pension liability, which was not addressed, \$705 million; housing costs that were accrued over 50 years down to 20 years, \$606 million; federal accounting error, \$91 million; purchase of Centra Gas, it was not even on the books when we came into office, \$606 million. I can go through every item. Off-book debt by the members opposite, on-book accounting for the people in Manitoba under this government, Mr. Speaker.

Maple Leaf Distillers Building Purchase Price

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): According to the *Free Press*, in December 2001 this Doer government sold a building valued at \$6.4 million to Maple Leaf Distillers for only \$2.5 million, and, therefore, Manitobans were hit with a loss of nearly \$4 million. I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) why would he give such a sweet deal to Maple Leaf Distillers, and why would he not have allowed other Manitoba companies the opportunity to purchase that same building at fair market value.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question. To correct the member opposite, it was not the Minister of Finance or any government member who sold it. Actually it was a private firm called Colliers who sold the building. It was a private broker who sold the building at market value, and it was a respected real estate company that did it. If you look at it what it was was a private transaction not controlled by government, but was an open and transparent transaction done by a reputable company.

Manitoba Industrial Opportunities Program Maple Leaf Distillers Loan

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Doer government's math simply does not add up. Selling your building to Maple Leaf Distillers for \$4 million less than market value, and then they turned around and gave a \$1.5-million low-interest loan to Maple Leaf, according to the *Free Press*, this company has never turned a profit and, of course, if it does not turn a profit it will have no hope of repaying that loan.

I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) what due diligence, if any, was conducted by him, his department or the Premier (Mr. Doer) prior to granting that loan?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, all MIOP loans are subject to due diligence. This was subject to the regular due diligence that was set for any company or any condition that was set by government under the former government or under our government.

I would like to inform the House and you, Mr. Speaker, that there are three private commercial lenders who have also done their appropriate due diligence and chosen to invest with this company and to loan money for this company.

It is very important that each lender conducts its own due diligence. Each lender makes their own financial decisions and sets their own conditions with the company. We, in the government, set the policy where MIOP is a good, solid investment in growing the economy. It provides capital for companies and will continue a program that was established under your former government.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, that \$1.5-million low-interest loan given to Maple Leaf Distillers is

secured by a mortgage on the very same building that the Doer government undersold to Maple Leaf. As it turns out it is a third mortgage with no personal guarantees. If Maple Leaf defaults on this loan, the first two mortgages will take priority and Manitobans may never see a cent.

Obviously the minister is a very poor negotiator. Now I know why the total debt of the province is over \$20 billion and growing. What was this Finance Minister, what was this minister thinking to do a deal like this, or was he simply being directed by a higher authority as he was in the Crocus scandal?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is fundamentally wrong on his understanding of the debt of the Province of Manitoba. Last year he quoted chapter and verse from the Auditor General of Manitoba. The Auditor General of Manitoba, in the Public Accounts, just one page before page 53, indicates that we have met all the accounting standards, both provincially, nationally and internationally. Our net debt is \$10.5 billion, which is \$453 million less than last year.

The member opposite has been quoting a figure of \$20 billion. He is fundamentally wrong as he has been on all of his information before.

Policing Services Funding for Additional Officers

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, today's NDP commitments are tomorrow's broken promises. Six months after last year's promise to improve policing on rural highways it was put on the ash heap of broken promises. RCMP were forced to reorganize and now they police larger areas with fewer police officers. Now, today, we wait for the balloons and the confetti to fall on another Justice announcement, but Manitobans are saying, "You did not tell us the truth last year, why should we believe you today?"

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, it is their third priority in terms of questions today because it is a top priority. I understand, numbers from the other side, I recall a few months ago, members opposite said we should have 40 new officers in Manitoba. In the current budget we created 54 new officer positions in a budget that they would not support. Now when they discovered that there are actually 95 new funded police positions they say there should be 100 police. I guess maybe they are going to say it should be 110.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, added to the smouldering pile of broken Justice promises is the commitment for more officers for the city of Winnipeg. We learned last month that the Winnipeg police department was short two inspectors. They were short four sergeants. They were short a patrol sergeant. They were short 24 fully trained constables in the city of Winnipeg, 31 police positions that are vacant today after that phony announcement last year. The minister is warming up the marching band for another announcement in about an hour. Manitobans are saying you did not tell us the truth last year, why should we believe you today.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this from a group that was going to gut the justice system. They promised that in the 2003 election, but the questions the member raises may well be legitimate. On the floor of City Hall, perhaps he would want to raise those, and they will be passed on to the mayor and chief of police. But I hear from members opposite, I am so sorry to hear, the suggestion that we should get rid of the RCMP in Manitoba. I say shame on them. It is one of the best parts of this country.

* (10:40)

Justice System Conditional Sentences

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): There is only one law enforcement official we want to get rid of and that is this Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, another brick in the wall of broken promises is conditional sentences. Yesterday it was announced in Ottawa that this Minister of Justice caved, and he signed off on a deal that will allow violent gang members to continue to have house arrest sentences. When the NDP had a chance to stand up for Manitobans they stood up for gang members. This minister has a lot of bark, but he has not had any bite. Why did he fail to get a ban for the conditional sentences for violent gang offenders?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, that sounds like the member opposite has not read the proposals going to the House of Commons. Thank goodness members opposite were not anywhere at the table to scuttle any movement on this issue because there is movement. They seek headlines; we seek change. That is what is going into the House of Commons.

Election Financing Donations from Unions

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, contributions to political parties in this province must be clearly identified. I believe the NDP has broken The Elections Act by accepting money collected by unions. Will the Minister of Justice be prepared to have this matter investigated?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I cannot believe that question, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: If they would simply read the laws that they passed, Mr. Speaker, the government is not empowered to do investigations on election breaches. That has rightly been given to the independent agency called Elections Manitoba and, indeed, they have the obligation to have an independent prosecutor. That is not a role for government.

Mr. Cummings: Well, Mr. Speaker, when the party breaks the law that is a serious matter. It is possible that the NDP are repeat offenders. They have been doing this for six years. Will they co-operate with an investigation into the legality and the origin of these donations?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the independent Elections Manitoba Chief Electoral Officer has reviewed the issues at committee last year, and some of the members stayed around for the rest of the whole committee. At the committee last year I said that any issues of ambiguity flowing from the election changes we made we will change.

There are a couple of issues. The issue of bundling, we are bringing in legislation this session. We are bringing issues dealing with loans that are over \$3,000. I believe there was a loan in the last election campaign of \$100,000, Mr. Speaker, that the Chief Electoral Officer ruled in an equal way.

We will let the Chief Electoral Officer referee these issues. We have never been charged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cummings: Well, Mr. Speaker, when grandmothers who bring pies to fundraisers have to be held accountable, major parties in this province should also be held accountable. The public wants to know the truth. The public demands to know the truth.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Is he satisfied with the authenticity, first of all, and the accuracy of tax credits that may have been issued?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that the best way to investigate any concerns about the way public financing or donations and elections are handled is through Elections Manitoba. At Elections Manitoba, the chief elections officer has said the following: There is nothing in the law that identifies who may or who may not receive your individual contribution if they are only acting as a way to move it to the political entity.

Our Premier (Mr. Doer) has said he will clarify that in law.

Health Care Services Rural Emergency Room Closures

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Ashern, Arborg, Erickson, Boissevain, Deloraine, St. Pierre, Glenboro, Treherne, Russell, Mr. Speaker, these are but a few communities in rural Manitoba who have lost access to health care services, to emergency services despite this Premier's (Mr. Doer) promise more than six years ago to fix health care in our province.

Why is the Minister of Health forcing rural Manitobans to pay for his inability to manage health care in our province?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted that last Friday the Ashern emergency room reopened with a full complement of five doctors. I am delighted that we have Rivers about to reopen as an acute rehab hospital in co-operation with the Brandon Regional Health Authority. I am delighted that we have over 200 new doctors in Manitoba since 1999 in comparison to 116 who left during the 1990s.

I am delighted that the Manitoba Medical Association president, Dr. Tony Herd, spoke about how in this government there is a respectful relationship, that doctors are coming to Manitoba and that the new agreement with the MMA will enable us to recruit and retain doctors in contrast to what happened over—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Brandon and the Westman region are facing a health care crisis, yet this NDP government has failed to address this issue in the Throne Speech. The region is short 27 doctors, two

more emergency rooms are closing today, Mr. Speaker.

Highway medicine is alive and well in Manitoba. Seven throne speeches later and nothing that we have seen but broken promises from this NDP government. When will the people in Brandon and Westman regions see the promise fixed to the health care crisis that this Premier (Mr. Doer) promised more than six years ago?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, last week in the *Brandon Sun* it was noted that the new VP Medical Services and an outstanding internist, Dr. Penner, had joined the regional health authority. Three pathologists, a neurologist, an internal medicine specialist, a nuclear medicine specialist, an obstetrician, a locum radiologist and 16 additional physicians staff the ER in Brandon. An outstanding record by the Brandon Regional Health Authority of recruiting, and they will continue to recruit, they will continue to be successful and they will continue to fill the vacancies.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, clearly this is a government that is extremely tired and has no vision for our province. At a time of unprecedented revenues for our province, for health care in specific as well, this NDP government has failed to address the health care needs of rural Manitobans. Forcing our citizens to travel the highways to access health care and then sending them the bill for it is not my idea of fixing health care in this province.

Will this government commit today to pay for inter-facility ambulance transfers so Manitobans do not have to continue to pay for this government's inability to manage our health care in this province?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite, "This is not my idea of health care." Their idea of health care was to have less doctors, less nurses, less diagnostic equipment and less services over Manitoba. If members opposite go to northern Manitoba you will actually find CAT scan machines in The Pas and Thompson, Mr. Speaker.

You know, speaking of vision, the members opposite mothballed every hydro-electric opportunity. We are building Manitoba into the future. That is our vision and that is why Manitoba is growing.

* (10:50)

Agriculture Industry Government Support

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this government is full of empty promises about helping our Manitoba farmers. There were no significant promises whatsoever in yesterday's Throne Speech. The CAIS program does not work. Crop insurance is a farmer-paid program. Agriculture in Manitoba is facing a crisis not seen since the early 1930s.

Why has this NDP government abandoned our agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, again the member is out of touch with the actual farmers in rural Manitoba. I am very pleased that the member finally raised an agriculture issue, sixth question.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to read the press release that has been put out by Keystone Agricultural Producers. The Keystone Agricultural Producers have been encouraged by the steps that this government has taken to further reduce education tax on farmland and to put additional resources into the CAIS program. They are also pleased with the steps that we have taken to improve environmental victim services.

So I can tell the member opposite that he is the one who should get in touch with rural Manitobans. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, it is a very difficult time.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, just more lip service from this minister. Read it in the paper, that is not action, that is what we need, more action.

The Speech from the Throne provides cold or soggy comfort to farmers who saw their crops drown due to overland flooding this year. Over the past few years farmers have struggled through the drought, frost, flooding and the BSE crisis. New programs are needed to help producers keep their heads above water. Our farmers need sustainable, long-term financial programs that will put real dollars into their pockets. Mr. Speaker, where is this program?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about excess moisture. Well, I can remind the member that it was this government that put in place excess moisture insurance. Members opposite had the opportunity and they refused to do it.

Mr. Speaker, this program that we put in place is a long-term program and it is in place. This year we paid out \$58 million in excess moisture insurance. We anticipate very high payments out of crop insurance. We announced in the Throne Speech yesterday that we will be putting additional money into the CAIS program in recognition that this has been a very difficult year for our producers.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Harry Enns for introducing the excess moisture program back in 1999 while he was still here. The minister is great at taking press releases and other people's ideas and trying to make them her own.

The government has trotted out a new slogan regarding agriculture: "Farm it in Manitoba; finish it in Manitoba." Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us, without assistance the farmers will be finished in Manitoba. Why has this NDP government refused to help the agriculture producers by putting in place assistance programs that will work for our farmers?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the member opposite to produce the facts on when the crop insurance program was amended in Manitoba to allow for excessive moisture to be covered under crop insurance. It was not when the Conservatives were in office. It was when this minister amended it in 2000, and I want the member opposite to come back on Monday and set the record straight. The facts are clear. This minister amended the crop insurance legislation, not the previous government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation we have a free loge or have your conversation in the hallway. Right now the honourable Member for River Heights has the floor.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis and Treatment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the criminal justice system it is well known that the Minister of Justice operates a revolving door policy. One of the reasons for this revolving door policy is that whether it involves those who steal cars or commit other crimes the minister is dealing with crimes which are perpetuated by individuals who have fetal alcohol spectrum

disorders or other mental illnesses. It is well known that individuals with fetal alcohol syndrome often have difficulty in distinguishing right from wrong.

I ask the Minister of Justice this. What is his policy with respect to individuals with FASD who come into contact with the law and who commit crimes?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): If the member is truly concerned about youth crime in this country and in this province in particular, Mr. Speaker, I would urge him to speak to his colleagues in his party. I would urge him to try and make some difference, because when it comes to auto theft our prosecutors have come to us. Nova Scotia is helping to lead an initiative as well in this country so that we can have some consequences that matter. I do not need to hear from the member opposite concerns about the criminal justice system when it comes to youth when they were the authors of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it has been a few years since we were in office provincially and I am not really sure what he is referring back to.

Since the Minister of Justice does not seem to have any policy at all with respect to those who have FASD and other mental illnesses who commit crimes, and since the Premier did not even mention FASD, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, in his Throne Speech yesterday, because apparently it is not a priority, why is the Premier operating a revolving door policy for those with FASD and other mental illness instead of promptly diagnosing and treating such individuals so that they do not have to get into situations such as this where they are committing crimes?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question and that is why, over the last six years, we have worked with our colleagues in western Canada with the fetal alcohol syndrome, the northern prairie grouping of provinces and territories. We are noted in the North American context as having one of the largest and most well-staffed clinics for the diagnosis and treatment of FASD associated syndromes.

The other large clinic in western Canada is in British Columbia, but the two clinics both see over 200 diagnoses a year, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted that the clinic in Thompson is reopening because we now have a pediatrician coming to Thompson who is

able to staff that clinic. It will be back in business very shortly. We have led the way on the diagnosis, treatment and education of the judicial system and other systems on how to deal with FAS children and adults.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there is a problem, and I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) because he has been very quiet on this issue. You know, many individuals who come into conflict with the law are not even checked to see if they have mental illnesses or FASD. We have programs for mental illnesses like the PACT and first-episode psychosis which have long waiting lists. In fact, the PACT program has such a long waiting list that the NDP made it vanish. There is a fundamental problem here with this government in not recognizing the relationship between mental illness and crime if you do not treat and diagnose and make sure you prevent the mental illness in the first place.

What is the government doing in this regard? Why has it failed and been so derelict in its duty in addressing this issue?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): You will note, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Liberal commitment on waiting lists which we supported had five waiting lists to be accountable for. You will note yesterday from the Speech from the Throne, if the member has not read it I would refer it to him, where there is a section dealing with adding priorities for Manitoba and that very definitely includes the mental health lists.

* (11:00)

Manitoba Hydro Ontario Power Sale

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Manitoba Hydro has just announced a significant sale of hydro power to our neighbouring province Ontario. Can the Minister responsible for Hydro elaborate on the impact of this sale to Manitoba and, in particular, to northern communities of our province?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that the Ontario Minister of Energy was here yesterday in the Legislative Building to sign the first phase of the CETI agreement, a building, an export of Manitoba power that will help establish the east-west grid, not a mothballing but a building of a resource that will share the resources with First Nations in the North with all of Manitobans. We will

see revenues provided to Manitobans today, tomorrow and into the future, and the potential for Manitoba is significant in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue, thousands of jobs and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Teachers' Pensions Cost of Living Allowance

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, yesterday over 500 retired teachers rallied at the Legislature. Some were in wheelchairs, some walked with canes and all of them were asking this government to help keep a commitment made to them. I would like to ask the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) if he is prepared to strike a COLA advisory committee to review the COLA issue and to make recommendations on reaching a sustainable solution. All the teachers are asking for is fair treatment. Is this government prepared to do that?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the retired teachers appeared before the committee. I noted that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) stated that he would have an actuarial review about this but would not commit himself to any money. There have been actuarial reviews, and we did work with the teachers' representatives to produce funding to deal with the unfunded liability on a go-forward basis, funding that was jointly contributed by the government, the employer and the workers, the teachers. A similar unfunded liability challenge that we inherited again from the past on health care workers we have dealt with. We will continue to work on unfunded liability issues.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago teachers gave up their disability benefits and agreed to pay more towards their pension benefits in return for reasonable COLA. Since 1999, the Doer government has not followed through in providing reasonable COLA. I would ask this government if they are prepared to ensure that a thorough and full actuarial modelling is done to fix the whole teachers' pension plan including the COLA component of it.

Mr. Doer: First of all, I wonder if it is the position of the Conservative government that the public, through taxpayers, would be funding unilaterally unfunded liabilities of pensions that were decisions made a number of years ago. If that is the position of members opposite it is totally inconsistent with the

first two or three questions the member opposite asked.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before we move on to Members' Statements, I would just like to draw the attention of members to the loge to my left where we have with us Mr. Binx Remnant, who is the former Clerk of this Legislative Assembly.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rural Health Care Services

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my outrage over this NDP government's continued failure to deal with the health care crisis in Manitoba. Ashern, Arborg, Boissevain, Deloraine, Erickson, Treherne, Rosburn, St. Pierre, the list of emergency room closures and downgraded hospital services goes on and on. Empty rhetoric, broken promises, unprecedented deaths, this is the legacy of this NDP government.

This is a tired government. This is a government with no vision for the province. This is a government that has failed Manitoba. Yesterday's Throne Speech was a slap in the face to patients waiting in pain for surgery. It was an insult to rural Manitobans who were forced to travel Manitoba's highways in order to access health care services. Yesterday's Throne Speech claims better care, sooner and closer to home treatment for Manitobans, yet there is nothing in this Throne Speech to deal with the crisis in rural health care. There is nothing to comfort those waiting in pain for surgery. There is nothing to compensate those forced to travel to access health care.

Yesterday's Throne Speech was the NDP government's seventh opportunity to provide Manitobans with their plan for addressing health care. Unfortunately, this government once again ignored the crisis in health care and offered no real relief for patients waiting in pain and no hope for rural Manitobans. At a time of unprecedented revenue, Manitobans are unable to access health care in their own communities and are being crippled by enormous ambulance bills.

Manitobans expect and deserve more from this government. It is time for this government to stop

offloading their inability to manage the health care crisis in our province onto the backs of rural Manitobans. We ask that the government start covering the cost of inter-facility ambulance transfers today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Balanced Budgets

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the recent release of an important federal government study. Conducted by the federal department of finance, this study concludes that the governments run by the NDP are more likely than any other party to produce a balanced budget. In a study that covers the last 22 years, the NDP is shown to be clearly the most fiscally responsible party over the long and short terms.

I need not remind the House about the importance that this government places on fiscal responsibility. It is a cornerstone of this NDP government that the province in which we live and the communities that we build be sustainable. Sustainability requires the prudence and foresight that accompany any balanced budget. In this manner the value of the province is increased greatly by managing in a responsible and disciplined manner the services that matter most to Manitobans.

With this principle of sustainability in mind, we can easily see just how effectively this government has put this into practice. Since its first election in 1999 and re-election in 2003, this province has known six consecutive years of balanced budgets.

Following the balanced budget legislation the Conservatives themselves put in place, the government's most recent budget passed in 2005 was not only balanced, it also included a \$314-million contribution to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and a \$110-million contribution to paying down the debt, all the while guaranteeing the quality of and access to those essential services that Manitobans rely on each and every day. It is this combination of fiscal discipline and social commitment that is characteristic of today's NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is fitting that we congratulate this government for its ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility and the building of a sustainable province. The release of this federal report only testifies even more to the discipline this government has shown in building the beautiful and diverse Manitoba we live in today.

Agriculture Support Programs

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I rise today to express my frustration with this NDP government and their lack of ability to recognize the seriousness of the situation facing rural Manitoba. Rural Manitobans were left with little more than cold, soggy comfort in yesterday's Throne Speech. Instead of seeing a concrete plan, sound vision, there were non-descriptive plans for our farmers to pin their hopes on the upcoming years.

In recent years the agriculture industry has been devastated by the lasting effects of the BSE crisis, the downturn in grain and cereal crop prices, drought and now flooding. For two long years, we have had nothing but lip service from this government about creating more processing plants in Manitoba. We were treated with more hot air yesterday. Our producers needed to see a plan that would ensure Manitoba has the ability to process, package and market our own products, removing the crutch we are using by making other provinces and countries do this for us.

This NDP government still has not grasped the thought that it is the agriculture industry that is the engine that drives Manitoba's economy. There need to be assurances made that this industry is going to be sustainable. Yesterday this NDP government trotted out its new slogan, "Farm it in Manitoba; finish it in Manitoba." I can tell you that without tangible programs and real assistance farming will be finished in Manitoba.

The future of this economic foundation is in real danger under this NDP government. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has stated that the NDP party is for the farmers, but over the past six years, we have had little more than hollow words and empty promises from them.

Many of our producers are in desperate situations, Mr. Speaker, due to circumstances beyond their control and yesterday we were looking to this Premier and NDP government to throw them a bone. Instead, they were left out in the cold once more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:10)

Child Care Workers

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to inform the House of the government's July 1 announcement of an increase of \$11.5 million to improve wages and

training for child care workers in Manitoba. This important announcement was made in my constituency of Wolseley at the Cornish Child Care Centre, a facility which also recently expanded to make eight infant care spaces available, thanks to the co-operation of Manitoba Housing and the work of our Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick).

On April 29, 2005, the government of Manitoba was the first province to sign the historic Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care agreement with the federal government. With this agreement, \$176 million will flow over the next five years and go directly towards improving the quality, accessibility and affordability of child care and early learning in Manitoba. It is worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that in Manitoba we are the only jurisdiction in the country where this money is now flowing. That is vision. That is leadership. This money will be used to promote the community-based and non-profit child care system that Manitobans overwhelmingly endorsed in 2001 in their response to the child care vision paper we provided.

One of the key factors in providing quality child care in early education is to maintain a qualified work force, and on July 11 our minister announced at the Cornish Child Care Centre that the \$11.5 million increase will go to wages and benefits for child care workers. This will bring their salaries up to a range of \$27,000 to \$30,000 a year. It is worth noting that the average salary across Canada for these positions is only \$18,000 per year. After years of working at low wages like this, child care workers in Manitoba will enjoy the respect and decency of decent wages, benefits, and training incentives. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Architects and Engineers

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, it saddens me that I have to rise once again to express my concern regarding the critical situation facing the future of Manitoba following yesterday's Speech from the Throne.

The Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) and this NDP government have once again demonstrated their inability to settle the ongoing dispute between the architects and the engineers, two very essential professions to both Manitoba's economy and the construction industry. Despite repeated promises to bring the two sides together to come to an agreement, this government has done nothing.

Yesterday, this Premier assured Manitobans that they have established a co-operative agreement between both sides but, once again, Manitobans get empty promises. Due to this NDP government's complete lack of action to resolve this catastrophic situation, Manitoba's construction industry is at a virtual standstill. It is vital that a meaningful solution must be achieved to put these two professions back on a level playing field.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to table for this House over 500 signatures gathered by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists asking the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending The Architects Act to provide engineers an exemption similar to that enjoyed by the architects under The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act. I, along with all Manitobans, look to the Minister of Labour to finally put this long-standing dispute to rest.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS ADJOURNED DEBATE (First Day of Debate)

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): I move, seconded by the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fourth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Aglugub: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to have moved the 2005 Throne Speech and speak in support of it. I believe it is a Throne Speech that continues to meet today's challenges and build on a long-term plan. This Throne Speech continues the vision and strategy this government has promoted since the voters turned to us to lead this great province six years ago.

Since we were elected in 1999, we have been called upon to guide Manitoba through a changing world. This Throne Speech acknowledges the challenges and opportunities our province faces in the future. Indeed, building Manitoba's clean energy advantage and preparing the province for

emergencies were highlighted in this year's Speech from the Throne, while further commitments were made to combat crime, deliver better health care sooner, invest in the province's youth and grow rural Manitoba through the expansion of new markets.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I continue with my remarks about why I think we should all vote to accept the Speech from the Throne, I would like to digress for a moment to make some introductory remarks. I would first like to welcome our new interns, Kathleen Ross, Philip Gass, Lisa Hutniak, Jessica Kelly, Andrew Clark and Mark Rosner, who are all university graduates and who have achieved honour and distinction in their academic pursuits. I would encourage all the MLAs to read their résumés which testify to their impressive talents. These interns are a welcome addition to the Legislature and will be of great assistance to all members of this House. We all look forward to working with them.

I would also like to welcome our new pages who will be assisting with our work in this Chamber. We hope your work here will be a great experience. We wish you the very best. Maybe, some day, you will take your seat or your place in this Legislature.

Also, we welcome back the Clerks and Sergeant-at-Arms, and we thank them for their work in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, our government has always taken a proactive approach to dealing with challenges of living in a changing world. We do this to protect the interests of Manitobans and position ourselves for a brighter future.

For example, Manitoba was the first Canadian province to develop a climate change action plan, and we pushed the federal government to ratify the Kyoto Accord. As a result, Manitoba is seeing a remarkable growth in new renewable energy and new initiatives to reduce harmful greenhouse gases. The benefits have been twofold. For example, through increased public awareness and a loan program through Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba has become the North American leader in geothermal installations, otherwise known as earth energy, that are used to heat and cool buildings. Installations have increased 40 percent per year, and communities like Wawanesa are lowering installation costs by installing ground-source heat pump loops instead of gas lines for newer subdivisions.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance recently gave Manitoba the top marks for energy efficiency in the country, and the Manitoba government has funded innovative research through the establishment of the Climate Change Action Fund. Recently, Manitoba was the first province to partner with the federal government to support the One-Tonne Challenge through our climate change community challenge. We have called upon communities in rural, urban and northern Manitoba to demonstrate best practices in energy efficiency, green transportation and waste reduction, and to expand their use of solar, wind and biomass power. The results are clearly recognizable.

Despite living in a harsh climate, Manitoba pays the third-lowest rates among the provinces to heat their homes. Moreover, because of our commitment to keeping Manitoba Hydro publicly owned, Manitobans benefit from low prices, dependable, high-quality energy to power their homes and workplaces. Because Manitoba Hydro is an asset for all Manitobans, we not only benefit from Hydro's success in pointing the way to the future, but also benefit from proactive programs to protect the high standards of living we have achieved in our province. That is why, in a climate of rapidly rising oil and gas prices, our Speech from the Throne introduces a Manitoba Home Heating Strategy to protect Manitoba consumers from rate shocks on their gas bills and assist homeowners in making energy-saving upgrades.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue our commitments to address climate change and seize the opportunities of this emerging green economy. We will ramp up our biodiesel production through support for community-based biofuel production facilities, and continue to pursue alternative energy and export strategies through the Clean Energy Transfer and other similar initiatives.

Innovation defines our approach to our energy policies and to the environment, but it also defines our approach to health care. Our government is dedicated to delivering better health care sooner. Mr. Speaker, 235 more doctors are registered to practise in Manitoba today than in 1999. We have increased the number of medical school places from 70 to 85 and are further expanding it to 100 seats over the next two years. Our government has more than tripled the number of nurses graduating since 1999 from 210 to 669. There are 1200 more nurses

practising in Manitoba than in 1999. The Pan Am Clinic is now open seven days a week to give patients a speedier treatment for non-life-threatening injuries. This move will relieve pressures on hospital emergency rooms by channelling more than 50 000 patients a year to this clinic.

Just days ago, we introduced a new state-of-the-art \$3.5 million MRI at the Pan Am Clinic that will perform more scans for Manitobans who need diagnostic tests. The Health Sciences Centre is getting state-of-the-art equipment and facilities in a \$100-million redevelopment, the largest such project in Manitoba's history.

Brandon Hospital has been expanded and its new MRI installed. Our government has expanded and modernized over 50 health care facilities across the province since 1999. In my constituency, the Seven Oaks Hospital has received a new CT scanner and has become the site of a new 20-station dialysis unit capable of treating 80 patients, as well as an out-patient cancer clinic. Last year alone, 26 000 MRI scans were performed in Manitoba, four times the number of MRI scans performed in 1998. In terms of cancer care, the cancer advisory coalition of Canada reports that Manitoba has one of the shortest average waiting times in the country. The wait time for radiation therapy has been reduced to one week from six to seven weeks in 1998. Yet, Mr. Speaker, despite all these accomplishments, we intend to do even more to provide better care sooner and closer to home.

Our Throne Speech has committed to addressing waiting lists identified in the First Ministers' Accord, including joint replacement, cardiac treatment, cancer treatment, sight restoration and diagnostic imaging. We will be completing the replacement of all 160 ambulances in the province's fleet in the coming year, a significant first step to address EMS issues in rural and northern Manitoba.

Our innovative policies in health care are also reflected in a determined focus on public health and prevention. This is why we created the Ministry of Healthy Living. Our initiatives have included a prostate cancer awareness campaign, a cervical cancer screening program, an early warning system for the West Nile virus and improved mosquito control measures. Hundreds of thousands of Manitobans have received flu shots. Our Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force, composed of members from all parties in this Chamber, held public hearings and issued a report with 97 detailed

recommendations. This Throne Speech underlies our commitment to work with schools and parents to implement an effective nutrition and exercise program for youth for all ages as recommended by the task force.

Mr. Speaker, our government is concerned with the place of Manitoba in a changing world. That is why this Speech from the Throne is dedicated to preparing children and youth for the future. In the coming year, we will take further steps to improve early years care, including additional funded spaces, capital investments, expansion of nursery schools and a new governance model.

We will soon proclaim The Appropriate Educational Programming Act, and will introduce more experiential learning opportunities for middle year students to increase their engagement with school and their sense of its connection to their future. To meet the challenges of a changing world, we intend to modernize our post-secondary institutions. Our government has long believed that the best economic policy is a good education policy. For that reason, we will undertake the expansion of technical-vocational initiatives to raise awareness of technical careers and career paths further, and we will continue our programs and capital commitments for the new University College of the North, as well as our commitment to additional multi-year funding for Manitoba colleges and universities.

Our educational strategies are aimed at boosting productivity and promoting economic inclusion. Mr. Speaker, our government promotes inclusion in a variety of ways. Our province was built on immigration and the inclusion of immigrants in our society. New immigrants strengthen our province's economy while enriching the social and cultural diversity of our cities, towns and rural municipalities. Since we formed government in 1999, we have been committed to supporting and increasing immigration to Manitoba, and we have been relatively successful. Manitoba is experiencing 20-year highs in net immigration. Indeed, last year Manitoba gained 9700 new residents, the biggest annual population increase in 20 years, and immigration has increased 14 percent alone in this year.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention that international migration to Manitoba has contributed to our robust economic growth over the last few years, and that many of these newcomers

have settled in my constituency of The Maples and to the benefit of all Manitoba.

* (11:30)

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has also the most successful provincial nominee program in Canada. In 2003 alone, 3085 nominees arrived in our province. This represents approximately six times the number of nominees that immigrated to Manitoba in 1999. A recent change to our government of the Provincial Nominee Program is the speeding up of the application process for potential nominees interested in moving here.

Mr. Speaker, newcomers contribute to our recent economic success. Statistics Canada projects that private investment in Manitoba will increase by 3.6 percent this year, above the Canadian average. Total investment is forecast to rise to a record high of \$7.3 billion. Manitoba has the second-lowest unemployment rate in Canada, 4.7 percent, as of July 2005. Manitoba is estimated to see significant growth in the manufacturing, construction and retail sectors. New skilled immigrants have contributed to and will continue to contribute to this success. However, we realize that there is still room for improvement.

One of the biggest issues facing our government has been the recognition of the qualifications of foreign-trained professionals who immigrate to Manitoba. Often immigrants coming to Manitoba cannot have their foreign credentials approved until they have been certified by their professional associations or by specific government departments. These delays affect the economic health of our province since the skill of new professionals cannot be used. This also hinders new Manitobans in finding work in their desired career fields. But our government is taking a proactive approach to recognize the qualifications of foreign-trained professionals.

In the past, the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan) hosted a Qualifications Recognition Summit. The summit brought together stakeholders and professionals that have been active in assisting foreign-trained professionals who are interested in seeing new Canadians work in their chosen career fields. Our government continues to co-ordinate and build partnerships with different professional organizations and bodies to deliver occupation-specific language training. This includes

language training for foreign professionals in engineering, pharmacy and teaching occupations.

Our government also supports the medical licensure program for internationally trained medical graduates. This program assists foreign-trained medical physicians to obtain their licensure requirements to allow them to practise in Manitoba. We are also working on a program to help foreign-trained teachers to meet their Manitoba licensing requirements. Our ongoing discussions with licensing bodies, trade and professional organizations and immigrant groups will help us develop effective ways to evaluate the skills of new immigrants.

Supporting the immigration of skilled professionals is one of our top priorities as a government. New immigrants committed to working and living in Manitoba benefit our provincial economy socially and culturally. That is why our Throne Speech outlined a continued commitment to the provincial target of 10 000 immigrants per year and increased support for community-based settlement services.

Our government will do all that we can to make sure that new Canadians feel welcome in their new home. But, Mr. Speaker, to feel welcome, one must also feel safe. Although we have accomplished a lot, making our neighbourhoods safer through such innovative programs as Turnabout and Ototema, and the toughest anti-drinking and driving laws in the country, our Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and The Fortified Buildings Act that have helped shut down over 120 fortified buildings, drug dens, prostitution and sniff houses, we realize we still need to do more.

The Throne Speech assures us that The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act will be strengthened to further target gang houses. Manitoba's gang prosecution unit, a first in Canada, will receive additional prosecutors.

Mr. Speaker, we will also expand the Front End Project, an award-winning project that significantly reduced the backlog of domestic violence cases to deal with all cases where offenders are awaiting trial in custody, and we will introduce first-of-its-kind legislation in Canada that will recognize protection orders granted by courts in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we also intend to introduce a strategy to deal with the problem of crystal meth. This strategy will include measures to restrict supply

and production, promote collaboration between policing and other agencies, develop public awareness and provide additional resources for the treatment of meth and other serious drug addictions.

But, Mr. Speaker, crime cannot be combatted by just punitive measures. We must include all members of the population, so they will not be tempted to turn their backs on our society. This means taking a proactive approach to developing and empowering our communities. We plan to exceed our original commitment of establishing 40 Lighthouses, which, through evening programs at schools and gyms, offer young people a safe place to play and study. We will expand our efforts to combat bullying in our schools. We will also strive to make our neighbourhoods healthier.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue with safety aid programs which provide free basic security devices, home audits and forgivable loans to low-income seniors in Brandon and Winnipeg.

In the North, we will pursue a new partnership with the federal government designed to make a significant impact on Aboriginal health outcomes. Manitoba will also propose similar partnerships to boost school completion rates on reserves and to begin addressing the critical shortage of adequate housing in northern and First Nation communities.

In rural Manitoba, we will bring an additional 10 percent reduction for farmland property owners in 2006, building on the 50 percent reduction and the \$20 million in property tax savings we have managed so far.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to revitalizing our cities and our neighbourhoods. For example, as outlined in the Throne Speech, the Province will continue to work with the City of Winnipeg and the private sector towards opening up new housing lots as our capital city experiences solid and sustained growth.

We will also continue to work with citizens to revitalize and clean up our neighbourhoods to make them more desirable for all their inhabitants. For example, last July, I hosted a Maples community forum concerning the clean-up, beautification and safety of our district. If I may, Mr. Speaker, The Maples is a diversified community. It is a home to recent immigrants, as well as more established residents of 20 or more years. There is a strong sense of pride and attachment to this community; hence, the desire and willingness to clean up and beautify

the neighbourhood. Participants indicated that among the benefits of such initiatives as community forums is the sense of citizens' empowerment that they help create.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the inclusion and empowerment of all citizens. That is why, for the first time in 30 years, employment standards legislation will be modernized to reflect changes in the workforce and the new demands placed on families. It is also why the hourly minimum wage was increased to \$7.25 an hour, a 21 percent since 1999, and that also is the reason why we intend to introduce changes to the provincial Elections Act which will address voter participation and encourage increased democratic participation among Aboriginal citizens, our youth and the many new Canadians who have moved to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, The Maples epitomizes Manitoba in a changing world more than any other constituency in our province. It serves as a virtual cultural mosaic inhabited by skilled and talented people from all over the world and from all walks of life. I am proud to have been given the opportunity to represent the constituency of The Maples, and I want to thank them for their continued support and confidence in me.

By including these new Canadians and, indeed, all Manitobans in our hopes and dreams for the future, we can build a strong Manitoba in a changing world. I believe that this Throne Speech does exactly that. Therefore, I move that this speech be supported and accepted by all members of this Chamber.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:40)

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It is my honour to second the motion on the Speech from the Throne, and I am very pleased to follow my friend the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

Mr. Speaker, I have learned much in my first year in the Legislature, not just what we can learn in this building, but, certainly, what I can learn around the province and in the constituency of Minto, which is truly a fascinating and a diverse place to live, to work and to play.

My friend from The Maples spoke passionately about diversity, and maybe there is no constituency in the province more diverse than Minto. One third of all the residents of Minto were born outside of Canada. In the past, waves of immigrants came from

Great Britain, from Italy, from Portugal, from Germany, Scandinavia, Hungary, the Philippines, Vietnam. We receive many newcomers now through our very successful Nominee Program, largely from the Philippines, but also from Central Europe and a host of other countries. We are also proud to accept our share of refugees from around the world, primarily now from East Africa.

There is not a day when I do not learn something from the people of Minto in our schools, in our homes and in our community places, and it truly is a privilege to work with the incredible diversity of people who have chosen to come to this country to join us and to build a better life.

Now, I had to put a lot of thought into how to address the Legislature. I did have the chance, Mr. Speaker, to speak on the budget debate last year, and I fear that, indeed, I offended the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer)—and he was so upset that he mentioned it to me again—because I know that the words of Social Democrats, the words of those of us who believe in the capacity of all citizens to build a better society can be confounding and perhaps even troubling for some of the people on the other side of the House.

I was concerned because the Member for Southdale clearly has a heart. I cannot say that about everybody on his side of the Legislature, but he certainly does, so I thought about how best to put some context into the debate. All of us come here, all the 57 members come here with their own experiences and their own ground for debate, and I am very proud—[interjection]—and, yes, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), I can state for the record, does have a heart. I can say that unequivocally.

I am certainly proud, Mr. Speaker, of the diversity within the government caucus, so I thought, "What could my own experiences bring to the debate." I mean, certainly, I could speak as a lawyer, the profession I practised for 14 years, a great profession, but speaking as a lawyer would not gain too many friends on either side of the House or inside or outside of the Legislature.

I could talk about my experiences playing football for 10 years, but it has been a tough time for the team that makes its home in Minto, the Canad Inns Stadium, so we will save that for another year. As I was trying to find the right analogy, I did as I often do when I am thinking. I decided to go out for a run because sometimes running unlocks the creative juices and lets one go. There are some great

places to run in Minto. I can run along Omand's Creek. I can do my hill work at Westview Park, which some of you know as garbage hill. I can run through the West End. I can run south of Portage along Wolseley and Wellington, and, as I was doing that, I thought that maybe, maybe the whole process of preparing to run and running is actually a pretty good analogy to managing an economy and running a government.

I thought I had some credibility. I am certainly more of a Clydesdale than a gazelle when it comes to running, but I do participate in the Timex running series. I am a member of the marathon board which supports Community Living Manitoba. The marathon promotes the city, promotes healthy families. Certainly, within my own family, I am very proud that my two daughters have taken up running, and, in fact, this year completed the one-mile fun run at Islendingadagurinn, one complaining more than the other.

The key point, Mr. Speaker, is that runners, just like all Manitobans, are of all different abilities and all different backgrounds and all different needs. The goal of those of us on our side of the House is to work so that as many Manitobans as possible can get to the start line and run the race and finish the race. I look at this Throne Speech as the race plan. Where are we going and how can we get there?

Now, to run a successful race, there are many components. You have to be prepared in your training, in your knowledge, being ready for the weather and other conditions, knowing about nutrition, rest and being aware of your own health. It is interesting to see how those themes match up in this year's Speech from the Throne.

For a runner, conditions in 2005 were clearly beyond our control. Snow and ice and gale force winds greeted us at the start of the Police Half Marathon back in May. After a cool and rainy spring, heat and humidity arrived three days before marathon Sunday. We ran through a monsoon at the Grand Beach 10K run and, finally, we suffered through heat and sun for the 10-mile race from Winnipeg Beach to Gimli.

Manitobans will run for just about anything: through hail, through rain, through sleet, to grasshoppers, certainly difficult for many, and particularly those of us who may be less graceful out on the road. Runners complain; then they do it. If they are prepared, they can do it safely. In our province this year, there is no question that

conditions beyond our control have affected and continue to affect our province. The wet and cool weather has been an annoyance for runners, but, certainly, far more serious for others across the province. The wet and cool weather has been a disaster for our farming communities, certainly, potentially disastrous for those who live along rivers and lakes which threatened to spill their banks as the rain continued.

I am very proud that we will be introducing new legislation to enhance our capacity to deal with emergencies as they arise. Mr. Speaker, \$130 million has already been invested to provide permanent flood protection to communities and residences that were flooded in 1997. I am very proud that work has begun on the construction of the Winnipeg Floodway, a project that will provide 1000 jobs over five years and provide protection against a 1-in-700-year flood.

Emergency planning for a pandemic, should it strike Manitoba, is receiving the highest priority, and the Chief Medical Officer of Manitoba will continue to work with Health Canada on a comprehensive plan for dealing with a pandemic in Manitoba. But being prepared for whatever the weather can throw at us is not enough, and the question is what fuels, what powers runners as they get to the starting line and start their race. Well before the race, we carb up. We eat lots of clean-burning carbohydrates; we hydrate. We drink lots of water, and during the race we drink water, sports drinks, Powerade.

Well, here in Manitoba, our economy is powered by clean hydro-electricity from our public utility, from our Manitoba Hydro. Mr. Speaker, I am excited. I am energized by yesterday's announcement with over \$3 billion in clean energy development over the next 10 years. I am energized about further negotiations with potential customers, which are going to lead to further clean energy sales over the next six years, and I am certainly energized about the clean energy transfer, which will support enhancements toward a new national dream, a true east-west power grid, and set the stage for future hydro sales and the construction of low-impact dams in northern Manitoba.

I am very proud of the Manitoba home-heating strategy, which will be introduced to do two things: first, to protect Manitoba consumers from increasing energy costs, and, secondly, assist homeowners in making energy-saving upgrades. Minto, like many other aging areas within the city and in rural areas,

has a number of homes urgently in need of more assistance, and I am very pleased that we are going to help people make those changes.

I am very proud of a continued commitment to address climate change and seize the opportunities of an emerging green economy. We know the completion of Manitoba's first wind farm at St. Leon will generate almost 100 megawatts of emission-free electricity and substantial payments to land holders. I am proud of a commitment to 1000 megawatts of wind generation over the next decade. This development will be in tandem with the continued hydro development in the North, providing training and employment for Aboriginal peoples.

I am very proud that ethanol production will be increased 13-fold, from 10 million litres a year to 130 million litres a year through the construction of Husky Oil's new production plant in Minnedosa. Manitoba's ethanol mandate for 10 percent blends of gasoline will cut vehicle emissions by 135 000 tonnes, equivalent to taking 10 000 cars off the road, and, maybe more importantly, every litre of ethanol we produce here in Manitoba is 1 less litre of a non-renewable resource we have to import from outside our boundaries.

I am also proud of increasing biodiesel production through support for community-based biofuel production facilities. We have the power to do what we want to do in this province because of our energy developments.

Now, those who run are certainly no strangers to injuries, although, of course, runners have a much lower rate of chronic and other diseases. In a race, those who suffer injuries often need urgent medical attention, and serious injuries are dealt with immediately. Other injuries, other problems are certainly dealt with at the end of the race, or after the end of the race based on severity. We know the best way to reduce the wait for runners seeking help is to reduce injuries through education, through runners knowing their limits, reducing their weight, having better nutrition, which is no different than our health care system as a whole. We are moving to prevention and getting people back on the road, to use the running analogy again, much more quickly.

* (11:50)

So I am very proud of our Province's commitment to target federal-provincial-territorial wait times for joint replacement, for cardiac care, for cancer treatment, for diagnostic testing and sight

restoration. Manitoba's Wait Times Reduction Strategy will add four more wait time priorities, including children's dental programs, mental health initiatives, Pain Clinic expansion and treatment for sleep disorders.

I am very proud, Mr. Speaker, that there are 235 more doctors registered to practise in Manitoba today than there were in 1999, and, in fact, the number of doctors has increased by over 90 in just the past 12 months. We are also proud that we now have a true province-wide recruitment strategy to bring more physicians to this province. Certainly, we have a commitment to bring care closer to home for rural Manitoba, a commitment to work with schools and parents to implement effective nutrition and exercise programs for youth of all ages as recommended by the all-party Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force. We are also replacing ambulances in the province's fleet, and a province-wide EMS call centre will be developed in Brandon.

I know I am hearing some excitement on the opposition benches. I know they are very interested to hear about this, and I am sure that all of them will join me at the start line for the Manitoba Marathon next year. I would be glad to take them out for a training run and give them a little bit of guidance which they need in running, as well as in their political lives.

Now, the question is how do you get more people to the start line. Well, you help them to prepare for the race. You can take classes on running. You can go into any bookstore and find a shelf of books. You can go on the Web and find different ways to learn about what it is you are doing. There is no surprise that in running, as in our society, education is a key, and this Throne Speech will continue our efforts to prepare children and youth for the future.

I am very pleased that, since 1999, there has been a 64 percent increase in support for child care in Manitoba. There are 3500 newly funded child care spaces to take down the barriers to people joining the race and becoming employed. We have taken further steps to improve early-years care, and, for children in school, we have increased education funding per student by 18 percent since 1999. I am very proud that we have invested \$333 million in a school capital program, which is more than twice as ambitious as the previous government. We have an updated curriculum. We have an increase in funding for special needs instruction, and this week, I

understand, The Appropriate Educational Programming Act will be proclaimed.

As my friend from The Maples said, we are providing better learning opportunities for middle-years students, and we are improving technical-vocational initiatives to let students see the entire range of post-secondary opportunities that they have. We are targeting initiatives through the Aboriginal Education Action Plan to raise school completion rates in northern and inner-city schools.

Enrolment in our colleges and universities has increased by more than one third since 1999. We are the most successful province in Canada at increasing the number of people taking post-secondary education. Our investment in university campuses is paying big dividends, including the beautiful new downtown campus of Red River College, which is now fully operational. We are also making our program and capital commitments for the new University College of the North to extend the opportunities to attend post-secondary education to all Manitobans.

Now, that is not the only way you encourage people to the start line. What is interesting is that runners tend to flock together. The running store I spoke about before offers running groups, not just running groups but free running groups. You can show up and run with other people. People can form their own running clubs, and, even in races, people take the time to run together. And why is that? Because we know that people can accomplish more by working together and co-operating. *[interjection]*

The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) has just announced he will be joining me at the start line of the Half Marathon of the Manitoba Marathon. I am very pleased that I will see the Member for Lac du Bonnet out there. It is terrific.

Now, we know that by working together through community development, through neighbourhood associations, through co-operatives and a host of other initiatives, we can empower people and we can get them to the race. Some examples in our Throne Speech are the expansion of efforts to combat bullying in schools over the coming months, enacting programs recommended to us by educators and by parents. We have a new package of initiatives to assist seniors' efforts to maintain their health and their independence, and, for the first time in three decades, employment standards legislation will be modernized to reflect changes in Manitoba's

workplace and the new demands placed on Manitoba families.

I am very proud of our regular increases in the minimum wage since 1999, and I am very excited about changes to provincial election acts to address voter participation and to encourage youth and other excluded categories in our society to come out and be involved in the political process.

There have been developments in race timing over the years. I am not that old, but I remember some early races where all you got when you finished was a slip with your place on it. Then we moved to have tags they would rip off at the end of the race. Now, we even have computer chips. It beeps as you cross the start line; it beeps as you cross the finish line. So, too, are there developments in accounting practices. That is why we have made a commitment to work with the Auditor General to make the summary budget the principal report on provincial finances, fully incorporating generally accepted accounting principles into annual provincial budgets.

Preparation and empowerment and help are not everything that is needed. Runners certainly need safety, and it is an easier job if it is a five-kilometre run through a park. But it is a lot tougher if it is a big race in a big city. That does not mean police on every corner of the route, but it means an increased presence, and we understand that. We know that safety is not only provided through enforcement, but by prevention and by education for runners and for the general public, not only about the route, but by making them more aware of their surroundings. That fits with what we are doing in the province in general.

Certainly, on the marathon there is always the risk of somebody driving their vehicle onto the course. Anybody who walks, who runs, who bikes around the city has to be cautious of somebody not following the laws. I have had, I can tell you, some confrontations with people who may not be prepared to share the road with a runner or a cyclist, and it is strange the people who do not respect people who run or who bike are those who themselves have no interest in running, no hope of running. Just like in our society, those who choose to break our laws are those who do not feel invested in our society. We need to suppress crime, but, on this side of the House, we know we also need to deal with the root causes of crime.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago there was a shooting on Sargent Avenue in Minto which shocked the city and this province, and yet the reality is very different from the way it can be portrayed by some for short-term political gain. I went to a meeting at John M. King School, arranged by the Spence Neighbourhood Association, a week after this occurred. I went through the streets which were supposedly deserted if you read some media reports, but, indeed, they were filled with families, filled with couples and filled with children going about their lives. People want justice, but people in Minto and people across this province also demand and expect social justice.

Our justice initiatives this year are going to continue making our communities safer. The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act will be strengthened to target gang houses, to build on the law's success in shutting down more than 120 fortified buildings, drug dens and prostitution and sniff houses.

Manitoba's Gang Prosecution Unit, a first in Canada, will receive additional prosecutors and additional resources. The Front End Project, which is an award-winning project that significantly reduces the backlog of domestic violence cases, will be expanded to deal with all cases to increase the efficiency of our court, to bring cases to a disposition more quickly and reduce the number of people on remand in our provincial jails.

We are certainly going to work with the City of Winnipeg and the police to add additional targeted resources to deal with gangs. We are going to be introducing a comprehensive crystal meth strategy to deal with the terrible drug which has had horrible effects to the west and to the south of us to make sure that Manitobans are protected. We are also going to bring in innovative legislation to protect a wider range of victims of violence and recognize the protection orders granted by courts in other provinces. I am very excited about our commitment to exceed our commitment to 40 Lighthouses across Manitoba this year. It is a way to keep young people connected, and we know it is a cost-effective way to keep young people connected and to keep them in the race.

Now the race community is great. It is helpful, it is friendly, whether it is somebody who is finishing a marathon in three hours or seven and a half hours as sometimes happens. The beauty about running is that somebody else running faster does not make you run

slower, and it is the same way in our province. It used to be that one part of our province was pitted against another. But, since this government came to power, we appreciate all Manitobans and we work for every area of the province. We are providing assistance to rural communities as never before. Because of the wet weather, we are providing record insurance payments to producers last year. Total crop insurance payments this year are projected to be \$300 million, including \$58.3 million in excess moisture insurance. An additional \$15 million for the CAIS program will be drawn from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and we will be providing an additional 10 percent reduction for farmland property owners in 2006 which will build on the 50 percent tax reduction in the last year.

* (12:00)

We are going to work on new export markets for our producers faced with the challenges of BSE, trade sanctions and evolving WTO discussions. We are going to build on a record \$3.4 billion in agri-food exports shipped in 2004. Under the supervision of the Office of the Chief Veterinarian, we will have a Farm to Fork food safety program to assure people within and outside of Manitoba that our food supply continues to be safe.

I am excited about initiatives to expand organic farming, and, as well, Manitoba will become the first province in Canada to launch a project to support farms in carrying out a range of environmentally friendly farming practices and alternative land uses. As well, there is continued support for a multi-pronged research and protection strategy for the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

I am very pleased—I believe my opposition has put together a five-member relay team now for the Marathon, and it is going to be a pleasure to see them out there raising money for Community Living Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we are building northern Manitoba. The University College of the North has 2250 students registered in over 40 programs offered in locations across northern Manitoba, including over 180 registered in the Bachelor of Nursing degree program. A Bachelor of Education program will begin in the fall of 2006 with science and Aboriginal midwifery programs to follow.

We are excited about the introduction of a new partnership with the federal government designed to

make a significant impact on Aboriginal health outcomes, and we will propose similar partnerships with the feds to boost school completion rates on reserve and to address a critical shortage of adequate housing in northern and First Nation communities. But we know that our commitment to involving the First Nations directly, it must be directly in these partnerships, and there must be a holistic approach that recognizes the root factors of cultural identity and language.

We are also revitalizing our cities. Boy, are we revitalizing our cities. If you look at downtown Winnipeg, the completion of the Millennium Library in downtown Winnipeg, the start of the Hydro headquarters, the start of the Human Rights Museum coming up this year and the exciting success of the MTS Centre in downtown Winnipeg are all signs of the rebirth of our great capital city. I am proud that our Province will continue to work with the City of Winnipeg and the private sector towards opening up new housing lots, and I am absolutely delighted that new legislation will be introduced to dedicate profits from Waverley West and other residential developments, as our city grows, to inner-city housing.

I am pleased that in Brandon there will be the development of the ACC, the Assiniboine Community College, the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site, and also expansions and improvements to the 18th Street bridge in Brandon. I ran over that bridge in the Brandon 10K, and I will be very pleased when that work is completed.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a race director in the province that does not want to make their race bigger, just as we are taking steps to making our economy in this province bigger, and we are continuing with our action plan for economic growth developed in partnership with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council with representatives from across our society, both business and labour.

Personal income taxes have been steadily reduced since 1999. Steady decreases in corporate tax rates have occurred, and the small business rate will be reduced to 4.5 percent in 2006 and to 4 percent in 2007, a 50 percent cut in the small business tax rate since 1999.

The other way to make our race bigger is to have more people in the province, and we are doing that. We are increasing our population through immigration. Last year, we welcomed 7427 immigrants to our province, a 14 percent increase

over last year. We have a continued commitment to a provincial target of 10 000 immigrants per year in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to end with a bit of history. The Manitoba Marathon was founded in 1979, and that time there was only a full marathon event. It was believed at that time that the best way to encourage people to run would be to pay to have the very, very best, the top runners, come because it was believed that ordinary Manitobans who might run a five-hour marathon would somehow be inspired by a very small group of people.

Not surprisingly, of course, that was during the Lyon years. Since then, we have learned that it is not the elite runners that motivate people to be involved, to get to the race and to finish the race, but it is the social and the health and the personal benefits of being active. Now, the Manitoba Marathon does not pay appearance fees. It is a community marathon which grows each and every year. There are many events now for all types of runners and walkers. It is a family event, and it includes all Manitobans.

I know, and I can hear the rumblings over there, that that is troubling to those on the opposition benches. They want to focus on the front runners. They would put all their energy and all their resources into a very small group of people. I can tell you from personal experience when the race starts, those who have the most are gone from the finish line. I may see them at the finish line as they are getting their awards and walking out to their cars as those of us in the pack stumble across the finish line.

Mr. Speaker, the great majority of runners do not get their motivation from the stockbrokers and do not get their motivation from the most wealthy in our society. They get their motivation from the strength and the successes around them. That is the case, whether they are running a five-minute mile or a fifteen-minute mile, and I encourage everyone to come and stand at the finish line of the marathon and see those personal successes which matches the personal successes that we are seeing in this province since 1999.

That is where the difference between our side and their side comes in. We know that stronger communities and a stronger province come from allowing everyone to participate and discover what they can do. See, it is the beauty of running that, although genetics may play a role in how fast you can run, getting to the start line and finishing the race and doing your best is not based on what family you are born into; it is not based on what family you marry into; it is not based on how much money you have. You can spend all you want in better shoes, in clothing, in gadgets, but it is still your training and your preparation and your courage.

I see this Throne Speech, then, about being about making sure that more Manitobans are in the race, making sure that more Manitobans finish the race safely and, by doing so, adding to the strength of their community. It is about including all Manitobans and inspiring all Manitobans to work together, and that is for the ones who do the marathon in under three hours, God bless them, and for those of us who may be a little bit slower or deciding to walk to jog a shorter course for the first time.

Mr. Speaker, I normally leave Scripture to the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), but I do want every Manitoban to say, as Paul did in his second letter to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." And it is keeping that faith in building our province, which is why I am proud to be part of this government, and I am excited about the work that we have done, we are doing and we will do to build this great province.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 12:30? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 28, 2005

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