

Second Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 26, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 4—The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 4, The Provincial Court Amendment Act (Family Mediators and Evaluators); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale (médiateurs et enquêteurs familiaux), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: I am pleased to introduce the reading of this act, which will give provincial courts specific powers in a dispute about custody or access or a related family matter, to refer the parties to mediation or a family evaluator's report. Confidentiality requirements for information acquired during mediation for proceedings to the Provincial Court are consistent with those that are proceeding in the Court of Queen's Bench. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

PETITIONS

Retired Teachers' Cost of Living Adjustment

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Since 1977, Manitoba teachers have made contributions to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Pension Adjustment Account, PAA, to finance a Cost of Living Adjustment, COLA, to their base pension once they retire.

Despite this significant funding, 11,000 retired teachers and 15,000 active teachers currently find

themselves facing the future with little hope of a meaningful COLA.

For 2007, a COLA of only 0.63 percent was paid to retired teachers.

The COLA paid in recent years has eroded the purchasing power of teachers' pension dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider adequate funding for the PAA on a long-term basis to ensure that current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

Signed by Irene Lemk, Lorraine Unrau, Kim Morrow and many, many other Manitobans.

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

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The seven-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway passing through Headingley is an extremely busy stretch of road, averaging 18,000 vehicles daily.

This section of the Trans-Canada Highway is one of the few remaining stretches of undivided highway in Manitoba, and it has seen more than 100 accidents in the last two years, some of them fatal.

Manitoba's Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation told a Winnipeg radio station on October 16, 2007, that when it comes to highways projects the provincial government has a flexible response program, and we have a couple of opportunities to advance these projects in our five-year plan.

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada

Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to consider making the completion of the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley in 2008 an urgent provincial government priority.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider evaluating whether any other steps can be taken to improve motorist safety while the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is being completed.

This is signed by Leanne Wilson, Valerie Chatain-White, Bonnie Leullier and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Personal Care Homes–Virден

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial government has a responsibility to provide quality long-term care for qualifying Manitobans.

Personal care homes in the town of Virден currently have a significant number of empty beds that cannot be filled because of a critical nursing shortage in these facilities.

In 2006, a municipally formed retention committee was promised that the Virден nursing shortage would be resolved by the fall of 2006.

Virtually all personal care homes in southwestern Manitoba are full, yet as of early October 2007, the nursing shortage in Virден is so severe that more than a quarter of the beds at Westman Nursing Home are sitting empty.

Seniors, many of whom are war veterans, are therefore being transported to other communities for care. These communities are often a long distance from Virден and family members are forced to travel for more than two hours round trip to visit their loved ones, creating significant financial and emotional hardship for these families.

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be

moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider taking serious action to fill the nursing vacancies at personal care homes in the town of Virден and to consider reopening the beds that have been closed as the result of this nursing shortage.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider prioritizing the needs of those seniors that have been moved out of their community by committing to move those individuals back into Virден as soon as the beds become available.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is presented by Helen Koop, Verna Fillion, Margaret Rempel and many, many others.

Crocus Investment Fund–Public Inquiry

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

The background to the petition is as follows;

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by M. Valdez, H. Perez, E. Balaquit and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding in Waterhen

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I would like to report to the House that the Waterhen River has risen above flood stage in recent days due to frazil ice jams. The community of Waterhen, located on the river just north of Lake Manitoba, in conjunction with the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, declared a local state of emergency last night due to concerns about flooding. The river level has risen four feet since last Friday and continues to rise.

Thanks to the local and provincial efforts, most buildings in the community have been diked and no homes have been flooded. Water levels are within 1.5 and 2 feet at the top of the dike so the situation is being closely monitored. Flooding was expected to occur at freeze-up and dikes were built to protect homes and other buildings in the Waterhen area to a level of about two feet above the flood level of the November 2006 level. The crest is expected to occur at the community this week, perhaps within a few days. It is difficult to predict the peak water level accurately under ice-jam conditions.

Provincial staff have been on full-time duty over the weekend, working together with the community and others to place additional sandbags where needed. As of this morning, six homes were surrounded by water, but the dikes were holding. Some elderly people have been evacuated from their homes as a precaution. Some local roads have been flooded making transportation difficult for some residents. Pumps have also been brought in to assist. The Province will continue to actively support local flood-fighting efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I thank the minister for her update on this situation in the community of Waterhen. We, obviously, on this side of the House, extend our very best wishes to those who are obviously having some difficulties there right now with respect to the situation that's taking

place. Obviously, we want to extend our very best wishes and also thank the local members in the area for everything that they've done to come forward and make sure that what could have potentially been a disaster has not transpired to that right now. It takes the efforts of local people to make sure that those situations don't happen. We also hope that those that have been evacuated from their homes are able to return safely as quickly as possible, and we look forward to further updates with respect to this situation coming forward.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join other members of this Chamber in extending our concern to residents in the Waterhen area who are affected by the flooding and the danger of the high water there.

I would like to say a positive word on behalf of all those who have volunteered and in any way helped out in addressing the situation, and we hope that this situation can be resolved soon and that residents can return home.

Winnipeg Football Achievements

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

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure as the Minister responsible for Sport to rise before the House to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of Manitoba's football clubs over the weekend. The Winnipeg Blue Bombers brought pride to our province by reaching the 2007 CFL Grey Cup in a gritty performance watched by millions. The Bombers played to a hard-fought 23-19 loss on Sunday. Their performance this season shows that they have reclaimed their rightful position at the top of the Canadian Football League. Their achievement is a testament to the expert guidance of the Winnipeg Football Club, the skills and commitment of the players and coaches, the support of the Province, the City of Winnipeg and the contributions of our corporate community. Most of all, their success is a reflection of the unwavering and enthusiastic

encouragement from the best fans in Canadian football.

Also, this past weekend, the University of Manitoba Bisons won the Canadian Interuniversity Sport Desjardins Vanier Cup. The determination displayed by the Bisons all season long earned them their first Vanier Cup victory in almost 40 years. Their undefeated season will be forever a part of Canadian football history and a source of great pride for Manitobans for many years to come.

I ask all honourable members to join me in recognizing the achievements of the 2007 Winnipeg Blue Bombers and the 2007 University of Manitoba Bisons in extending well-deserved congratulations. It was a great season to be a football fan in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in response to the minister's statement, we'd also like to indicate the congratulations of members on this side of the House for the gritty performance put in by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers yesterday in Toronto. They entered into that game as underdogs, certainly facing some adversity and played extremely well in all the circumstances. They made us proud to be Winnipeggers and Manitobans. We certainly look forward to more great football games and seasons in the months and years ahead. In particular, congratulations to Coach Berry, and to others who've played a leadership role in putting together the 2007 edition of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

I also want to just pay special tribute to a great Winnipeg Blue Bomber wide-receiver, Milt Stegall, who is known not only for his excellence on the field but for the very many great things he does within our community. He's been hinting at the possibility of retirement quite strongly through the course of the year this year. We hope that he will, over the winter, reconsider and come back for another season next year. In any event, Mr. Speaker, whatever decision he makes, we thank him and wish him well for a great season and for the many great things he does in our city. I've had the occasion, as most of us have, to see him at various events supporting various causes around our city and he's a great Winnipegger. We wish the Blue Bombers well next year.

As well, congratulations to a great Bisons football team on winning the Vanier Cup and making us again proud to be Manitobans.

Thank you.

* (13:50)

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to salute the University of Manitoba Bisons and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers for their tremendous efforts over the weekend. It is incredible that the Bisons won the Vanier Cup, and it is a very significant achievement for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers to have been in the Grey Cup and to perform very, very well even though they weren't successful in bringing the Grey Cup back to Winnipeg.

I'd like to salute all the players who participated on both teams, the Bisons and the Blue Bombers. I'd like to salute also the staff, the coaches and those who have volunteered on behalf of either the Bisons or the Blue Bombers over the course of the year. It has been a team effort with both teams, and it didn't come without a lot of input from many, many people.

I would say in closing that it was quite a weekend for all of us here in Manitoba, and we're certainly proud of both teams and what they've accomplished.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today from the House of Commons in Ottawa, the parliamentary interns: Ceri Au, Anna Lise Domanski, David Gagnon, Delaney Greig, Karin Kronstal, Christina Lazarova, Julia MacLeod, Julie Maude Normandin and Andrew Sniderman, along with their academic director Jean-Pierre Gabouray.

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

I'd also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Red River community college 22 students under the direction of Duncan McMonagle.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

High Schools in Southwest Winnipeg Public Meetings

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): For many years now, residents in the southwest corner of Winnipeg have been acutely aware of the need for a new public high school to serve the families and the children of that corner of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

With the lack of foresight that has gone into the development now of Waverley West, there is a continuing sense of anxiety that, as that development takes place, children will continue to be faced with a lack of opportunity to attend a high school within their own community. Fort Whyte is the only provincial constituency without a public high school in it, and this is an issue that is a significant one for many families, not only in Fort Whyte but in areas like Fort Garry, St. Norbert and other communities around our province.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago a report was publicly released, a report that the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) had incorrectly told Manitobans was the property of the school division, when in fact it was commissioned by and under the responsibility of him and his department. A report was issued that was riddled with factual errors, that contained incorrect enrolment information and that ultimately recommended what the government had been looking for in the first place, which was that there would be no new high school built in southwest Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, there is a forum organized for this Thursday night of concerned parents from southwest Winnipeg. Invitations were issued to the Premier, the Minister of Education, the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick). The organizers of this event got back from the Member for St. Norbert, a no; the Member for Fort Garry, a no; the Member for Gimli, a no and the Premier, a no with respect to attending a meeting of families and parents who are simply looking for information about what options are going to be available to them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I, like many members, have had the opportunity to attend other events around the province. We see no shortage of NDP MLAs when there's free food available, when there's a buffet or free wine. So I want to ask the Premier why it is that no member of his party can see fit to attend the

meeting. Is it because there's no free food, or is it because they just don't care?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): [*inaudible*]

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't hear the answer, it was delivered so quickly. I think the Premier said no. So I would ask the Premier another question with relation to schools in southwest Winnipeg.

We are now advised, parents are being advised, hundreds of families with children in early-years schools, including École Crane, École St. Avila and Viscount learning centre, that their children are being asked to leave their schools and be moved into other schools in order to make way for students from Waverley West, from the NDP Waverley West development, Mr. Speaker.

Given the lack of planning associated with this, parents have been asking the Minister of Education for a meeting. They were advised that a meeting had been established, but were then told that it was a meeting that had been established with parent councils prior to these issues coming to light, that those parent councils had to submit no more than three questions in advance in writing and that they weren't allowed, upon attending the meeting, to ask any question other than the questions that had been submitted in advance.

As you might expect, Mr. Speaker, parents are outraged. These issues have arisen since they had to submit their questions. They're not allowed to ask any questions; they're not allowed to leave the script. Parents are wondering whether this is a function of a government that is too arrogant to listen to their concerns or too incompetent to be able to respond on the spot to new questions. So I want to ask the Premier: Is it arrogance, or is it incompetence that's causing them to manage the issue this way?

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the recording of *Hansard*, I ask honourable members to wait until I recognize them and then give an answer or a question because it's going to be missed on our *Hansard*. I recognize the honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doer: Neither, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Opposition to East-Side Line

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it must be the first day

back after Grey Cup. There's not a lot of energy coming from the other side in terms of their responses to these questions.

On a new question, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday morning—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question?

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

Last Friday morning, Professor Brian Schwartz, who had earlier made reference to the fact that it was possible to have both a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an east-side transmission line, was attacked in this House by the Premier, who implied in the House that that individual was in fact employed by people on the east side proposing ownership of the line. Dr. Schwartz then responded to that implied impugning of his motives with a letter to the Premier, dated a month ago, where he indicated in response to the Premier saying he would check and double-check; he says, and I quote: To date, neither your check nor double-check has involved simply calling me. The answer is no.

So I wonder, Mr. Speaker, given Professor Schwartz has taken a very well-articulated position on the east-side line: He's said that it's compatible with a UNESCO site. The Premier responded to that by attacking his impartiality. Given that he's now said on the record he doesn't work for the communities, I want to invite the Premier to take the opportunity to apologize to that member and perhaps respond to the substance of what he had to say in his very well-written article about the east side and UNESCO.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the first set of questions and the arrogance about members attending meetings on the basis of, quote, food and drink, I think the member opposite owes an apology to every member in this House who spends many evenings and weekend hours, from all political parties, going to meetings, as many as they can, to try to represent their constituents.

To only say that members on his side, or our side, or any side would go to a meeting based on food and liquor, I think, does a disservice to everybody in this Chamber. It does a disservice to everyone in this Chamber. I find the comments of the member opposite offensive. If there's any arrogance in this House, it's the kind of arrogance of cynicism that we see from the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of the proposed—I've read articles from Professor Schwartz talking about the Interlake route, and it was exactly the same, factually wrong information that the member opposite initially put on the record in terms of the Interlake versus the east side—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:00)

Mr. Doer: We've made that very clear that it is not the Interlake route. It's not recommended because of its issue of reliability. I have not read the final document that Mr. Schwartz has promised to release. I wonder if he also deals effectively, in his initial document or in his final document, I would ask, is he dealing with also the risk of \$800 million a year in export revenue as one of the factors? Yes, it costs more on a one-time only capital way.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out, contrary to what members are saying, Mr. Brennan said at committee and the next day in the media that the line would make hundreds of millions of dollars because, again, of export sales. You know, there are arguments on either side of this issue and I hope that when we look at the capital costs, which are one-time only, we also look at the revenue issues.

I know you're not supposed to look at both sides of it if you're only opposed. That's one of the reasons why Canada hasn't built a major transmission line in over 20 years, because it's easier to oppose something than get something done. I would suggest to members opposite and Professor Schwartz that he look at the legitimate issues of revenue because \$800 million or \$600 million a year, times 10 years will be well over \$2.5 billion in export sales, Mr. Speaker. That is a risk in terms of doing something that is not environmentally defensible in terms of a cause célèbre.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I took the Premier's third answer to get around to responding to points made in the first question, but I want to just give him the opportunity to respond to questions that are being raised by families and parents in southwest Winnipeg who are shocked that not a single member of the governing party can make it out to an event this Thursday night that has an impact on hundreds of families in southwest Winnipeg: not the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross), who represents many of those families, not the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), who is supposed to be representing many of these families. People want to know why it

is that they can't seem to get somebody to attend a meeting that has an impact on so many families in southwest Winnipeg.

Now the Premier talks about revenue, the fact is that they're going to throw away \$17 million a year in revenue through line loss because of the extra length and loss. So we look at revenue, Mr. Speaker, and we see revenue going down under their proposal, not up. We see revenue going down because nobody wants to do business with a company that builds lines on the risky side of the lake versus the lower-risk side of the lake. The fact is that everybody who's looked at the issue says longer lines pose more risk. They lose more power. They need different technology. They cost more, so it's higher cost, lower revenue. We understand that and we can't understand why he doesn't either.

I want to just ask him if he had the opportunity this morning to listen to comments made on the radio this morning by the member of Parliament for St. James-Assiniboia who indicated that people in other parts of the country are going to wonder, if Manitoba is a have-not province why are they squandering billions of dollars to build projects that are not necessary. He goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that taxpayers from B.C., Alberta and Ontario, they're subsidizing our quality of life in Manitoba dramatically. If I were in those provinces, wouldn't be happy if I heard the Province of Manitoba was unnecessarily spending hundreds of millions of dollars additionally and forgoing hundreds of millions in revenue because of some ideological quark.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got federal members of Parliament who we need to build a deal with in order to get things done raising concerns about hundreds of millions of dollars being flushed down the toilet by this government. Will he listen? Will he listen to what's being said at the federal level, to what's being said by east-side Manitobans, by what's being said by taxpayers, by ratepayers, by everybody in the world other than the international activists that he seems to be so impressed by?

Why, Mr. Speaker, is he putting international activists ahead of his relationship with the federal government?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I have met before with the parents in Waverley West, and, unlike the planning on Pritchard Farm roads in northeast Winnipeg where there was no planning, the housing plans were developed without any plans for ambulance which

we've had to put in, without any plans for highways, without any plans for roads, without any planning for schools. We are planning Waverley West, and I'm willing to meet with the parents as I have in the past, or our ministers; either one of us is willing to work at a mutually agreeable time. It's not a question of if we're going to build a school; it's a question of when. We will build it when the houses are built, when there are actual students in the area for the appropriate education decisions.

Secondly, I recall the non-partisan member from Charleswood-St. James or St. James-Charleswood, Mr. Speaker, making statements in February last year, and he said, speaking of the billions of dollars, billions of dollars are at risk. Billions of dollars of clean energy export sales are at risk if we don't build a transmission line. That would be the Tory way to go ahead. The member, then, in February of 2007, said: I hope this is an issue in the election campaign. I hope people go out and oppose this in the election campaign.

The last time I looked, the election was in May. We had the same position before the election, during the election and after the election, and Mr. Fletcher lost that argument.

Manitoba Wilderness Management

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker—
Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, we don't need to see more development in southwest Winnipeg to realize that the high schools are already overflowing. I would suggest that the Premier come to this meeting and see what really is taking place in southwest Winnipeg.

Not only, Mr. Speaker, is he failing the students in southwest Winnipeg, but this week the Wilderness Committee will release a report giving Manitoba failing grades, from a D-minus to an F-plus, for the way it protects the wilderness and manages our parks. For a government that claims to be strong proponents of protecting our environment, why is it that they are receiving a failing grade? Is it because they're all talk and no action when it comes to environment in our province?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): There has been action every year, Mr. Speaker, from

this government to protect more and more hectares of land in this province. Consistently, year after year, the numbers show that. If the member opposite doesn't care to look that up, then have her listen to this just for a minute.

We have done a number of things in terms of extending park reserves, expanding provincial parks and creating new park reserves in this province. Every day we look to protect more land and every year we increase our number.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Wilderness Committee is not the only group questioning this government's environmental records. Manitoba Wildlands recently released its 2007 protected areas audit. It found nearly 14,000 hectares of land were removed from protection in Manitoba over the past year for a net loss in overall land protected from development of more than 7,600 hectares.

Will the Minister of Conservation concede that his government has failed Manitobans, stop with the empty rhetoric and start taking real action towards our environment now?

Mr. Struthers: The Member for Tuxedo hasn't done her homework again, Mr. Speaker.

I know they don't want to hear this, Mr. Speaker, but in 2007 we expanded Whitemouth Falls, expanded Whitemouth Falls. We also expanded Nopiming Park and Beaudry Park. That's not rhetoric, that's action, that's adding to our collection of protected areas, and like no government before, we protected the best marl lake on the face of this planet. We protected that this year. That was a big step forward along Limestone Lake. They're jealous and we're making action happen.

Manitoba Housing Authority Release of KPMG Report

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, in August of 2006, we learned that the Manitoba Housing Authority was the subject of an operational review that's being conducted or has been conducted by KPMG. At that time the review was supposed to be six months. It's now November of 2007 and we still haven't seen that report, although we know that the minister has it. What we have seen is the continued turmoil and upheaval within the Manitoba Housing Authority; three senior officials suspended in August, two of them now have been fired.

I ask the minister: How much longer is he going to try to do damage control before he finally releases the KPMG report?

* (14:10)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, the report is one thing. It was converted into a fix-and-find approach to deal with a number of recognized shortcomings to better address the need for social housing in Manitoba and to make sure that Manitoba Housing became a model landlord in this province.

What took place, Mr. Speaker, was an important exercise in checks and balances going to work, and, indeed, there was timely and decisive action. In terms of the report, it will be released next month, actually within weeks, along with an action plan. That's what matters to Manitobans, is action not just a report.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, how many more operational reviews do we need in this department? It's a department of chaos.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is merely trying to do more damage control and try and obscure the facts that the Manitoba Department of Housing is in chaos, and low-income Manitobans are the ones who really lose out on this because of this minister's utter mismanagement of his department. The report has been stalled and pushed back again and again. The minister said he would release it this fall, but we're getting close to Christmas—still no report.

I ask the minister: What is he trying to hide?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Housing has, I understand, about 34,000 housing units under its jurisdiction, and, as we speak, there are enhancements being made to make sure that we not only enhance the capital stock, but deal with a number of issues around the management in public housing.

When I hear the words "chaos" and "housing", Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of the opposition's approach on Bill 21. There was legislation that they strongly supported. They stood up. What did they do? They voted against it. I can see chaos right in front of me.

**Throne Speech
Spirited Energy Advertising Campaign**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Hydra House and Aiyawin, that's standing right in front of the minister's face, and he does nothing with those files.

Mr. Speaker, the absence of the bipole line was the only noticeable omission from the Throne Speech.

There was also no mention of the failed energy campaign. Mr. Speaker, the omission of Spirited Energy from the Throne Speech leaves me optimistic, very optimistic, that this means the end of this failed campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Can Manitobans take the omission of Spirited Energy from the Throne Speech as a sign that the government is finally cutting off the millions of taxpayers' dollars that were going down this black hole?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): As we announced a little while ago, we said that what we'd do is listen to the business community. We're expecting some information from them on what should happen. But, again, the business leaders who are supporting this initiative are: the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, Bob Silver, Dave Angus, Roslyn Nugent, Harvey Sectar. This is a group of people who are committed to Manitoba. This is a group of people who led an image campaign to help promote Manitoba, to talk about the benefits of Manitoba to bring business to Manitoba, and I say, please read the Auditor General's report. It talked about the initiative; it talked about it being a business-led initiative and a non-partisan one.

Mrs. Rowat: *[inaudible]* any revenue from the Spirited Energy campaign's going into general revenue, so I really don't know where this minister is saying it's a private initiative. In an alternative Throne Speech, One Manitoba Strong and Proud, we offered to Manitobans that we would end the failed Spirited Energy campaign and go back to the tested and true Friendly Manitoba slogan. Mr. Speaker, the minister left a window of opportunity with the omission of the Spirited Energy initiative from the Throne Speech. I ask him: Will he take the advice of our alternative Throne Speech? Will he listen to Manitobans who have spoken clearly? End Spirited

Energy, and help us become Friendly Manitoba once again.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, it seems the members opposite are the ones who are lacking in any energy or spirit. I looked at the marketing campaign. The member opposite does not understand the difference between marketing our province outside and talk about the price of energy, et cetera.

We have said all along, Friendly Manitoba will be the moniker or the spirit inside the province. So we're talking about Friendly Manitoba as our slogan inside the province. But, the brand council, the PEAC, has said that what we would do is we would use Spirited Energy to talk about the price of energy and market the province outside the province. So I hope the member opposite looks at what was in the Auditor General's report, looks at what the business councils and business people are saying and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

**Used Cars
Anti-Lemon Legislation**

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, CBC Manitoba's I-Team found that over 130 vehicles for sale here in Manitoba have been labelled as lemons by United States legislation. Under the current legislation here in Manitoba, there is no way for consumers to find out if the vehicle has been identified as a lemon. Aside from a home, the vehicle is probably the next most costly item a consumer might buy.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for consumer and corporate affairs as to why his government is failing Manitobans in protecting them from lemon vehicles.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Portage la Prairie for the question.

Last Thursday, I went on CBC television to say we would be reviewing our legislation to see what we can do to protect Manitobans from the lemons that are brought into this jurisdiction. There currently was a program in place across the country which allowed for an arbitration mechanism when somebody bought a vehicle that they thought was inadequate, however, there is a loophole in that mechanism across the country. It does not compensate people when they buy a vehicle outside of Canada, which was originally purchased outside of Canada in the first instance, and brought back

here. So I said on the CBC, we would be reviewing The Discriminatory Business Practices Act to see what we can do to protect Manitobans and we will follow through on that.

Mr. Faursehou: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister of consumer and corporate affairs has stated that he might do, but that's not good enough for Manitobans. We on this side of the House believe that there needs to be legislation to close this loophole.

Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to introduce a private member's bill into the House. I want to ask the minister today if he will support that private member's bill.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the last time the members opposite said they would do something on whistle-blowing, I waited for two years and it never showed up.

We will make changes. We have an existing piece of legislation called the better business practices legislation. Under that legislation, if the vendor of a product or a service omits an important material fact they are subject to fines. The existing legislation already covers the sale of a lemon without disclosing to the customer that it is a lemon. We will take that legislation, we will clarify it even further to ensure that Manitobans are protected.

Phosphorus Pollution Targets for Reduction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Doer NDP government has consistently failed in setting and implementing targets and thus leaving Manitoba behind.

Even where government has finally set a target with respect to greenhouse gases, this is a far cry in the Throne Speech target from the Premier's (Mr. Doer) statement of several years ago that he was going to reach a 23 percent reduction below 1990 levels of greenhouse gases by 2012. When it comes to the reduction in phosphorus load in Lake Winnipeg, we have no idea what the government's target is because the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) has stated publicly recently that she recognizes that the original 10 percent target is not enough.

I ask the Premier: What is his government's target with respect to the phosphorus load in Lake Winnipeg, and by what time does he intend to implement this target?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the member opposite is only asking about one part of the issues in Lake Winnipeg. He doesn't deal with nutrients, and the announcement we made last week would reduce phosphorus by over 65 percent emanating out of the city of Winnipeg into Lake Winnipeg. It would reduce nutrients by over 50 percent.

I noted in the campaign, Mr. Speaker, that the member for, the candidate they had for Fort Rouge did commit to removing nutrients and phosphorus as we did. The member opposite had a different position. In fact, he criticized us for taking a position that Edmonton, Calgary, Regina have taken in terms of removing both nutrients and phosphorus. He criticized us for going against Terry Duguid, who was then chairing the Clean Environment Commission. So he has a one-dimensional approach to a multi-dimensional problem in Lake Winnipeg.

* (14:20)

Poverty in Manitoba Targets for Reduction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there's a better approach and a more effective and less costly and quicker approach to reducing phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg.

But let me move on to other targets which this government has also failed, and that is reducing targets in relationship to poverty in Manitoba. We are a province left behind, as a report today indicates. A recent survey shows that over half of Manitobans believe that the Doer NDP government is not doing enough to reduce poverty in our province.

I ask the Premier: What is his goal, and will he support the 50 percent reduction in poverty by four years from now as we've been calling for? Will he deliver on this target?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Again, Mr. Speaker, I would point out there's numbers from the United Way of Toronto today about the medium income rates of Toronto, Winnipeg and other communities dealing with poverty. I'd also point out that I believe we've had over 20 percent reduction—excuse me, in the child—sorry—

An Honourable Member: Too much cheering on the weekend.

Mr. Doer: Too much cheering on the weekend.

Over 20 percent reduction in child poverty rates, a reduction in single family poverty rates of over 40 percent. It's not enough, Mr. Speaker. I would point out, in the election campaign, two parties were opposed or wouldn't state what they would do on a minimum wage. One party stated that they would raise the minimum wage every year. I'm proud of the fact that—the member was sitting on the fence—we raised the minimum wage 50 cents an hour, effective April 1, 2008.

Seniors' Job Bank Closure

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has in fact sabotaged the 55 Plus Job Bank. Now I understand that the government is looking at replacing the job bank with maybe some government agency, not recognizing the value of the private sector or the volunteers for over 30 years that have provided thousands of jobs and opportunities for seniors in our province. The government believes it can do better, so now it is forcing the closure at the end of this year of the 55 Job Bank program.

My question to the Minister responsible for Seniors is: Why has this government sabotaged the 55 Plus Job Bank program?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, and I can assure all members of the House, the services for that demographic will be maintained. What's interesting is that we want to make sure that people who need services will have them. We'll assure all members of this House that services for that demographic will exist and we'll look at ways we can continue to enhance services to all Manitobans as far as employment and government services to help them maintain jobs, find new jobs or look for new jobs. Thank you.

Agriculture Farmer Appreciation Day

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it seems that, once again, issues of farming have failed to make the radar screen of members of the opposition, so allow me to put a question on their behalf. I'm sure all would agree that our farming community is a treasure and an incredible asset to our province. It has never been easy to make a living as a food producer and we should all appreciate this.

Could the Minister of Agriculture please brief the House as to an important event which occurred earlier this morning in the Legislative Building?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased that my colleague, the Member for Interlake, raised this important issue. You know, we've been talking about the needs for schools in southwestern—[interjection] south Winnipeg, but the members opposite refuse to recognize that today is Farmer Appreciation Day. We had a lunch in the Legislature where we were recognizing businesses, businesses related to agriculture and recognizing how much the agriculture industry contributes to this province.

Mr. Speaker, over 10 percent of Manitoba's gross domestic product comes from the agriculture industry. Many jobs in Winnipeg are related to the agriculture industry, and I'm disappointed that the members opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum.

Predator and Pest Control Government's Response

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The Minister of Sport (Mr. Robinson) gave a ministerial statement, the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) gave a ministerial statement. If agriculture is so important, where was the minister's statement whenever we had agriculture problems. She has a backbencher ask a long question because she can't think of anything herself.

Mr. Speaker, wildlife such as coyotes, wolves, it can take a heavy toll on Manitoba livestock. Trapping programs aren't all effective. There are other methods to deal with wildlife problems. One of them involves a provincial government applying to the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency for a permit to deal with this issue. This method will be used by conservation officers to help control the problem of wildlife. We've raised this option before.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell this House if the government has finally applied for the Pest Management Regulatory Agency for a restricted use permit?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to let the Member for Lakeside know that we have in fact worked out an agreement with the Manitoba Trappers Association to make sure that those farmers that he didn't ask

about earlier today in Question Period are well protected.

Mr. Eichler: I guess I didn't write the question to the Minister of Agriculture. She couldn't answer it.

Mr. Speaker, losing livestock to predators is a serious problem. Provinces such as Alberta have been working with the Pest Management Agency since 1997 to address this very serious problem. I table for the House a copy of their permit to show the minister how it can be done.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the Province of Manitoba refuses to do the management program as outlined in the permit?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I'm really glad that after we ask a question at the end of the day, the member opposite finally gets a turn to ask about agriculture being on the day that's agriculture appreciation day. I would have expected the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), I would have expected many of those rural members to stand up and give some praise to our agriculture industry. Instead, Mr. Speaker, it comes as an afterthought and their focus is on the south end of Winnipeg. That's a shame.

This is the day when we should be paying tribute to our farmers and, indeed, we have, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize Keystone Agricultural Producers for setting up this event and putting out this booklet that profiles many businesses.

Sleep Apnea Testing Wait List

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, Tracy Lee and her husband Brad are frustrated with this NDP government's total mismanagement of the health-care system. Brad has sleep apnea. His doctor referred him to RANA-Medical because the wait list for sleep apnea testing is currently years long. Now he's being told that because he was tested at RANA, he cannot get in line for a sleep study here in Winnipeg. He will not receive the treatment he needs for this life-threatening condition.

Can the minister explain her department's total failure to provide timely sleep apnea testing and explain why Brad Lee is being denied care?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Of course, while it wouldn't be appropriate to discuss a specific piece of casework in a public forum such as

this, I can say to the member that somebody in a similar circumstance that he has outlined today, in fact after speaking with the department, it has been confirmed that that service will indeed be provided.

* (14:30)

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, people like Brad Lee have had to wait years to get on to this type of a list, and this minister has totally failed to ensure that Manitobans with sleep apnea are tested and treated in a timely manner. We'd be pleased to see any kinds of results, but Mr. Lee is still waiting his turn and he's been waiting for months just to get on that list. Brad Lee's condition can be life-threatening.

Will the minister reverse the ridiculous policy that has denied Mr. Lee from even accessing these tests that he needs? When will she put this new plan in place?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my previous answer, an individual in the circumstances described by the member opposite will indeed get that service. I can also say that, of course, since coming into government we have made life-threatening wait times our priority. That's why CIHI reports us as having the No. 1 lowest wait times in the country for cancer and for cardiac surgery. In addition, in accordance with the FMM priorities, the big five priorities, we instituted a Manitoba list of four priorities on which sleep was one, and we can announce that we invested \$4.6 million to provide better testing and we've brought those lists down. We have more work to do and we're working on it.

PTH 15

Bridge Replacement

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, PTH 15 bridge, the Dugald bridge over the floodway, was slated for replacement due to safety concerns. It was cancelled because of cost overruns of the floodway.

I'd like to ask: Is PTH 15 bridge now slated to be replaced because there are some serious safety concerns?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, I thank the member for the question. There are no cost overruns. We're on time, on budget.

Mr. Speaker, we're currently at a 1-in-300-year protection level for the city of Winnipeg. Next summer we'll be at 1-in-500, and '09 we'll be 1-in-700.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, the floodway is only on budget because they cut projects and PTH 15 bridge, which was supposed to be replaced as part of this project, was pulled.

I would like to ask the minister: There are serious safety issues because it is a non-twinning bridge. It's old and it's going to have some serious issues if we do face a 1-in-500. I would like to ask the minister: Will he now put that bridge back into the project and replace PTH 15, the Dugald bridge over the floodway?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, that current bridge that the member refers to is at 1-in-700-year level, and there are no hydraulic problems related to that particular bridge in a 1-in-700 year level.

Now, with regard to our unprecedented budget, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see the opposition chose to select, at the tail end of Question Period, a question related to transportation and infrastructure and the dollars, that unprecedented amount of dollars we put into Transportation. There are many, many projects we've just tendered out for next season and we're very proud of the budget we put in place, \$4 billion over 10 years, first time in Manitoba's history. We have a plan to address the infrastructure challenges that we have.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Farmer Appreciation Day

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, not just anyone has the strength and perseverance to be a farmer, and it is important that on Farmer Appreciation Day, we make clear our gratitude for their hard work. I know from personal experience that farming is not for the faint of heart. Producers have a remarkable and indomitable spirit.

It is also important on days like today to remind the public that food does not grow in the supermarkets of major urban centres. Rather, the food presented to the population comes from the tireless effort and expert land stewardship of farmers all over the world. One only need look to the bread aisle of a supermarket to see that farmers are directly linked to the everyday actions of all Manitobans and indeed all Canadians.

In reality, every person on earth has a direct and real relationship with the farming community. From the gas in our cars to the oil we cook with, to the foodstuffs themselves, farmers are a central part of

the human equation of life. Mr. Speaker, farmers play a vital role in keeping our planet productive. Advancements in agricultural science are making it possible for Manitoba farmers to feed a larger number of people and produce higher yielding crops than ever before. From Africa to Asia to Mexico and back again, farmers truly do feed the world.

As a rural representative, I know first-hand that every day should be Farmer Appreciation Day. Farming is a major economic driver in much of our rural communities and our entire province. The hard work done by farmers in getting their products to market is propelling the Manitoba economy forward.

I would invite all honourable members and, indeed, all Manitobans to mark today by reflecting on how farmers and their essential work impact our daily lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

University of Manitoba Bisons

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend congratulations to the Manitoba Bisons football team. The Bisons completed a perfect season and, in the process, won the Vanier Cup in Toronto with a very decisive victory over the rivals, the St. Mary's Huskies.

The Bisons entered Friday's cup in familiar territory by carrying with them a perfect 11 and 0 record heading into the final. And this time the Bisons were able to exorcise past disappointments, defeat a rival who handed them a loss in the 2001 finals, and capture their first victory in 37 years. During the final game, the Bisons demonstrated the determination and skill that carried them throughout the season and showed few weaknesses in cruising to a 28-14 win. It was particularly satisfying for Bison faithful who still recall the stinging 2001 loss at the hands of the Huskies.

We do wish running back Matt Henry all the best and a positive return to health in the near future.

On a positive note, quarterback John Makie was named the game's outstanding player in passing for 261 yards and making several impressive plays in securing the victory.

The victory was also rewarding for head coach Brian Dobie who has been with the Bisons for 12 years. So, again, congratulations to all of our Bisons on completing what was truly an inspiring season. For those of us who are U of M alumni, the game was especially rewarding.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend a warm welcome home to our Winnipeg Blue Bombers and thank them for a successful and highly memorable season. Each of the players and coaching staff deserve praise for the valiant effort in the final game and throughout the season. Unfortunately, the Bombers could not overcome the curse of the NDP. However, it appears the new government in Saskatchewan is paying dividends already.

On behalf of all Bomber fans, welcome home blue and gold.

Augustine United Church 120th Anniversary

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, it's not often in a city as young as Winnipeg that we hear about institutions celebrating their 120th anniversary. That's why I'm so thrilled to be able to inform the House that Augustine United Church is celebrating 120 years of support and caring for the community of Osborne Village and the city of Winnipeg.

Augustine has become a central part of the village and has reached out to members of the community who have the greatest need. This tradition of caring and of compassionate ministry has been the focal point of the church's philosophy for 120 years.

Augustine United Church prides itself on creating a welcoming environment for all to worship. It was the first in the United Church of Canada to become an Affirming Congregation, opening its doors to the gay and lesbian community. Since 1981, Augustine has operated the Oak Table, a unique ministry of hospitality, offering friendship, food and a sense of community to all who drop by.

Many of my colleagues in this Chamber will know of Augustine's role as an advocate for social justice. They've lobbied governments for over a hundred years to support low income families and have stood up against injustices around the world. They put their faith into action by working with groups like Amnesty International and supporting refugee families who make our city their new home.

I would like to congratulate the staff, congregation and volunteers at the church not only for their excellent fundraising dinner on November 18 but also for keeping the flame of justice burning strong and proud. Their excellent work does not go unnoticed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Art Elias

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this moment to recognize an exceptional individual in this province. Art Elias has spent over 40 years of his life in the insurance business and his company, Hayhurst Elias Dudek Incorporated, has been recognized throughout the country for its successes.

Art and I met through my involvement with municipalities, and I'm proud of the 20-year friendship we share. After graduating from high school in Morris, Art began work in the insurance business and has thrived in his chosen profession.

He and his family moved to Winnipeg and Art began selling insurance for Aon Reed Stenhouse. In '79, Art founded Hayhurst Elias Dudek Insured Risk Services. He is a majority owner, president and chief executive officer of this award-winning company, which boasts headquarters in Winnipeg and offices in Laval, Québec. HED now also owns SecuriCan General Insurance which underwrites Petplan Health Insurance. Quality service of HED Insurance Risk Services work is evident throughout the province. The company brokers most of the school insurance in Manitoba and does property and liability brokerage for municipalities in the province with the exception of only Winnipeg.

* (14:40)

Throughout the company's many years of success, it has numerous accolades. For many years now, HED has the distinction of being one of the province's 50 fastest growing companies, according to *Manitoba Business Magazine*. This year, HED received an Excellence in Leadership bronze award from the Human Resource Management Association of Manitoba. Notable, the country was recognized as one of Manitoba's top 10 employers by *Maclean's* magazine.

Art Elias has created a company with a great work environment and is deeply rooted in Manitoba origins. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Art for the many successes he and his company have had over the last two and a half decades. I'm sure his success will continue in the future. Thank you.

Public Education

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize our government's commitment to the public education system in this province. Recently, I had the great honour of participating in

the grand opening of the new East Selkirk Middle School, the first new school built in our school division in over 25 years, the last time an NDP government was in power, that we receive a school in our part of the world. The old Happy Thought School was built in 1967, was overcrowded. There were over 700 students crowded into a building that was designed for 350.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognized this growing problem and took action. We provided \$9.5 million in funding for the project. When I was there, I had the opportunity to present an additional \$127,000 to the school division which was greatly appreciated. In fact, since 1999, our government has provided more than \$423 million in capital funding which is, in fact, double what was spent in the 1990s. This school, as we know, is a significant investment in the St. Clements-East Selkirk community. Students can now attend a state-of-the-art facility and which also allows as a resource for after-school and weekend programs for this growing community.

I would like to thank my colleagues, the Member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), the member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Lemieux) for supporting this project. I also want to acknowledge the minister's staff, officials at the Public Schools Finance Board, the architects and the builders. As well, I offer congratulations to the school division trustees and administrators and parents who worked so hard to make this dream a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba and the proposed motion of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose, who has 19 minutes remaining.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I will try to continue where we got cut off the other day, without my colleague's help here.

One of the areas I did want to talk about was some of the shift we are seeing in the area of municipal responsibilities. We continue to see more and more of the education tax end up on the municipal properties. Even with the reductions, or so-called reductions, on farmland education tax, the shifts go on to residential, commercial and industrial from an area where we were paying on municipal tax probably about 20 percent of education cost to now well over 50 in most municipalities, 50 percent.

We also see shifts in areas, and we do very much care about our elderly, our infirm and the comforts and amenities they receive. We see shifts in care in responsibilities to municipalities, not only in the 10 or 20 percent contribution we have to make to new health facilities, but in the preparation of those health facilities into upgrading them to an area that respects the needs of our elderly people. Proper beds for those places—a bed is put in when they're built, but a proper bed, one that treats the residents and the patients better and is more comfortable are the responsibilities of the local community to put in.

Chapels, which, I think, are an integral part of any personal care home, are locally funded, have to be locally funded, no provincial responsibility in them, and any courtyards and grounds upkeep, beautification around the facilities is also a local responsibility.

Some of the concerns we have in the Ste. Rose riding in the area of Manitoba Housing relate to such things as a 12-unit Manitoba Housing unit in Crane River which has no handicap accessibility to it. It's a 55-plus housing unit sitting half empty because handicapped people can't get into the place.

In Neepawa, the Yellowhead Manor had a ramp deteriorating. Some 15 months ago, a request was put in for upgrading the ramp. It took 14 months before anything was done. A company came in, rebuilt the ramp, put it at the wrong angle, and now it's closed off to anybody's use because it's at too steep an angle for the elderly to use.

Ste. Rose personal care home there is badly in need of maintenance and not being attended to.

This government seems to think that making financial commitments to solve a problem solves the problem. Just putting the money on the table, they don't come up with the results, orient a plan with clear measurable goals, and then make sure those goals are met. We hear, over and over again, throw money into here, throw money into there, but we

would like to see some results out of the money. Our provincial Health budget has pretty well doubled since this government went into place. Ask anyone out in the street if they have seen a return for that doubling of that Health budget and they probably haven't. The answer is that most of them haven't.

This government has been in power for eight years and one of the first promises they made, they were going to fix hallway medicine with \$15 million in six months.

Recently, a friend of mine in Neepawa had his brother-in-law spend two days in the hallways of one of the Winnipeg hospitals here, and two days later he passed away. A man in that critical shape put in a hallway on a gurney for two days is literally criminal, and you want to sit here and tell me that hallway medicine has been solved? No way.

Mr. Speaker, another area I want to touch on is the proposal for the west-side bipole 3 line, a line that will cost over half a billion dollars more than the proper route down the eastern side. Along with the unionization of the floodway contracts at a cost of another \$50 million, and what's appearing to be going to be a waste of close to half a billion dollars into the upgrades of the Winnipeg sewers, unnecessary upgrades, add on another half a billion over the life of that hydro line for line loss.

What does half a billion dollars buy? Well, it buys a rec centre for every community in rural Manitoba. It buys probably four of the football stadiums that Mr. Asper is proposing. It buys countless nurses, doctors, teachers, child-care workers, overpasses like Portage. A \$50-million overpass, it'll buy 10 of those. We haven't been able to afford beef-slaughter plants. We've heard over and over again, there's no money there. It would buy a lot of beef-slaughter plants at \$15 million to \$20 million. How about care homes, hospitals, schools? We hear about schools in Question Period today. It's a terrible waste of money when you just blatantly say we're going to throw away half a billion dollars. Because I'm a farmer, I might as well throw one more on there. Right now, at the present price of cows, it would buy 150,000 cows.

*(14:50)

We heard in the Throne Speech a commitment to plant a million trees a year for five years to a total of five million trees. I haven't done an exact count, but I would suggest that might be enough trees to cover one section, maybe two sections of land. A lot of

farmers out there have over five million trees on their property. It would be interesting to check and see how many trees Tembec and Louisiana-Pacific plant each year. They would just snort at a million trees a year.

On the issues of Child and Family Services, for which I am the critic, we watched a devolution that happened too quickly, and the problems were passed on that were already existing in Child and Family Services to the authorities. We've seen another move here just recently with the investigation of child deaths partially being shifted over to the Child Advocate's office, a system that I'm sure will fail, too. We put very good reasons on the record why that shouldn't happen and it totally was ignored. We're already seeing some of the rot sneak in; we're seeing an audit ordered on the Southeast Child and Family Services authority.

Even the other day in Question Period here, the First Minister (Mr. Doer) responded to one of our leader's questions by saying, when there are child deaths, it's not tolerable to anybody. But he seemed to have a real problem even coming up with the number of children that have been murdered in Child and Family Services over the last number of years. He used three different numbers: 1, 11, and 19. I would assure you that the number is at least double that highest number, and that is unacceptable.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

We heard in the Throne Speech about a shift in focus from apprehension to prevention. I don't like the word "apprehension" to start with. I think if you're going to use a word there, it should be "intervention." But that's a key phrase to say a shift to preventive measures but away from apprehension, leaves children in danger and will continue to leave children in danger. Every time priorities shift, children suffer, and this is going to go on in that department until this government actually takes responsibility for what's going on there. Once again, we've heard, oh, we doubled the budget of that department. Well, congratulations, but you didn't get a return for your money yet.

I thought this was an opportunity with a new mandate for the government to create a vision for Manitoba. In this Throne Speech, we saw no vision, no new ideas, just a rehash of promises made and not kept in all the preceding Throne Speeches. We've seen millions of extra costs put into things like the bipole line, put into floodway unionization and any

number of other things without the science to back it up.

Once again, I'll say to the members, this Throne Speech was an exercise in how to say nothing in the most confusing way possible in 10,000 words or more.

With those few remarks, I'll thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I'll allow someone else to carry on the debate.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): First of all, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank two western teams yesterday that fought, I think, a very good fight, although it is true that our Winnipeg Blue Bombers, despite their spirited energy, didn't quite make it. The Roughriders won instead, which are the Saskatchewan Roughriders, representing the entire province. It will certainly please my wife, who is from Saskatchewan, was born in Saskatchewan. I haven't phoned her yet, but I'm sure that the discussion will crop up and well, I guess, I'll have to eat a little crow.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's great to be able to put a few words on record in this the opening Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and to welcome back, formally, Mr. Speaker as well, and look forward to his sage advice in the future, as his advice has been in the past as well, sage advice. I welcome back the pages, and I hope that their learning experience here is going to be considered worthwhile by them, although sometimes during Question Period I wonder if they are learning the right lessons. I welcome back the table officers and, of course, my colleagues all around me.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Throne Speeches are usually painted in very broad terms. They are sketched in rough strokes and only give you a general direction of a government. It's also true to say that Throne Speeches are universally condemned by the opposition and always praised by those in government. So this is no different; we expect the naysayers on the one side and the proponents on the other side.

I listened with great interest to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), and he made quite a production about the fact that there were some omissions in the Throne Speech. Well, first of all, you can't put everything in the Throne Speech, and he is right that Conawapa was omitted and bipole 3 was not mentioned, but I would assure him that Conawapa

will be built and that, as well, bipole 3 will be built. There is very little doubt about that.

He also indulged, the honourable member, although the speech was very interesting, he also indulged in a little bit of revisionism, I thought, when he painted Duff Roblin, certainly a venerable leader in the province, as the architect of economic development in terms of hydro in northern Manitoba. I don't think that's quite correct, although Duff Roblin was certainly involved in amalgamating smaller utilities, and, finally, you know, the giant called Manitoba Hydro was in existence. He should have also mentioned Ed Schreyer, I think. That was an omission on his part because Ed Schreyer was critical in development of hydro-electric power in northern Manitoba, but, you know, you've got to omit some people. You can't put everybody in the Throne Speech. For example, Sir Rodmond Roblin wasn't in the Throne Speech either. He created a public institution, a public utility, MTS, which was sold by his descendants later on, I guess his political descendants, which I think was quite shameful.

However, the Leader of the Opposition tries to create the impression that the Tories are builders in northern Manitoba and that we, this particular government, are not, and he referenced a throne speech to bolster his argument. Of course, I would tell the honourable member that he should go to northern Manitoba and talk to the people there, to miners, or small businessmen, or Aboriginal people, or Métis leaders, anybody on the street at all, and if he's very lucky he might find someone that will say, yeah, the Tories were great for northern Manitoba.

I suspect he won't find too many people like that because I suspect that the way people vote tells all. They vote for the party they think builds northern Manitoba, builds the roads, builds the airports, builds the hydro dams, and that's the party they vote for.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll give you one example. The Tories had a chance for 11 years to build the South Indian Lake Road that they kept promising over and over and over again and which was part of the Northern Flood Agreement to South Indian Lake. They never built it. We started building it immediately when we were in power in 1999, something they should have done years earlier, but they deferred it year after year after year.

However, I am, Madam Deputy Speaker, heartened by the fact that the Tory leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition has discovered Aboriginal people and has discovered them in the sense that it's

a serious issue some of the problems faced by our Aboriginal people, people living in isolated areas, and that is good to see. I was also frankly heartened by the fact that the Tories ran a number of Aboriginal people in their last campaign, in their last election. I think that is good for democracy, and I think it is a really good sign for the future, but there's a lot of work to do there.

The Leader of the Official Opposition also suggested that there's crushing poverty and high unemployment on the east side of the lake, and he's absolutely right. There's no doubt about that. We're fully aware of that, and it's not just St. Theresa Point and Garden Hill, the communities he referenced, but all across northern and isolated Manitoba. It's also in Shamattawa, and Pukatawagan, and Brochet, and Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake and Granville Lake, and so on.

There is poverty and problems as well in the mining towns where the mines are closed. I'm particularly thinking of Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake, but also to some degree Sherridon in the past, and I suppose, at some points in history, Bissett and other communities—Wabowden. In fact, there are some communities no longer in existence that were mining communities. Herb Lake is a typical example, and it's unfortunate those communities are often dependent on the boom and bust cycle in the mineral industry.

Now I would suggest to the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) that, if really and truly he wishes to help people that live in isolation and are burdened by crushing poverty and lack of employment, we should look for solutions together. I think the way to go is partnerships. Building bipole 3 on the east side would not be a panacea in any case, not that it would not create jobs. It would create some jobs, but they would be temporary jobs, probably seasonal jobs in terms of brushing and then perhaps building the line, but they wouldn't be long-term, meaningful jobs for large groups of people, so that is not a panacea. Besides that, we're already doing a lot of work on the east side of the lake as we are all over the north. I just reference one particular item, the Rice River Road that we're building, and we're doing many other things, obviously. The northern food initiative is really important in that part of the world. We have 27 community gardens, and we're looking forward to building a commercial greenhouse in Grand Rapids as well.

*(15:00)

As well, we're building roads in the area. We have built dialysis facilities in the area for the people on the east side of the lake as well, but the way to go, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to make Aboriginal people partners in this great enterprise so that all of us will have economic justice, and we can all live a decent life. Therefore, I'm very happy to say something not everybody even knows is that the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation of Nelson House is a partner in the development of the Wuskwatim dam. They're one-third partner, and I think this is a very good and solid and positive direction in which to proceed. They're one-third partners in Wuskwatim and this, of course, involves pre-project training and building, and so on. It will create jobs, and it will create positive economic spinoffs in the future. There's no doubt about that.

To have Aboriginal people as partners is nothing unique, Madam Deputy Speaker. This has already happened to some degree in forestry and should happen even more in the future in Hydro, when Hydro develops even more dams in northern Manitoba, and certainly should be part of mining as well.

In fact, talking about mining, I was fortunate to attend the mining convention which ran from November 15 to 17 in the Convention Centre in Winnipeg. It was my 13th consecutive time there, and I really enjoyed being there because I get to meet so many miners and people related to mining from northern Manitoba.

I was also very happy to see that the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) was there. He was there, I think, the entire three days, or most of those. Well, not the entire three days, but for a lot of it, and was very well received, which is a huge contrast to Ontario, because our delegates from Ontario kept saying, people from the mining sector kept saying, we can't get near our mining minister; we can't even get past the bureaucrats, whereas in Manitoba it's very easy to deal with your bureaucracy because you are really pro-mining, and it's very easy to work with you. So that was a positive message to take home.

It is an important sector, the mining sector, the mineral sector. It's a \$3-billion sector now, and you could argue that it's probably the largest sector in Manitoba, although I don't wish to suggest that agriculture isn't, but it's very close to agriculture if it isn't. *[interjection]*

Actually, for an honourable member here, for his benefit, I was a farmer at one time. Couldn't make a living at it.

I was very impressed by the technical sessions that were offered at the mining convention, Madam Deputy Speaker. One of them was called Government Consultation with First Nations, and it was led by Ernie Armit and Janet Forbes from the department. That was Thursday afternoon. A very powerful session and, again, talking partnership with Aboriginal people.

I also, incidentally, enjoyed the guest speaker Friday noon, MaryAnn Mihychuk, the former Mines Minister, who spent a lot of time talking about the super cycle which has elevated the mineral prices which stands us in good stead here because we stand to make a lot of money, obviously.

The Friday p.m. session was also quite wonderful. I managed to attend that. It was called The Aboriginal Mining Workshop: Building Partnerships on Common Ground. Again, the word "partnership."

The session that I particularly enjoyed, and it ran all afternoon, was chaired by John Fox. First of all, we started with a prayer from Elder Flora Zaharia. Then the session was led off by Chief Glenn Nolan who is the Chief of the Missanabie Cree First Nation in Ontario who talked about his experiences in Ontario and, in fact, was pushing or arguing for, looking for support for, a Learning Together 2008 conference in Winnipeg running from April 9 through the 10th. That's on April 9 and 10 in 2008. The Learning Together Conference, according to Glenn Nolan, was and is defined as grass-roots First Nations organizing by building an organization that focusses on building relationships between First Nation communities and the mining industry while at the same time identifying opportunities for growth and prosperity for both partners.

Following Chief Glenn Nolan, Vice-Chief Don Deranger from Prince Albert Grand Council spoke, and he gave us a brief history of the activity in northwestern Saskatchewan—I think it's called the Athabasca region—where a group of bands had joined together and have become major players in the mining that's taking place in that area. It's become a hugely successful arrangement, but it took a lot of planning and a lot of effort. If it can happen in northwestern Saskatchewan, it can also happen in Manitoba.

Also, I listened with very great interest to a gentleman called Juan Carlos Reyes from Ontario who gave us a brief history of the Aboriginal relationships with the mining industry in Ontario, and some of the hardships and some of the stumbling blocks that they faced. Again, the almost universal comment came back: it's much easier to do business in mining in Manitoba than it is in Ontario. Of course, that is confirmed by all kinds of reports, Madam Deputy Speaker.

David Chartrand spoke for the MMF, and his speech was Métis Mining Partnerships, again the word "partnerships." He gave a very powerful speech, a direct speech. He made it quite clear that Métis people are not interested in handouts. They're interested in working together. They're interested in being main players in the mining industry, as other Aboriginal people are, as well. So partnerships are incredibly important for us if we wish to get rid of that crushing poverty that the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) talks about.

I should also point out that, when the Throne Speech talks about growing green and the green strategies that our government has evolved or developed over time, I was extremely pleased to be able to take one day, that is Thursday, the 15th, to get on a bus with some friends and colleagues, MLAs and others, to go out to the St. Leon wind farm and actually see how those wind turbines operate. It was a very instructive and enlightening day, Madam Deputy Speaker. St. Leon wind farm produces a hundred megawatts, roughly, and, of course, we know that this government and Hydro is interested in developing, in short order, 300 more megawatts. To put that into perspective, those 400 megawatts would be double the Wuskwatim Dam in terms of output. Now, it's true the wind doesn't always blow, but 40 percent of the time it does.

I was very impressed with what happened at St. Leon. I also want to thank the Member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) who hosted us and was very gracious. I know he supports that wind farm. I would also thank the former Member for Carman who was also was a strong supporter of the wind farm.

What impressed me most, I suppose, Madam Deputy Speaker, was when I talked to some of the farmers of the region, and this was not talk about the blades or the units or the megawatts per unit, not the factual scientific talk, but, rather, how do they make a living off the land and how does a wind farm fit

into that pattern. I was happy to learn that they'd formed a co-op, and that particular co-operative movement shared the wealth. It wasn't just that the farmer with the wind tower would get a certain amount of money, but everybody in the region did. They had formed a little co-op, and I think they were getting \$5 an acre for the rights for these wind turbines to use the wind, \$5 an acre, which is roughly, what, \$800 per quarter section. If there is a wind turbine or a tower on your land, then you get an extra \$4,000. So I thought that was just a great model, and I think it's the old CCF-NDP co-operative model where you work together rather than against each other.

I would contrast that to another model because I come from western Saskatchewan where there is oil, and if there's an oil well there—and we use the Alberta model there—if there's an oil well on your land, you used to get \$4,000 for the oil well. But the oil companies soon learned that you could pour a pad and you could put four oil wells on that one pad, and you could slant those wells in different directions and basically suck out all the oil in the region, but the farmers in the neighbourhood weren't getting any money. There was no sharing. So I'm much more impressed with this made-in-Manitoba model at St. Leon. I think those farmers are going in the right direction. I'm very proud of them. I like that co-operative approach, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I should point out that part and parcel of our growing green strategy, our focus in getting rid of greenhouse gas emissions, of making our environment better than it is now, I should also point out that we are continuing with the direction that includes fuel-efficient vehicles. We are continuing with the ethanol mandate. We are continuing with biodiesel in the future because those kinds of biofuels are going to be very important in the future.

We're going to also, according to the Throne Speech, plant an additional one million trees. I think that's a good start. I was in Tolko not too long ago, and they were celebrating the fact that they'd planted their one-millionth tree, and it took a number of years to do that. So that's a good direction.

I am encouraged by the fact that we're proposing to phase out coal-burning electric generators in Brandon, as we did in Selkirk, because they are polluters, and we're trying to get rid of that.

* (15:10)

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a northerner, I like to see the Throne Speech basically through a northern lens, if I can, and that should have been obvious with my earlier comments. Our Throne Speech mentions the north. It's a section. There are 10 sections, and one section is northern Manitoba. That's a far cry from Throne Speeches in the past, particularly in the '90s when the north was either mentioned like once, or one line, or not at all. That concerned me because, although the north might only be 4 percent, 5 percent, or 6 percent of the population, depending on where you draw the line north, it's still a very important storehouse for wealth and for energy, and so on. We can't take it lightly. The Golden Boy, after all, points north.

I'm heartened by the fact that the University College of the North is going to be growing by leaps and bounds and that Ovide Mercredi was installed as its first chancellor. Ovide is a friend of mine, and I was very proud of the fact that we have a well-known Aboriginal leader as the first chancellor of the University College of the North. I'm also heartened by the fact that the Tory leader supports the University College of the North, unlike the previous leaders. I think he is right in doing so and he is heading in the right direction.

I am heartened by the fact that we are going to put a lot of emphasis on a central trade corridor which involves the Port of Churchill. That would involve, of course, keeping the Churchill line intact, and in fact, improving it, something that the Liberals did not do. In 1996 they basically dumped the line, if I can use that word. It was at the point of being salvaged at one point and that worried me a great deal, although lately they've come on board, thank God, and we are definitely not only trying to salvage that line, save that line, trying to improve it and try to make Churchill an integral part of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It's the only inland seaport we have in this northern part of the world, and it's going to be critically important in the future, particularly if global warming continues at the rate it is doing.

I want to point out our Northern Healthy Food Initiative is an important initiative, particularly when you're talking about crushing poverty and unemployment in some of the more remote regions, and as I mentioned earlier, there are 27 community gardens and a plan or plans for a commercial greenhouse in Grand Rapids. As we all know, there

are new dialysis units in the east of the lake region and I should also point out that in my own region, in Flin Flon, we've doubled the dialysis capacity in the Flin Flon General Hospital.

I am very happy that we have restored the 50-50 funding for the transit system in Flin Flon. I am very happy to see that the Neighbourhoods Alive! has finally been started in the Flin Flon area and in other areas as well, I believe, in Selkirk and others.

The Lighthouses program continues. It is a very important program in Flin Flon. That's an integral part of keeping our youth busy and healthy in positive activities, and that's been going on for quite a while.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, and I think a lot of people are aware of it, that our government has done not only a lot of things for northern Manitoba, but for all of Manitoba. If you take a look at the Winnipeg skyline, you can see that it's changed. You know, downtown has changed. You see the MTS Centre. You see the new Hydro building growing almost every day, and you know that the community colleges downtown have also been supportive and that they have been enhanced and increasing.

Similarly in Flin Flon. Flin Flon is not the same as it was pre-1999. The skyline has changed there as well, Mr. Speaker. I'm thinking particularly of the Flin Flon Shopping Centre. We have a shopping centre, finally, in Flin Flon. We had been looking forward to that for 30 years; now we finally have it. We have a new primary care health facility. Our roads are improved. There are a lot of things in Flin Flon that weren't there when the Tories were in power, so really happy to see that our government is not ignoring northern Manitoba as the previous government did.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things to be proud about in this Throne Speech and I would recommend all members support it. I hope that they, if they weren't planning to, have a good second look at what the Throne Speech offers and change their mind and support what I think is really a good Throne Speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the government's Throne Speech, and I want to make a number of comments today.

Clearly, it is in some ways significant and perhaps appropriate that I speak on a day when we've had a report card on this province entitled *A Province*

Left Behind. This is a report card, the *2007 Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report Card*, and it talks about the legacy of the NDP in leaving Manitoba as the province left behind the other provinces. It was an opportunity, one might say, in this Throne Speech, after the election earlier this year, for the government to set some bold targets to show some ambition, but clearly the government didn't see it that way. They delivered what has been clearly labelled, and appropriately labelled, an underwhelming Throne Speech, a Throne Speech which can appropriately be described as directionless, as a slow boat to mediocrity, a poor and sad Throne Speech when it comes to what we should have had for Manitoba at this particular juncture.

We should have had a different approach in areas of the environment, in areas of health care, in areas of the economy, in areas dealing with Child and Family Services and in dealing with agriculture. So much more could have been done but was not done, that it must stand as one of the most underwhelming Throne Speeches ever delivered in this Chamber.

Let me start with areas of the environment. We are pleased that the government has decided to follow some Liberal-led initiatives, getting rid of phosphorus in automatic dishwasher detergent. We're still waiting for the bill and we understand that the targets may be slow, but that's what the NDP are, is slow and behind, but at least there was a little bit of movement there. But, overall, the problem fundamentally was that there are not real targets set for reduction of phosphorus and the phosphorous load in Lake Winnipeg.

The Minister of Water Stewardship and the government have been talking about a 10 percent reduction in the load of phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg, but the Minister of Water Stewardship admitted before this last session ended, publicly, that those targets were nowhere near good enough in terms of what needs to be achieved for Lake Winnipeg. Indeed, as I have pointed out, that if one uses the numbers in the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board Report that you may, in fact, have to achieve something closer to a 58 percent reduction of phosphorus. Now they're so far short of what is in the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board report that it is a little bit ludicrous.

In any event, what is clear is that this government at the moment is directionless. We don't even know what target they're aiming for, and until

you start setting targets and have an overall plan to achieve those targets and some timelines to deliver on those targets, we have far less than the comprehensive plan that the Minister of Water Stewardship was only a few weeks ago saying time and time again in this Legislature that that was what she was going to deliver.

When it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba, it wasn't all that long ago that the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself was saying that he was going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 23 percent below 1990 levels. Now what we have is a Premier who in 2010 is only, I think, going to get back to 2000 levels, a very timid, tame, inadequate target by the Premier. You know, one of the big problems, of course, is that there wasn't enough of a direction or a strategy or a plan delivered in the Throne Speech to know that they even have a good concept of how they're going to achieve that.

* (15:20)

Agriculture clearly is a major contributor to greenhouse gas in Manitoba. We are still waiting after a long, long time for—it's eight years now—for the government to deliver a target which includes adequate recognition and a plan to work with farmers and generate a win-win approach to reducing greenhouse gases in agriculture, and at the same time making sure that the overall targets of reducing greenhouse gases, at least to the Kyoto level, 6 percent below 1990, are achieved by 2012.

The government, when it comes to the environment, failed to even mention our Liberal initiative to ban plastic checkout bags. Clearly, when we look at the hundreds of millions of plastic checkout bags that are used in Manitoba, a large number of which, maybe several hundred million, end up in the Brady Landfill site. To anyone who goes by the Brady Landfill site and sees the number of plastic bags in the area, you can see right away that there is some action need to be taken.

But this government, sadly, has forgotten about some of the straightforward things that could be done following in the plastic bag example on the footsteps of Leaf Rapids. The community of Leaf Rapids is to be congratulated for leading the way in showing how feasible and how well supportive the local initiative is to ban plastic checkout bags. Surely, we should be following in the rest of the province.

We see that there are major needs in this province to clean up the areas in this province where

there have been mine sites, the heavy metal contamination. Mr. Speaker, I have visited a number of these in Sherridon, at Leaf Rapids, Ruttan Mine, Lynn Lake, Flin Flon, Thompson. What is abundantly clear is that if we are to be good stewards of our environment, if we're going to make sure that we don't have huge clean-up costs, if we make sure that we're not going to have increased health problems and health-care bills as a result of the poor stewardship of the environment, that we should be acting in a much more meaningful way.

We had hoped that the government would have already cleaned up, for example, the areas where children are playing in Flin Flon. We had hoped that the government after eight years would have been further along in addressing areas like the situation at Sherridon and at Lynn Lake where there are major issues. Certainly, much more needs to be done in this area and one would have hoped that the Throne Speech would have mentioned this need for northern Manitoba and the importance of paying attention to the environment in northern Manitoba, as well as the environment in southern Manitoba.

In health care, we had hoped that the government would seriously start talking about reforming the regional health authority system. Wherever I go in the province, Mr. Speaker, it is appreciated and understood and recognized that there need to be major reforms to our regional health authority, our regional health authorities in the north, in the south, in Winnipeg, in Brandon, across the province. Those reforms are needed to ensure that there is accountability, to ensure that there is quick access to quality care for Manitobans, to ensure that family physicians and patients are considered at the first and at the leading edge of what is happening in health care, and to ensure that there are province-wide specialists networks, and to ensure that that we are adequately addressing areas like medical errors and patient safety.

It was just incredible to witness the scene last week where individual after individual came to the microphone and talked about the medical errors that occurred and the need to change, to improve, and yet patient safety was not even mentioned in the Throne Speech. It was a sad day for those who are concerned about these areas and concerned about medical errors and concerned about improving our health-care system. There is much need to work on improving how we deal with issues around Aboriginal health and issues of prevention and, once again, sadly,

inadequate approaches, compared to what we really should have had.

The government, as I mentioned right off the bat, has been doing much less well than it should have been doing in terms of addressing issues like child poverty. The report of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg entitled *A Province Left Behind* talks about the deplorable situation of Manitobans living deep in poverty, a deplorable situation where the shelter allowances and social assistance are not what they need to be, comparisons with other provinces showing the shortfall in action in Manitoba, the lack of progress in areas like affordable housing, the lack of progress in many other areas, including the deterioration of ensuring that recreation is universally and locally available to children in low-income families, a deterioration in terms of Winnipeg Transit access and affordability for people on low income, time and time again when this was a Doer NDP government that could have acted over the last eight years, but instead has not and has left us behind. A province left behind, the province left behind, you can take it either way, but clearly we are not where we need to be.

Part of the reason that we are not where we need to be is that consistently the government has looked at government from a socialist-central-planning-government-doing-more-and-pushing-the-private-sector-out kind of approach. Certainly, one of the things that we need is the kind of private-sector growth and stimulus and entrepreneurship that would help build this province in a really good, strong, sustainable way.

The availability of resources, taxation and otherwise, to government is not endless. We will have upturns and downturns in the economy. It is badly needed that we should make sure that there is private-sector growth and that the private sector is doing well in this province and providing the kinds of jobs that will attract people here from all over the world. We have not done nearly as well as we should have in the last eight years.

The government has continued to refuse to sufficiently address issues around crime. The problem in reducing crime in Manitoba is not just a matter of how many policemen you put on the streets. We need appropriate law enforcement. We need a police department and a fire department and paramedics and so on to make sure that things are looked after well in terms of emergencies, in terms

of making sure that we are building a society where crime is less of a problem.

But what we need to do is to ensure that the supports are there to reduce poverty, that the support is there to make sure that children with FASD are identified early, that FASD is much more effectively prevented, that children with FASD are enabled to grow up to their potential, rather than left in situations where they can all too often be caught up, sadly, in anti-social activities.

* (15:30)

The failure of this government to even have an appropriate system for making sure that children are diagnosed, that there is, in fact, a scientific understanding of what the incidence and prevalence of FASD is in the province. We need to know those kinds of information in order to make progress, in order to make good decisions that will help us move forward.

The government has failed consistently to provide full disclosure of costs and benefits around the bipole 3 hydro-electric power transmission line from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba. This has been a major shortfall in people being able to make good decisions on the east or west side in terms of their support or lack of support for a bipole, for instance down the east side, and for the relative understanding of what the impact will be or not in terms of the environment on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Clearly, there are major benefits. Clearly, as was exposed under questioning, Manitoba Hydro is now looking at payments for easements for First Nations on their traditional lands or resource management areas, but these were never discussed before. They need to be part of the discussion. Manitoba Hydro needs to be honest and up front and open about in fact what the costs are going to be and the benefits both to those in the communities and to the rest of the province and those with that openness we could get a much better decision I believe. I believe that we would have a circumstance where we would have a hydro-electric power transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and a World Heritage Site there as well and that the support for the World Heritage Site would be even greater if there are mitigation funds flowing from the building of the power transmission line to look after the environmental issues and make sure, as an example, that the World Heritage Site gets off to a good short-term and long-term financial basis.

We believe that people on both sides of the lake should have a say. We argue for plebiscites on both the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the west side of Lake Winnipegosis because it's important to involve people in the area in decision making and to make sure that they have and feel comfortable with the information that is provided by governments and by Manitoba Hydro in order to be good participants and active participants in decision making.

It is our view that the government has not done what needs to be done in the area of agriculture. Particularly at the moment we have a lot of concerns about livestock producers, cattle producers, hog producers for a variety of reasons and one of the things that we had expected and should have been in the Throne Speech was a province-wide rollout of an ALUS-like program to provide financial support to farmers for the environmental services they provide to all Manitobans to improve the environment and to improve the bottom line for farmers at the same time.

This is now ongoing, as we know, in Blanchard municipality, but I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this kind of a program would have had significant benefits for many cattle producers, for example, because a lot of their land has areas which are riparian or marsh or land which could have benefited from these very kinds of contributions from an ALUS-like program. So here would be a way that the province could have supported farmers who are having difficulty at the moment, but sadly this government has not chosen to do that but instead has left farmers out in the lurch.

One of the areas clearly where there needs to be more attention is the area of Child and Family Services. One of the fundamental, one of the very fundamental changes that is needed is to take Jordan's Principle and make sure it is fully and 100 percent implemented in Manitoba. I have been bringing this up now for two years. One of the first times I brought it up, the then-minister, I think it was Tim Sale—I think I can name him now that he is not an MLA, and I believe the record will show that he said, oh, we support putting the child first. They do it verbally but they don't do it in practice, and we still have a situation where Jordan's Principle has not been implemented in Manitoba.

Yes, there's some co-operation which would be desirable at the federal and provincial level, but there are ways that the Province could act to make sure that the federal government is a partner here because there is a responsibility at the federal level to make

sure that Jordan's Principle is properly implemented and funded. Certainly, that is something, Mr. Speaker, that we have called for and will continue to call for because, sadly, we have children—and when I was in Norway House, I would indicate that there were I think it was 37 children who could have been served at that point under Jordan's Principle, and they were not receiving the kind of support that they should have been receiving from provincial and federal governments because Jordan's Principle has not been implemented.

So it is time to change and we don't accept that this Throne Speech by this government is good enough. We believe it is a go-slow, underwhelming approach. We don't believe that it is what Manitoba needs at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT the Amendment be amended by adding the following after clause (t):

(u) that though the government has chosen to follow Liberal-led phosphorus initiatives to clean up Lake Winnipeg, there have been no real targets set out in the reduction of nutrient-loading into Lake Winnipeg; and

(v) the government has been timid by setting inadequate targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba in particular with respect to agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, an industry that is responsible for about one-third of all emissions within the province; and

(w) the government's refusal to move forward with the comprehensive Liberal initiative to ban plastic bags; and

(x) the government's sloth-like approach to cleaning up this province's mine sites and the failure to clean up contaminated soil in Flin Flon; and

(y) the government's failure to even mention rapid transit for Winnipeg which is an important step in improving the quality of life in Winnipeg and an important step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and

(z) the government's failure to mention the badly needed reform of the RHA system; and

(aa) the government's failure to ensure quick access to quality health care in Manitoba; and

(bb) the government's failure to ensure province-wide specialist networks in Manitoba; and

(cc) the government's continuing to commit an injustice to the children in this province by failing to reduce child poverty and even to present an adequate plan to reduce poverty starting with setting targets to reduce child poverty by 50 percent over the next four years; and

(dd) the government's continuing refusal to sufficiently address the societal issues surrounding crime and its failure to realize that the solution to Manitoba's crime problem does not lie only in more law enforcement; and

(ee) the government's negligence in not adequately improving FASD programs within the province, with the result that this has had a negative impact on health care, education, child and family services and justice in Manitoba; and

(ff) the government's failure to include full disclosure of costs and benefits and in addressing the Bipole III hydro-electric power transmission line from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba, and the government's failure to move towards plebiscites on both sides, as called for by the Manitoba Liberals; and

(gg) the government's failure to substantively address agricultural needs in Manitoba, especially with respect to livestock producers and with respect to the needed province-wide rollout of an ALUS-like program providing financial support to farmers for the environmental services they provide to all Manitobans.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT the Amendment be amended by adding the following after—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's a pleasure to rise to speak in favour of a very exciting and a very complete Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting time in Manitoba for many reasons. As a football fan and as someone who is proud to be the representative for the area which includes Canad Inn Stadium, I found myself thinking on this very exciting weekend about the

parallels between football and politics. Certainly, right now there is the excitement in this province about a historic third term for the New Democratic Party and also the valiant efforts of both our Winnipeg Blue Bombers and our University of Manitoba Bisons. As we all know, of course, the Bisons were victorious this weekend, beating the St. Mary's Huskies to bring home the Vanier Cup for the first time in 37 years. Of course, the Bombers fought a hard-fought loss to the Saskatchewan Roughriders without, I may note, their MVP quarterback.

Now I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), in his comments, tried to draw some parallels between the performance of football teams and politics. I agree with the comments of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), a few days ago, that that really doesn't apply. But even if I accepted the logic of the Leader of the Opposition, knowing that not many in Manitoba do, but if I did, I would note, and I have this House note that, indeed, the Bisons have won three Vanier Cups and, indeed, all three of them have been while the New Democratic Party has been in power in Manitoba. If I was to follow that logic a bit closer, the first two wins the Bisons had were in 1969 and 1970, which were the first two historic years of Ed Schreyer's government.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So if, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition's logic is right, of course, their third win now is in the first year of this historic third term for the NDP, so, indeed, it looks good for the Bisons next year.

But let's move on to maybe a slightly different level. There certainly are similarities between football and politics on a few levels. Certainly, I draw that experience from three and a half years in this Legislature, but also from 10 seasons of playing football. Indeed, I played Pop Warner, all the way up to playing junior football for the St. James Rods, foolishly enough, in my last year of law school.

Of course, I hear the chirping from the team on the other side, and that's okay, because politics, like football, has a very basic, very primal, very partisan nature. Indeed, meeting in caucus before a Q.P. is the closest thing to preparing for a football game that I found in my life, from discussing strategy to, indeed, the occasional rousing pep talk. Certainly, on this side of the House, I certainly feel a sense of unity, which is unlike anything I've felt since playing football. I'm not sure how it goes for the other side, but I'm concerned about this team.

Now, in Manitoba—and I do reach my hands out to the members on the other side—we are fiercely partisan. We play the game as hard as we can and, Madam Acting Speaker, I know we don't always distinguish ourselves in our sportsman-like efforts in this Chamber. On the football field, I was taught to hit hard but to play between the sidelines and until the whistle. I will try to do the same, and I hope that everybody else in this Chamber will try to. Our emotions do get up once in a while, but in this session I will try to play by the rules.

The best part, of course, is that in politics, just like in football, it doesn't matter what happens. There's always an opportunity to keep your head up and get somebody back at some later point. Certainly, the last election was a very good opportunity for many of us working hard for our constituents to show up and run up the score a little bit on our opposition.

But at a higher level, indeed, there are similarities between building a successful team and building a successful province. Every team, every government, in fact, has limited resources. For a sports team, whether it's an amateur team, a university team, or even a professional team—even the NFL has a salary cap—there are always limits. Successful teams are built with intelligence, balance and passion. I'm proud to be part of a team which has all of these things as we work to build a better Manitoba.

The Throne Speech is really a game plan. Of course, it's the obligation of the government, as it has for the past eight years, to put forward a consistent theme in its Throne Speech, and I'm actually kind of pleased, Madam Acting Speaker, that this year the opposition has chosen to put forward its own document which is sort of a game plan. I know that the opposition isn't necessarily always a paragon of consistency, so it's quite enjoyable to see that they've put their plan on paper so we can actually compare and observe how things go.

Now as the Legislative Assistant to the Justice Minister and representing a constituency in the heart of Winnipeg, I'll focus in my comments today on Justice issues. You will see the Throne Speech contains a plan for safer communities which indeed is crafted with intelligence, with balance and, indeed, with passion. It includes measures to prevent crime, measures to divert young offenders and other offenders and, where necessary, to truly get tough and crack down on violent crime.

The plan we see opposite is law and order only. And when I say the plan opposite, I'm ignoring the Liberals. They haven't been playoff contenders in decades. We're going to leave them be. I'm talking about the official opposition. And, indeed, like a team that can't pass or a team that can't run, the opposition game plan is one-dimensional, and it's rare, if ever, that a plan ever succeeds.

For example, this Throne Speech contains more historic and continued commitments to support our police and to support our Crown attorneys. This Throne Speech contains commitments for a further 100 police officers across the province of Manitoba and a further 20 Crown attorneys. This in addition to the 155 police positions that this government has added since coming to power in 1999. It's in addition to the 23 Crown attorneys which have been added by this government.

Now the Conservative game plan says that they would add police officers and they would add Crown attorneys, too, but what's really curious, curious-strange some would say, is that every single time the Conservatives have had the chance to vote on a Throne Speech or a budget to add police officers or to add Crown attorneys, what have they done? They have voted against it every single time. You know, I'm going to use a football analogy again. It's like calling a draw play when you haven't actually thrown a pass the whole game. You can do it, but nobody in their right mind is going to believe it, and that's where the Conservatives are on that issue.

Now there's no doubt that car theft continues to be a serious issue in Manitoba. Manitoba's problem is serious, and it's unlike many places because of the nature of the crime. Unlike other cities, in Montréal, Toronto or Vancouver, if your car is stolen, the odds are your car is going to be loaded on a container ship and gone to a foreign country.

Our problem is equally serious and equally concerning, but certainly we've been able with aggressive measures, in conjunction with our police, with our Crown attorneys, with MPI, to get a handle on the problem. As you know, Madam Acting Speaker, there are free immobilizers for those cars most at risk. We know there's greater supervision of offenders which is having a tremendous response. I'm very pleased that indeed our calls in Ottawa to toughen laws dealing with car theft are being heeded, and through Manitoba's lead, there are going to be better federal laws in this country. This year alone

there are positive numbers. Car theft is down by 26 percent in Manitoba in the year to date. There is more work to do. It is a serious issue, but I have confidence with our game plan, this problem will continue to decline.

Now, on this issue, what was the opposition's game plan? Well, they only had one play that I could find in their supposed Throne Speech alternative which was bait cars. They see this as the magic, the silver bullet you could call it, as to how they're going to get a handle or how they would get a handle on the car theft problem. They've had the chance to ask the question in Estimates. They've asked it in Question Period. They had the chance to ask the CEO of Manitoba Public Insurance about this issue, and the short answer which they've been given time and time again is that there are more efficient uses of police time.

* (15:50)

Certainly, we've been prepared to support, MPI has been prepared to support the program, but indeed the police have said to us that the bait car program does not provide the kind of successes that law enforcement wants. Indeed, the last hundred times that bait cars were deployed in Winnipeg there was no success because none of them were stolen or attempted to be stolen. So law enforcement said to us, you know, there are better things we can do with resources. Let's do them. If law enforcement came back to us with a different idea, we would certainly heed that call, but we believe it's much stronger to go with a host of other measures.

There you go. After eight years in opposition and 11 years in government before that, they have no ideas. The Conservatives have no real ideas when it comes to policing and enforcement.

Now what's interesting in their game plan is it contains a couple of what I would call trick plays. Trick plays are the kind of plays your team uses when you're losing and you can't match the other team person-for-person, which is clearly what this is all about. The first and most curious in their Throne Speech, or their alternative Throne Speech, was that apparently the Conservatives believe the Province should take on the training of police. Now I'm not sure they're aware of this. They have 19 members in caucus. All but five of them represent areas of the province which are policed either entirely or in part by the RCMP. I'm presuming the Conservative members, or at least most of them, are aware that the RCMP are actually not trained in the province.

They're not trained by the Province. They're trained by the RCMP in Regina. So, certainly, I'll be interested to find out whether each member actually knows that and whether they are actually advocating for creating a separate police force in the province of Manitoba. I guess we'll find out.

I'm not sure if they intended to provide an insult to the Winnipeg Police Service, which, quite frankly, does an excellent job of training police officers. I was quite proud to be at the graduation service just two weeks ago where 48 new recruits were becoming City of Winnipeg police officers.

I don't know if the Conservatives were intending to insult the Brandon Police Service, which, in conjunction with Winnipeg and other colleges, also provides top-notch training to police officers who want to work for the Brandon Police Service. So I don't know whether the Conservatives are planning on setting up a separate academy for the remaining municipals in the province of Manitoba or, more likely, they just don't know what they're talking about.

What would be useful? If the Conservatives really wanted to run a successful play, they could work with us. They could work to force the hand of the federal government, which promised in an election campaign less than two years ago that there would be 2,500 more police officers across Canada. They have also promised that there would be 1,000 more RCMP officers across Canada. It'd be very helpful if they could throw the equivalent of a block and actually, just for once, hold their cousins in Ottawa to account and work with us to make sure that there are police officers being provided by the federal government as promised for the benefit of Manitobans. Just once, they could make themselves truly useful if they would come on board, but we'll see what happens.

The second trick play is a call to change the way that Provincial Court judges are appointed. The members opposite should know that indeed, the process, the independent process to appoint judges here in Manitoba has been in place for many years, and it's recognized as one of the best processes in the entire country of appointing judges. I'm not sure that the Conservatives are aware that Provincial Court judges in Manitoba are bound to apply the Criminal Code, which is federal law. I'm not sure that the members opposite are aware that Provincial Court judges don't make up law on their own. Provincial Court judges actually are bound to follow decisions

of judges of the Queen's Bench of Manitoba, the Court of Appeal of Manitoba and indeed, the Supreme Court, none of whom are or have ever been appointed by the New Democratic Party. We're hopeful that may change, but that may be some time.

But what we see from the Conservatives and sometimes from the Liberals when the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) gets his occasional question, is contempt for judges in Manitoba. It's contempt for judges in Manitoba, whether it's Provincial Court judges, Queen's Bench judges or Court of Appeal judges. Indeed, I do respect the work that our judges do and oftentimes they have to make difficult decisions and oftentimes they're applying a Criminal Code or a Youth Criminal Justice Act which has flaws and which has problems.

But, more than that, there's a more sinister side to the Conservatives wanting to repoliticize the appointment of provincial judges. You know, Madam Acting Speaker, I'm actually quite proud of the increasing diversity on our Provincial Court as it begins to truly reflect the changing face of Manitoba. I know the Conservatives believe that diversity is a bad thing. I had the opportunity to attend the swearing-in of four new judges just a couple of weeks ago, all four of whom spoke very emotionally and very truthfully about their backgrounds. I know that the Conservatives have a real suspicion about anybody who doesn't fit their profile, which is becoming increasingly narrower and narrower, certainly in this Legislature and across this province. I'm very nervous by the Conservatives raising this as one of their pillars to reform the justice system that they intend to repoliticize the appointment of judges, and I'm very concerned about giving members of the Legislature such as those sitting in the opposition the chance to start asking questions about, for example, the sexual orientation of a judge.

They may decide that they want to grill criminal lawyers who fulfilled their obligation to the court and to our society by defending people who may have committed horrific crimes. That is the defence lawyer's job, and I don't want an opposition member who doesn't know the first thing about justice to start questioning a lawyer about his activities.

I don't want someone who's donated their time or their effort to the John Howard Society or the Elizabeth Fry Society to have to defend their choice to work for restorative justice and to work for bettering our justice system, to have to submit to

some kind of kangaroo court that the Conservatives would love to create in this province.

The Conservatives believe that special interest groups are anybody who doesn't fit their narrow profile. New Democrats see people in Manitoba coming from all different backgrounds, all different ethnic groups, all different circumstances, as Manitobans, and if they've done a good job as a lawyer and if they are able to show that they've had a good career, why shouldn't they be entitled to submit to an independent process to try and become a judge? And who are they going to remove? Are the Conservatives then suggesting we should take a representative of the Law Society off of that panel or a representative of the Bar Association off of that panel? It will be interesting to see how the Conservatives explain their justice views as we go along.

Now, we know in the last election the Conservatives had justice week, and one of their biggest promises on justice was to build a new 700-bed jail. The Conservatives knew their game plan wouldn't deter crime. They would just continue to punish it. It's like spending all of your time working on your kickoff return team because you know your game plan is going to give up a lot of touchdowns.

Now, New Democrats balance—we balance our approach to justice. Yes, we believe in tougher measures on violent crime, tougher measures to deal with gun crimes, tougher measures to deal with gangs, organized crime and car thieves. The other day the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) mentioned that Manitoba's organized-crime package indeed has been approved by other provinces and the federal government. I can tell you, I was quite proud to be at the federal-provincial meetings in Winnipeg just two weeks ago when, indeed, 14 ministers of Justice from all different provinces and the federal government, from all different political parties, stood up together and approved Manitoba's leadership on this issue.

Certainly, I'm proud to work with this Minister of Justice and the previous Minister of Justice, now the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), who have ensured that Manitoba is at the forefront to providing innovative legislation and innovative programs and providing that strong voice at the national level.

Manitoba has an Integrated Organized Crime Task Force comprised of the RCMP, of the

Winnipeg Police Service and the Brandon Police Service which is doing great work. Manitoba has a very successful Gang Prosecution Unit which has been successful in putting hundreds of criminals behind bars.

Now, I note the Conservatives in their motion on the Speech from the Throne mentioned gun crime, and, indeed, gun crime is a concern in Winnipeg. If the Conservatives would watch TV or read the newspapers, they would also know gun crime is a concern in Toronto, in Montréal, in Calgary, in Vancouver, in Edmonton, in fact in every major city across this country. All major cities have these problems with handguns, the majority of which are illegal and the majority of which are being smuggled into this country from the United States.

You know, as a member of the NDP and as a member of this Legislature, I certainly respect and I support the RCMP which are doing a lot of hard work with Border Services to protect Canadians from illegal handguns coming into this country. But, again, I would point out to the Conservatives, who tend to ignore this or perhaps simply don't know it, that both the RCMP and Border Services are federal. Certainly we will work to do what we can do to strengthen what they're doing, to provide any support the Province can, but, again, it would be really appreciated if the Conservatives could actually throw blocks, so to speak, do something useful and actually stand with us to make sure the federal government is doing what they can to make this a safer country.

* (16:00)

It's also interesting, now that the Conservatives have put this into their materials, to watch what other provinces are doing. The Province of Québec has actually passed a law seeking to restrict handguns. The Attorney General of Ontario has come out publicly saying he supports a ban on handguns, and I'm wondering where the Conservative Leader is going to go with this.

Now I know that Conservatives don't actually allow open debate at their conventions anymore. They changed the rules to prevent individual constituencies from bringing forward resolutions. I wonder what the Conservative leader is going to say to his party when he has an awful lot of explaining to do when he goes before his members. *[interjection]*

Indeed, and indeed, I hear some of the—
[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Marilyn Brick): Order.

Mr. Swan: —chatter from the members opposite. I know that I've touched a nerve. I've touched a nerve and perhaps they'll regroup.

Now I spoke as well about passion as being an important part of any government's role, and indeed there is passion on this side to creating safer communities. *[interjection]*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Marilyn Brick): Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker.

Mr. Swan: Indeed, I hear the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who wants to join the debate—
[interjection] I hear the Member for Russell wants to join the debate and I'm sure that I will, or perhaps—
[interjection] I missed. Indeed, I see my light is already blinking when yet there are so many things to talk about.

I can tell you that I've only outlined the law-and-order game plan. Our game plan is better than theirs even at that front, but, that's where their game plan ends. They have nothing. You turn to the play book in the Conservative—the Conservative play book on justice. That's where it ends. New Democrats know that law and order is only one part of providing safer communities and providing justice.

I know that the Member for Russell is the kind of guy who would have hit you in the back on the football field, and I know he likes to do that here as well, but, indeed, we'll keep the debate between the sidelines and until the whistle. I will be quite pleased to put our proposal on justice against the very limited one-dimensional approach that we hear from the Conservatives.

There isn't time to talk about Lighthouses. There isn't time to talk about Turnabout. There isn't time to talk about Neighbourhoods Alive! which is spreading across the province and providing innovative ways for justice across this entire province.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, indeed, to conclude, in fact, earlier this fall, we had the greatest coach in CFL history who walked into this building to receive an honour from the province of Manitoba. Of course, that's Bud Grant, who managed to end with the Blue Bombers four Grey Cups in five years. Indeed, he did it by combining passion, by combining intelligence and by combining balance. Indeed, I know men who played on his teams, such as Norm Rauhaus and Gord Rowland, who coached me on the

football field, and they taught me a lot about football and also a lot about life.

I've met Coach Berry as well. I think if you look up the word "passion" in the dictionary, you will see Coach Berry's picture next to it. You will not see the Member for Russell's (Mr. Derkach) picture next to it, but you may see Coach Doug Berry's picture next to it, and I know that he led the team to the Grey Cup game, and with passion and drive, indeed, he will lead them to success next year.

I am proud to play on this team, the New Democratic Party, with the support of people from across the province and not this narrow constituency that I see on the opposition bench. I am proud to be part of a team of women and men from very diverse backgrounds, a team which understands the needs to balance the needs of the cities with our rural municipalities, with the north, the need to promote economic development while at the same time improving the safety and the lifestyle of our workers and protecting our environment, the passion to work to correct the injustices done to our Aboriginal peoples long before many of us were in the Legislature or even born, so we have to do it, and indeed, the passion to create a truly diverse and a truly welcoming province, the passion to work every day to make sure that Manitobans have the best chance to participate in our society.

I see the defence, the opposition is reeling, the chains are moving first down after first down for this government. This Throne Speech lays out a game plan which is good for all Manitobans and I'm going to look forward standing up and voting in support of it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to give my response to the Throne Speech and the reasons why I cannot support this Throne Speech, and also the reasons for supporting the official opposition leader's amendment to this Throne Speech. In my response, I would like to cover a wide range of topics because there certainly is a wide range.

I'm going to stay away from the football analogies, because I think we're getting a little tired of that stuff, but I'd also like to cover what my critic responsibilities are, as well as my constituency, as well as the entire province because we do represent the entire province.

Often in the daily Question Period, I hear the phrase, "We have much more to do." It's a standard

answer from a certain government minister. This phrase did not transcend itself very well into the Throne Speech because the Throne Speech was long on perceived past accomplishments and short on vision for the future, which brings me to the purpose of a Throne Speech. My idea at least was that a Throne Speech should be a road map for the future direction the government intends to implement for the province, but perhaps my choice of using a road map is not a good choice because as we've seen in the last eight long years of NDP government, they only move on a problem such as roads when public outrage becomes so great this government can no longer risk ignoring the problem.

Being risk-adverse has taken on a whole new meaning in the past eight years, and the Throne Speech was evidence as we are headed into another term of looking back and not planning for the future. There are so many opportunities out there, but this government seems content to let them slide by and let other provinces and jurisdictions seize on the opportunities, move ahead, while in Manitoba we continue to be content with being mediocre and missing opportunities that has cost us and will cost us even more as a province into the future.

Madam Acting Speaker, in terms of the Throne Speech in itself, there is a wide range of topics I would like to address, starting with my critic role portfolio as Intergovernmental Affairs. Under Intergovernmental Affairs, I would just like to start with the city of Brandon, and as Brandon grows and realizes long-term progress, its citizens deserve greater power to manage its own affairs. We would like to see the Brandon charter expanded. This would give the city more authority to use land-use decisions, to establish business improvement zones, and to grant tax exemptions and a full range of licences from business to recreational facilities. Even something as simple as giving Brandon a private wine store cannot seem to happen under this government. They should be able to manage their own affairs.

There is considerable growth in many Manitoba rural communities such as Steinbach, Morden and Winkler, but all the communities, both large and small, need support to help them with the basic services. Modern roads, sound water supplies, up-to-date sewer and water facilities, these are the keys to keep the development going on both our rural and northern communities. This government needs to make a firm commitment to growing the economy that exists outside the Perimeter Highway, and I did

not hear this in the Throne Speech. However, as we saw in the previous session, the last session, with bills like Bill 20, this government is more intent on placing further restrictions on municipalities rather than a commitment to helping them grow.

I noticed in the Throne Speech or the lack of notice in the Throne Speech about Hydro. There was no mention of Conawapa, no mention of Wuskwatim. They continue to talk about converting the Selkirk plant from coal to natural gas, but my understanding is that natural gas is a non-renewable energy. We have wind power proposals out there that are sitting, waiting to be approved. We could approve many more. Between the Brandon and Selkirk plant, why not approve enough wind power that you could shut those plants down completely and work on renewable energy instead of depending on non-renewable sources? Manitoba's internal energy growth is growing faster than the exports.

*(16:10)

Under infrastructure and transportation, there is much to do in terms of sewer and water infrastructure, and there is a pressing need to upgrade these plants. We need firm commitments, not just re-announcing the same programs over and over.

Ironically, as I speak now, this is the start of the annual Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention in Brandon. There was a study just released last week by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities entitled *Danger Ahead: The Coming Collapse of Canada's Municipal Infrastructure*. In that study, they found that 80 percent of Canada's infrastructure is past its service life. Roads, bridges, sewer and water are in dire need of repair.

We need a firm commitment. They've committed \$400 million a year to highway projects per year for the next 10 years. Why not get out ahead and tender these out two and three years ahead of time? There are things like the futures market where the companies could actually hedge their oil purchases for many of these roads. They could get out and know, if they've got business ahead, so that they could procure the supplies they need and hire the people that they need.

I also noticed that in this Throne Speech there was no mention of the transportation hub we have in Manitoba. The rail and the trucking is vital to Manitoba. The container business continues to grow and yet there's absolutely no mention of that in this Throne Speech.

There was no mention of the railway infrastructure. A couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines (Mr. Rondeau) sponsored a tour out to the St. Leon wind farm. I hope that when the bus was running down 23 highway, they took note of the railway. The Morris to Mariapolis line is being torn up and sold for salvage. This line was under provincial jurisdiction. It could've been stopped, but they chose not to. I have another rail line within my constituency, the Rathwell to Nesbitt line, a CP line, which is scheduled for abandonment. There's also the Morden to Killarney line. We need this provincial government to step up to the plate, take some action and stop CP Rail from abandoning these lines. Once gone, we will never get them back.

Madam Acting Speaker, on Friday night I was at a conservation dinner meeting and—

An Honourable Member: Was it free?

Mr. Pedersen: No, actually I paid for my ticket. We talked about the floodway being on time and on budget, and we really do question that. It's a matter of being on budget because you cut back the project. But it's the firm belief of a number of those people gathered at that conservation meeting on Friday night that if we could have taken the money, instead of building the floodway larger, we could have used that money to store water across rural Manitoba and you wouldn't have needed to spend the \$500 million on the floodway.

There is no imagination in this government. They will not even consider things like that. We have dam projects out our way that they won't even consider funding feasibility studies for. How are we ever going to get ahead when we come into a drought, and a drought will probably happen in the next number of years when we're going to run out of potable water in southern Manitoba, and instead we built a ditch bigger to drain the water away.

The roads in our area are terrible to say the least. We have contracts, and I noticed a contract coming out for No. 2 highway now. It's only shoulder upgrades; it's not for paving. Already, we're seeing cutbacks on the so-called highway projects.

I have a PR road, PR 305. Provincial Road 305 in my constituency was so bad this spring, the school buses had to be diverted to the municipal roads to get around. If that's what you call imagination in fixing our roads, we're in terrible shape.

Under the theme of justice, I notice the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) talking about handguns and long guns, et cetera. We still haven't been answered the question from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) that how many long guns were actually turned in by the Hells Angels and other gang members. We're still waiting for that answer. I guess it's better if farmers and duck hunters turn in their long guns and that will solve crime.

But crime used to be a city problem. In my constituency, which is a rural constituency, it's a huge problem now. We have arson, vandalism, thefts are running rampant. There is no justice for these people out in the country. People are scared; people are mad; and I'm afraid that something's going to happen because of the lack of confidence that justice will prevail. Somebody's going to get hurt out in our rural areas and I'm afraid that it is going to be an innocent person. Simply hiring more police is one measure that will help, but it takes more than that. We need to have real justice for those that commit crimes.

Madam Acting Speaker, under the Science, Technology, Energy and Mines, this was wonderful here. We see the weakest commitment that the government could possibly make. I would call it smoke and mirrors, but that would be just more greenhouse gas, so we don't want to go there.

They've decreed to do 5 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over the next three years. They're going to leave 95 percent until after the next election, so I guess that means that the Progressive Conservatives will have to do it then, after the next election.

Under Water Stewardship, Madam Acting Speaker, we continue to hear talk and more regulations, unscientific regulations. There's been lots of rhetoric about protecting Lake Winnipeg, countless announcements, consultations, review, draft regulations, but the bottom line is they have their scapegoats. This government uses scapegoats. Agriculture, federal government, municipal lagoons, all become convenient places to place blame. They refuse to crack down on existing cottages, new cottage developments. Instead, they are letting new cottage developments happen without any real consideration as to what will happen with the effluent. Urban fertilizer use—no regulation at all. Raw sewage continues to be dumped from the city of Winnipeg, and yet agriculture, federal government, municipal lagoons are always the scapegoats.

There's a realization that you have to stop pandering and wishing this problem to go away. Everybody is part of the problem. Agriculture is part of the problem, too, and they realize that. But don't use them as a scapegoat. Everyone is part of the problem. Everyone needs to be part of the solution. That would require leadership from a government. That's what we don't see.

The environment policies that they do bring in should be based on sound science, and outcomes should be measurable, not goals for later on that will never happen. They need to concentrate on phosphorus for the city of Winnipeg as to make it happen sooner rather than combining it with nitrogen and phosphorus. Phosphorus is the main problem for algae growth on Lake Winnipeg. Concentrate on phosphorus and it would have a greater impact on restoring the health of Winnipeg, and it would result in significant cost savings in the near term. We also continue to wait for the Clean Environment Commission report, and I wonder what will happen with more restrictive legislation after that comes out.

* (16:20)

Under Advanced Education and Literacy, the tuition freeze continues to set our universities back. It's a major handicap to our universities, and it's a major handicap for their ability to provide top-notch facilities. We must address the differences in tuition costs between rural Manitoba and Winnipeg. The Red River community college in Portage charges \$6,100, versus \$1,500 in Winnipeg. This is very unjust to rural Manitoba.

Under Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, I think I could probably go on for a long time on this one, but I'll just touch on a few highlights because it's very close to my constituency. This Throne Speech just continues to fail to recognize the serious challenges facing some parts of our rural economy. Issues such as the impact of the rising Canadian dollar, the high input costs, trade matters, traceability programs, country-of-origin labelling, which is called COOL, it's creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty and real hardship for our livestock sector in particular.

The livestock sector contributes \$1.5 billion to the provincial economy and hires thousands of direct and indirect jobs, and as we heard today, from the KAP luncheon today, we know how important it is to the economy, and, yet, there's no real support for it. Our cattle producers are still reeling from BSE, are still struggling to cover their cost of production, and

our hog producers are going out of business. I know at least one of my constituents who used to be in the hog business is now working in Alberta. That's sad, because that's a young family. We're going to lose them to Alberta. We're facing a mass exodus from the livestock sector. Many of these, as I said, are young producers, and a proactive government would recognize this, sit down with producers, find out what's needed.

The CAIS program doesn't work. The Canadian Wheat Board is not going to solve this. The cash advances through the CAIS program do not work because it affects your reference margin, and you're not eligible for it.

It's a sad lack of leadership by this government and it's demonstrated again in this Throne Speech, how out of touch they really are.

We need immediate and long-term strategies to deal with the COOL, the country-of-origin labelling, so as to be able to minimize the impact on our livestock sector. Get proactive. Get out in front of the problem. Don't wait for it to happen.

The fact that they didn't even touch on cattle-processing capacity within the province is strange, that they wouldn't mention that, seeing as how they're taxing us \$2 a head for the Cattle Enhancement Council, and at the same time that Cattle Enhancement Council is costing us \$400,000 a year in management fees, \$400,000 a year that could be put into actually building facilities instead of building bureaucracies. *[interjection]* Well, it keeps a lot of people employed, I guess. Why not let private industry decide what it wants to do and then raise the money from there?

We need commitments to long-term research and development, and, again, the Throne Speech was silent on this. Kernel visual distinction—it's called KVD—in wheats is the ability to segregate wheat varieties. We could be growing high-starch, low-protein wheats for the ethanol business, but we're not able to right now because it can't distinguish them from the bread wheats. It's this undying support for the Canadian Wheat Board for problems such as this that they fail again to address.

We have some reservations about the reference to amendments to The Employment Services Act. Regulating hours of service in the agricultural business is a dangerous road to go down. The quickest way to discourage business from operating in Manitoba is to set up standards that are not

comparable with other provinces. When you're always following other provinces, why do you want to lead when it comes to restrictions?

As I said, the Clean Environment Commission hasn't released their report yet. The moratorium—oh, pardon me, it's called a pause. The hog pause is still on. Moratorium is more like it. We don't even know if it's going to come off. Again, there's no mention in the Throne Speech. Is this going to be removed, or is it going to stay on? It's anybody's guess.

I think it was a couple of weeks ago, the week before last, our Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) and our Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) were in Ottawa talking to the federal Ag Minister Gerry Ritz. They discussed many issues, amongst them that CAIS is not working. They were talking about the next generation of risk management programs. The reference margins for CAIS have declined for cattle producers over the past several years, leaving them ineligible for the CAIS program benefits such as the cash advance, and I'm not sure the Minister of Agriculture understands that.

Most of my cattle producers are not able to understand this. Just today I was reading the Canadian Cattlemen's Association wants to decouple the cash advance from CAIS, and I hope that our Minister of Agriculture would take up something like this.

One of the other topics that they talked to Minister Ritz about was bovine tuberculosis, TB. They brought out the issue of mandatory surveillance and how this testing comes at a cost to Manitoba producers, and they asked about a presentation fee.

They also talked to federal Minister Ritz about ensuring that producers can move livestock across the border in a timely fashion. As they were reporting back to us about their discussions there, I sort of had the sense that Minister Ritz was not aware of the TB problem in Manitoba and I was wondering, so where was our Minister of Ag and Food and Rural Initiatives on this issue? Does she not talk to the federal minister about this?

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The Throne Speech barely mentioned alternate energy such as ethanol, biodiesel and wind, but the ethanol and biodiesel I keep finding interesting. I am still waiting to hear where these five commercial projects in Manitoba are up, commercial production.

I'm still waiting to hear that. I guess I've got to get outside the Perimeter more.

An Honourable Member: Stay there.

Mr. Pedersen: That's inside the Perimeter. I heard that comment, Mr. Speaker, about I should stay outside of Winnipeg, and, you know, that's typical of the NDP mentality, just stay out of our Winnipeg. We'll govern the province. Don't worry about rural Manitoba. I take that message home with me and I tell my constituents that. They're very happy to hear that type of mentality.

Having access to modern communications, I was talking to some people out of Saskatchewan last week and we were talking about broadband Internet. Why can't we have broadband Internet across rural Manitoba? It's Perimeteritis when you talk about—*[interjection]* There is no reason why it can't be.

Mr. Speaker, we would hope that they begin to recognize the problems in rural Manitoba. Unfortunately, my light is blinking and I still have pages and pages and pages of problems that I haven't even begun to deal with in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that members see fit to support the amendments brought forth by the Leader of the Opposition, and that we will, in turn, vote down this Throne Speech.

* (16:30)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the Throne Speech. I will inform the member opposite I will not be supporting the amendment that they have put forward, none of the amendments that have been put forward, because the Throne Speech that we have put forward is one that outlines the plan to build Manitoba.

I would urge the members opposite to read through it carefully. In fact, instead of supporting their amendments, support this Throne Speech because this Throne Speech lays out the plan for the future growth of rural and northern and central Manitoba, because we are a government that doesn't just talk about rural Manitoba, we don't just talk about northern Manitoba and we don't just talk about the cities.

Why is that? It is because we're the only party that has representation from all parts of the province. We're the only party and a government that crosses and has representation from a broad range of people,

a diverse group of people that brings forward many very good ideas that we can put in the Throne Speech, that we put in our election platform and that we are going to build this province with.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I get into a few of those issues, I want to thank you for your guidance and your efforts to maintain decorum in this House. I know sometimes that is very, very challenging, but we look to you for your guidance, and we appreciate that. I would also like to recognize the pages and the staff that sits at the centre table here, who keeps us all in order here in this building and makes sure that we have the right bills, that we follow the right procedures. I thank them for that support that they give us.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues that I could talk about in this Throne Speech, but I have to take a little bit of time to talk about the issues related to the agriculture industry and the challenges that the industry is facing. The high Canadian dollar is affecting the livestock industry, but it's also affecting many other sectors on the manufacturing side. As I look at it, and I can say to the members opposite and to my colleagues that this morning I had a meeting with the Manitoba cattle producers, and one of things we talked about is if the dollar remains where it is—and these industries, many of them are built on a lower dollar. How are we going to make adjustments to that industry to live through the long term? I will say to the members opposite that one of the things that the industry told us, the industry told us that they were very happy that this government made a decision to maintain extension services in rural Manitoba, that we did not go the path of other provinces and remove all of that extension service, because now it is those people that are in the GO offices, in the GO centres, the livestock specialists who are working with that sector as they meet some of the challenges that they have.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of financing and TB mandatory surveillance, all of those issues, I'm surprised that the member opposite would say that Minister Ritz does not know about this issue. That shows complete disrespect for a federal minister. I know that Minister Ritz is aware of the issue because we met with him. We talked to him. We talked about the TB surveillance. We talked about the issue of the extra testing that was being called for at the border. I want to commend CFIA for working so quickly to ensure that that extra testing did not have to happen. The extra testing has been removed.

There are changes that have been made. The only ones that have to be tested, if they're going direct to slaughter, they do not have to be tested. If they are going to for breeding stock, they have to be tested. But the breeding industry has said that that they can handle that. The federal government was well aware of that issue, and CFIA has moved on it. There are still more issues that have to be addressed with regard to TB. The whole issue of mustering fees and those kinds of issues is one that we have to work together with the industry. This is what we talked to them about. What part is the industry going to be playing in this? Because it just cannot be government. Government cannot be expected to pick up all of the costs. We had this discussion about how we can involve the industry.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the next generation of APF, there are negotiations going on, and I believe that very shortly we should be able to move forward with it. It is my hope that, through the existing programs that we have, we can make some minor changes, particularly for the cattle industry with regard to their margins that will then make the program work better for them.

As well, Mr. Speaker, producers can apply for a targeted cash advance. The pork industry has applied for it. It's been approved, and, again, I met with the cattle producers this morning and indicated to them that, in order to get that targeted cash advance going, they have to initiate the issue. The Province cannot go to the federal government and say, do a targeted cash advance. The process is that the industry has to say they want it, and then we can move on it to the federal government. That's what we did with the pork industry. In fact, the federal government first came with 50 percent. We urged the federal government to go higher at the request of the pork producers, and the pork producers have now a 60 percent targeted cash advance.

Mr. Speaker, so those are some of the challenges that we face in the industry. I was very pleased today when we had an ag in the city—Ag Awareness Day—ag appreciation day—no, it's Ag Awareness Day, to make many people more aware of the impact of this industry on the city. It is a service sector, the manufacturing sector, but there are huge opportunities for food processing, for nutraceuticals, for functional foods and in the alternate energy fields. When you go into these alternate energy fields, there are also the opportunities of what we are going to do with the co-product, the distiller's dried grains, that comes off it. I see this as an area where

research can be done, where we have to do more work and create new opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, those are some of the issues that I want to talk about, issues like alternate energy. Member opposite said he didn't hear about alternate energy in the Throne Speech. First of all, they say, oh, well, you're just regurgitating everything that was in the last Throne Speech. Then, when you don't put it in, they say, oh, you haven't put this in, so I guess you're not talking about it anymore. I can assure the members opposite alternate energies are very much on our agenda, as areas of development of hydro in the north. All of those issues are very important and we will continue to work on them.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the major theme, a good portion of this Throne Speech is dedicated to green and growing. We very much want to see our environment greened, and we want to use this as opportunities for economic growth. By making investments of \$206 million to upgrade three waste-water treatment plants in Winnipeg as well as \$150 million in rural and northern Manitoba, that is definitely a commitment to cleaning up water and cleaning up our lake.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we talked about removing coal from the Brandon plant. I see this as another opportunity where we might look at agriculture products. There are many people looking at alternate energies: pelleting straw, other fibres that we have out there that could be used as an energy source, a renewable energy source that could replace products like coal.

*(16:40)

Of course, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are not too keen on the position we've taken on removing nitrogen and phosphorus. They just want to see phosphorus removed. I'm quite surprised at that. When you look at provinces west of us, in the cities in Alberta, cities in Saskatchewan, they are removing nitrogen and phosphorus because that is what the scientists recommend. The Clean Environment Commission made these recommendations. We have to continue to work along this path to ensure that we are cleaning up our water, that we are conserving water. Even in an area that my friend the Minister of Conservation has worked very hard in, in developing new cottage lots, many people want a cottage at the lake, but, along with developing cottages, we are bringing forward changes that will see new measures to address cottage and residential septic fields, again, a very important issue. If we are sincere about

having clean lakes, then that's a very important issue for us.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, other people have talked about tax reductions. Other people have talked about health care. I want to talk briefly about a few of the further issues in the rural area and in the north.

The members opposite, when they were in government, increased education tax on farmland. They increased the portioning. They did nothing to reduce education tax on farmland. When we took office, we made a commitment to a 20 percent reduction, a 50 percent reduction. This year we are at a 70 percent reduction, Mr. Speaker, and that's a significant amount—\$29 million going back into landowners' hands. The members opposite continue to vote against it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the other issue that members opposite talked about is CAIS, and that CAIS doesn't work. There are problems. Many amendments have been made to the program to make it work better. But, in this year, we are committing \$95 million to the CAIS program. This is the provincial part. The federal portion is higher than that.

Now, I know members opposite will say that the CAIS program doesn't work. It doesn't work for everyone; it doesn't. I would admit that, Mr. Speaker. But money is going out to the communities; money is going out to producers, and we are making changes to the program so that it will be more effective. Under the new program, you will have agri-invest, agri-stability, agri-recovery, a wide variety of programs and what we hope will be a better basket of programs.

But we have to be sure, as we're developing this new program, this new package, that we have enough money in there for innovation. We have to have more money for innovation, for economic development, waste-water treatment, for example, because you're not going to have this diversity take place in rural Manitoba without proper waste-water treatment. We have to have more money set aside for innovation and research, programs like the Alternate Land Use program. That is a way that farmers are addressing environmental issues.

Mr. Speaker, one of the more important issues is bridging generations. We hear about the next generation of farmers that want to take over. How are they going to do this? We've put in place a program through our Agricultural Services

Corporation and now we are building on that, because the program now applies to farmers. Under this new program, it will be rural businesses and fishers who will be able to access funds in order to transfer their family operation to the next generation.

Co-ops are key to many activities where an individual may not have the resources to start a business, but by pooling resources through co-ops, whether it be in processing, whether it be in housing, whether it be a gas station, Mr. Speaker, whatever they do, there's an ability to keep more resources at home. That's why we are enhancing supports for co-ops.

One of the areas, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we really have to move along is in adding value to our products. For too many years, we have exported our products for somebody else to add value to and then bring them back home; we buy them back. We have the resources here. We saw it today at Ag Awareness Day where products are being used, products are being developed. We have a new initiative where we want to do a very innovative business model to forge partnerships between the processors, the producers and suppliers to ensure that more Manitoba product is used in Manitoba goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that when I look at the north, I'm very pleased and impressed that the federal government was able to partner with the Province to fix up the railway and to put enhancements into the Port of Churchill. This port saves our farmers money. It's the shortest route to markets, and we need more of that. Of course, I want to say that the only grain that went through the Port of Churchill right now came through the Canadian Wheat Board. They were the ones that put that product through the port. They were the ones that had the first shipment that ever went to eastern Canada via ship rather than via rail. We got a first shipment of fertilizer in through that port.

That two-way traffic is significant for us, and we have to continue, but the question that my colleague asks: What would happen to the Port of Churchill if there was no Canadian Wheat Board? That's a very good question because the grain companies have no facilities there. They're going to want to move their grain through their facilities, so every time the members opposite speak up against the Canadian Wheat Board, they are further putting the Port of Churchill in jeopardy. I don't think any of us, in Manitoba or the Prairies, should say that we don't value an inland port, particularly with the climate the

way it's changing and the opportunities to put more traffic through that; those are very important.

Mr. Speaker, I want to refer briefly to the north and the steps that we're taking there. Of course, one of the ones I am very excited about is an agreement that we've come up with, with the Jewish National Fund, to build a pilot project of a greenhouse in the north. This greenhouse will be built in Grand Rapids. It's in the planning stages right now and, along with the gardening projects that we have in the north, we are working towards bringing fresher foods and having more production in the north to build a healthier society.

Mr. Speaker, as well, the members opposite are so opposed to the bipole on the west side of the province. Somehow, you know, they never cared about eastern Manitoba. They never cared about the north. They never had any interest in that until—and whereas our government, there were over 80 meetings. There were 80 meetings, over 80 meetings with people in the north and on the west, east side of the province, I should say, to discuss bipole and where it should go. Members opposite have just dug their heels in. There are many professors to listen to. There are many professors to listen to on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, building a hydro line, a bipole on the east side of the province is not economic development. That's a couple of years of brushing and scrubbing of lines and brushing the lines in the years to come, but there is no real economic development. Real economic development happens when you have access via road, where you can have job creation. Real economic development is in tourism. I can say to the members opposite, that will happen. That's why we're making the commitment to the first phase of the road this year, and then we'll continue to go on to the all-weather roads to Hollow Water and Bloodvein. We are building two new bridges to have permanent roads in that area.

So the members opposite would have decided to hang their hat on the whole issue of bipole 3 and that it shouldn't go on the west side of the province. I could say to the members opposite that I'm quite happy that it's going on the west side of the province. I am quite happy it's there, and I'm quite happy that we are taking steps on the east side of the province to have true economic development, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just talk briefly about my constituency. When I talk about my constituency, I have to talk about the advances that we have made in health care in that area. The hospital that has been

built in Swan River is a wonderful facility, and we continue to work to improve services there. To bring dialysis to Swan River has changed a quality of life for many people, and that's why we're not only doing it in that area. That's why we are putting additional dialysis units in—additional ones in Winnipeg, in Gimli and in communities like Berens River, Norway House, Peguis. For those people that live in those remote communities, it is just an improvement to their quality of life.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, there are so many more things that I could be saying about this Throne Speech. I say to you that it lays out the plan, the beginning of the plan. It spells out what we ran on in the election, and now puts the plan in place of what we will do over the next four years.

I look forward to all of the successes, the economic growth, the improvements to education, to health care and to the environment that we will bring through implementing this Throne Speech. I ask all members to support it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I'll be very direct. I will not be supporting this Throne Speech. I will be supporting the amendment from the official opposition as well. Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, this is the most non-Throne Speech I've had in eight years of being in this Legislature. I want to assure all members on the government side, the Cabinet ministers, they couldn't have had an input into this because I'm sure they could have come up with a better Throne Speech individually if they'd tried, with very little effort.

Mr. Speaker, it was a rehash of a number of things that they've had, just like the Minister responsible for Agriculture has just indicated. I want to assure her and all members of this House that there's so much needed to be done in agriculture that this government isn't addressing that I wouldn't know where to start.

There's so much opportunity in rural development in rural Manitoba. As the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) and the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) certainly know in their visit to Ottawa last week, or two weeks ago, it was an opportunity to deal with some of the issues around agriculture. I've had the opportunity, as well, to attend some conferences, from the west Ag conference in Vancouver a couple of weeks ago, and look at the

issues on transportation and infrastructure across Manitoba.

Of course, there are initiatives happening, and I think the government here is trying to address some. They go on and on about the amount of dollars that they've put into the program, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that that's a good thing. It's a good thing that we have more dollars available. I guess I still have a bit of work to do in regard to challenging the government on the fact that, with the biggest transfer payments they've ever had from Ottawa, they're only using a miniscule amount of those to increase the budget that they've got in Manitoba, when we are so far behind in infrastructure development in this province that it's very doubtful that they'll ever catch up.

I certainly applaud the fact, Mr. Speaker, that we do need to have infrastructure development in this province. It goes along with the critic responsibilities that I have for trade and government services, a number of other areas as well that I'm responsible for, but it all leads to the fact that we need to do these things to be competitive.

I enjoy working with our new critic for Finance, the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) as the critic for Finance of the Province of Manitoba, that I, as responsible for the Competitiveness that his predecessor had, Competitiveness, Training and Trade. It's an opportunity that Manitoba cannot lose on because, if we do continue to lose and do not continue to make it the priority that it should be under a government in Manitoba, then we will continue to fall farther and farther behind.

I think one of the things that I wanted to look at and just mention today again has been brought up in the House in Question Period. It is that even Saskatchewan outranks us in the competitive categories. There were 11 categories that have been looked at, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan outranks us on 10 of those. Whether it's the highest tax rates, personal rates west of Québec, whether it's the lowest personal exemptions in all of western Canada, whether it's the levels of corporate taxes or the division of tax positions, it's a huge concern.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a government that applauds the fact that they've been able to reduce, do what we said we would in 1999, and slowly eliminate the education taxes off farmland. In this budget, they promised to take it up to 70. They had the budget to do away with it in 2003, at least, and they still haven't done it. This is the government that

said, in 2003 of our plan, that it couldn't be done. Well, it can be done, could have been done and is being done. But you know what? Just like we said it would be in 2003, it's costing the government \$1.5 million a year to administer this program. So the funds that they've wasted over the last five years could have eliminated the program by now. That's the kind of mismanagement that this government is responsible for in creating a false economy in Manitoba.

We have an economy that, and I've had many people come to me as the trade, transportation and infrastructure critic and talk about the potential that they see in Manitoba. But they're still so far behind other provinces that that's where they're making their major investments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these aren't small companies. Perhaps the small companies, and I would say our farms are one of those, they can't move the land. If they're going to be here and farm it, they have to be here and farm it. They have to stay on the land and do that. Many people, though, with whether it's road building, machinery, whether it's office space, most of the industry that we have in Manitoba is quite capable of being able to lift itself up, move to another jurisdiction where they have a more competitive tax climate. They can do that as a board decision in the offices of their companies.

We need to make sure in Manitoba that we have set at least a competitive climate to deal with other areas in, to be competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada. You know, another one of those competitive areas—and it was like a budget announcement, Mr. Speaker, and it was supposed to be a Throne Speech. They announced that they're going to increase the personal exemptions, basic personal exemptions, BPs by \$200. Well, that was just another reannouncement of what they did announce last spring, as an example, but that still leaves Manitoba the seventh lowest basic personal exemptions in Canada, seventh lowest in Canada, and this is an announcement that they tout as a great economic opportunity for this province. It's no incentive to keep our young people in this province, and they will continue to leave.

They have also refused for the—they've had a plethora of opportunities to reduce and index the personal income tax brackets for inflation, Mr. Speaker, and that has not been done by this government either. There are so many, the small amount of basic, of reduction in personal income tax

levels from 13 to 12.75. Of course, it's always welcome, but it doesn't even keep up with inflation in regard to where the other provinces have gone.

I guess that these are just some of the areas that I am most concerned about at a time when this province is receiving record transfer payments from the province—from the federal government, and the federal government still has done a responsible thing in reducing the debt of Canada. They've eliminated the deficits, but reducing the debt of Canada is not a bad thing because, like the province of Manitoba, if we were reducing our debt, there would be more funds down the road for our future youth and businesses in Manitoba to be able to expand the infrastructure and work in developing the infrastructure base of our province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of hearing many speakers at the west Ag meeting recently that talked about private-public partnerships in our areas. I know that there are a couple of ones that the City of Winnipeg is looking at on the Disraeli Bridge. Of course, the Charleswood Bridge is an example of how well those kinds of projects can work, but this government has chosen to go deeper in debt in most of these infrastructure programs and continues to make themselves look good, if by pulling the wool over the eyes of the public by saying that they're going to build more bricks and mortar instead of reducing the long-term impacts of the economic burden that they're placing upon them while they're doing it.

So, on the one hand, they're building bricks and mortar using capital and taxpayers' dollars to do it and, on the other hand, they're mortgaging the future of the young people of this province. You know, I

guess I just would even feel much more comfortable if I—and maybe we'll see it in the ninth rehash of the budget next spring, but, Mr. Speaker, there is no reference to a plan to reduce our ballooning debt. Manitoba's debt has over doubled since I became a member of this Legislature. I think under the NDP government it has grown tremendously. The operating debt of this province is doubled what it was in those days, never mind where the capital debt of the province has gone. These are issues that are being done at a time when there are huge amounts of dollars coming from the federal transfer payments.

Now, let me make it clear. A couple of weeks ago in the city, I also heard Mr. David MacKinnon speak, who came from Ontario. He spoke at the Frontier Centre, and his comment was, and I see it in the papers here again. I see federal Member of Parliament, Steven Fletcher, this morning, for Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia, talking about it as well, Mr. Speaker, and that is the fact that when Ontario is contributing somewhere around \$23 billion to the federal transfer payments in equalization programs, where Alberta is putting in over \$9 million, where B.C. is contributing to it, and even Saskatchewan is not having any problem right now and, of course, with the new government it's going to get better, but they're utilizing those resources at a time when we are at a situation where—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 20 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 26, 2007

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