

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 7—The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act
(Child Pornography Reporting)**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 7, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Child Pornography Reporting); Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille (obligation de signaler la pornographie juvénile), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill would require the reporting of child pornography, protect informants from retribution and guard the confidentiality of informants.

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

PETITIONS

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 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 into 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 Stuart Blain, Henry Boonstra, Morris Sauter and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

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 the current retired teachers, as well as all future retirees, receive a fair COLA.

This is signed by E. Mary Debrow, J. Rosins, Sally Cranston and many, many other Manitobans.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Norway House Ferry Service Disruption

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I have a ministerial statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to report to the House on the early disruption of ferry service in the community of Norway House. The ferry became stuck in the ice on Saturday, about halfway across the Nelson River. While disruption of the ferry service happens every year, the concern is the service was disrupted early and, of course, the community was not expecting this to happen.

I spoke to a councillor from Norway House this morning, and we are pleased to report that the Amphibex arrived about 6 p.m. last night and immediately started work. The Amphibex, along with the department staff and a local community contractor, were able to free the vessel at 4 a.m. The vessel will be inspected later today, and we have two of our mechanics at the site so they are able to start any possible repairs immediately if needed. We won't know when we will be back in service until the ferry is inspected later today, but we are cautiously optimistic.

At the same time, our winter roads staff are mobilizing and are measuring ice thickness in preparation to expedite work on getting the winter road built. There are plans between the federal and provincial governments to be put in action should the community require emergency supplies or service prior to the ground access being re-established.

The Province, through Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization, will work with Public Safety Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to support their efforts to address emerging issues. The Province will continue to actively support efforts to restore ferry service or to open the winter road as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I thank the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation for his report to the House today, his ministerial statement on the ferry service at Norway House.

Mr. Speaker, we're very satisfied on this side of the House to see that the Amphibex was used to free up the vessel that was frozen in the ice in the ferry crossing. It is much-needed supplies that need to get into Nelson House and across the Nelson River. It's unfortunate that this happened. The severe weather conditions that froze the vessel into the river is an unusual circumstance regarding the flow of that particular river and the speed of it, but having had some experience with these types of ferries in regard to other areas of Manitoba, I know how fragile they can be in regard to the movement of their product. If you don't have the ability to carry the cables across the rivers and keep them going, it's a concern.

These are much-needed lifelines to being able to get the product and the food and the fuel into those communities.

* (13:40)

It's my understanding that there was only a few hours, if days, left in supplies in the community. So it is good to be able to have the community, if you will, as a lifeline back to Manitoba, the rest of Manitoba, and supply them with the goods and services that they need in that community.

I would congratulate the Emergency Measures staff for the work that they've done in regard to being able to help move this forward, along with the transport people that have obviously utilized bringing this forward. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Dakota Collegiate 24 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Darcy Dewitt. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

University of Manitoba Building Maintenance

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, universities and colleges have been forced

to defer maintenance on many of their buildings because they get the lowest per capita operating grant in Canada, dead last of all the provinces, and because of the tuition freeze.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Advanced Education to confirm that the University of Manitoba has had to defer over \$200 million in maintenance of buildings because they don't have enough money to repair them.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is that when this government came into office, the roof on the engineering building was leaking, hardly in existence. The basement in the architectural building was flooding. There were terrible, terrible tears and rips in the walls of the Tier Building. It was in complete disarray.

I can also tell the member opposite that one of the first major decisions this government made was to increase capital to universities and colleges. One of the first commitments we made was a \$50-million commitment to the University of Manitoba, seed money that allowed the University of Manitoba to raise \$237 million in capital.

Mrs. Driedger: The facts aren't supporting the minister. Because of a decade of neglect by this government, the University of Manitoba can't afford to maintain its buildings. Sixty-four percent of their buildings are in poor or in critical condition. Many buildings are filled with mould. Asbestos is a serious problem in a number of buildings.

So I'd like to ask this NDP government why they are neglecting these critical issues and forcing our youth to sit in classrooms that are filled with mould and asbestos.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, the chancellor at the university, Mr. Mauro, and the president of the university came to me and said, we presented a plan to ask the provincial government for \$50 million in capital and the private sector would match it. They told me, and it is true, that the last government said no to the \$100-million capital plan. We have, in fact, through our plan, levered up over \$200 million, including the new engineering building, the new computer science building. There are new developments to wire the universities and remove asbestos at the same time with the private sector.

Have we made up for all the lack of capital in the '90s? So far, no. Is there more work to do into the future? Yes, Mr. Speaker, but we have a plan to do it.

Health Care Ultrasound Wait Times

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): According to the Premier, he had a plan back in 1999, too. In fact, on August 24, 1999, the Member for Concordia, now the Premier, made a promise to Manitobans. He promised Manitobans that his NDP government would cut ultrasound wait times to, and I quote, one or two weeks.

Can the Minister of Health indicate the status of that promise?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a question from the member opposite on progress that we've made on wait times. Certainly, we know that the First Ministers made an agreement in 2004 to ensure that we work on wait times in five major areas across the spectrum.

One of those areas, of course, includes diagnostics. We know that we have worked on that very diligently, not only by ensuring that our human resources are increased. We know that we have over 200 more technologists in Manitoba today than we did in 1999. We've achieved this also by moving diagnostics outside of Winnipeg, MRIs, CT scanners and ultrasounds. We're going to continue to work diligently on those areas and the Manitoba four as well.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, in fact the Premier's (Mr. Doer) promise in 1999 wasn't to work diligently; it was to cut the ultrasound wait times to one or two weeks.

According to a Freedom of Information response received yesterday, in September of this year, seven years after the Premier made his promise, there are 10,036 Manitobans waiting for an ultrasound. They are waiting 13 weeks at Concordia, 13 weeks at the Grace, 13 weeks at the Health Sciences Centre and 18 weeks at St. Boniface.

Can the Minister of Health indicate whether these 10,036 people who are waiting up to 18 weeks for the ultrasound are getting the medical service that this Premier promised they would get in 1999?

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we've spoken about wait times before, broadly, when we came into government in 1999. We were concerned with the lifesaving treatments. We knew that at that time the

wait time for radiation therapy was dangerously long. We know today that that wait time is the lowest, the best in Canada, according to CIHI.

We do know that the number of ultrasounds performed in '06 and '07 is double the number that were done in 1998. We know that the wait time in Manitoba is down some eight weeks from where it was in December of 1999. That's the median wait time.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we continue to have more work to do. We're continuing to do that by investing in technology and health human resources. Our priority was lifesaving treatment. We're working on quality of life as well.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Kyoto Targets

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, members opposite certainly have one thing right today and that is that they have a lot more work to do.

The NDP climate change plan only calls for reductions of 0.4 percent of Manitoba's total greenhouse gas emissions over three years. To meet the Kyoto targets they are promising to meet, they would have to reduce emissions by 23 times that amount.

Mr. Speaker, Curt Hull of Climate Change Connections said that effectively what the NDP has done is legislate, and I quote, sitting still. Hull went on to say that he was really confused and, quite frankly, disappointed by their announcement in the Throne Speech.

How can this NDP government honestly stand before Manitobans with a straight face and say that they are on target towards meeting their Kyoto commitment?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we do have a lot more work to do and we have a lot more time to do it. I was pleased, yesterday, that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was asking us now to commit not only to 2014, but she was so optimistic that we would continue in government that the twinning of the sewer system in Winnipeg that was required, I think, in 2017—you know, we try to think in terms of two terms ahead, but I'm pleased to see the optimism of members opposite asking us to commit to the fifth term and the sixth term. I'm pleased that they're doing that.

We said, in 2010 we would be below where we were in 2000. We would be below where we were when the Tories left office, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Stefanson: What it does, Mr. Speaker, is give us a lot more time to fall even further behind every other province in Canada, a joke.

It's absolutely embarrassing and I find it regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite are taking advice from Marge Simpson who said, aim low, kids; aim so low that no one will ever care if you succeed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, a 0.4 percent reduction, you have to be kidding. When will this minister stop with the empty rhetoric and start taking real action when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions in our province?

Mr. Doer: To say we're going to be below—in 2010 we're going to be below where the Tories smogged this province in 2000. We're going to clean up your smog. We're going to clean up our emissions first and then we're going to deal with the bigger amount of emissions that the Tories left us, second. We will have two targets. One is 2010, we will be below where we came into office and even more below than a minimum of being below it. Secondly, we will go to the Kyoto targets.

We've closed down one coal plant. We are closing down another one. When we came into office, northeast Winnipeg had this spewing Conservative coal emission. We cleaned it up, Mr. Speaker.

*(13:50)

Anti-Gang Legislation Criminal Property Forfeiture Act

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, in 2004 this NDP government passed The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. This legislation was touted by the Minister of Justice as his answer to the massive gang problem in Manitoba and yet not a single application has been brought under that legislation.

Let's compare that to British Columbia. In 2006, the B.C. Legislature passed the Civil Forfeiture Act and in less than a year and a half over \$2 million in cash and assets were seized from criminals across that province.

I ask the Minister of Justice: British Columbia was successful in its anti-gang legislation. Why has Manitoba failed so miserably?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba has been providing leadership in this country in terms of looking for innovative ways to counter organized crime, aside from the Criminal Code.

Under, for example, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, over 250 drug dens' operations largely for gang activity have been shut down. The Fortified Buildings Act, the first of its kind in the country, has shut down and removed fortifications from I think up to about 20 properties.

In terms of criminal property forfeiture as well, it's been recognized that giving those tools to police, Mr. Speaker, is going part way, but to go further and make sure that we can deliver on going after the money, the legislation will be strengthened in this session.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, during the Throne Speech, we found out that the minister's answer to his failure under The Criminal Property Forfeiture Act is to have civil servants, not the police, enforce it. That's wrong, and in the meantime gangs are expanding and they're running rampant in Manitoba.

British Columbia has been successful; Manitoba has failed. So I ask the Minister of Justice: Why has he failed to create a hostile environment for gangs in Manitoba, as he promised time and time again, in Manitoba?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, lines like that are only used by members opposite and the Hells Angels themselves. I think it's unfortunate they would want to send that kind of a message to undermine the hard and good work of law enforcement in this province. Of course, the preamble in his first question is a criticism of police as well.

But it's been recognized that the police, Mr. Speaker, need extra help by way of doing the necessary investigations, surveillance, doing the accounting work necessary to go after what organized crime is after and that is the money.

That is why legislation is coming to this House, and I hope the member opposite and his colleagues will support that bill because we're going to go even a further step. I hope the member will support us.

R.M. of Rosser Land Transfer Responsibility for Emergency Services

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yesterday marked the grand opening of Roseau River's urban reserve in

the R.M. of Rosser. The site now houses a cigarette shop, a gas station and five gas pumps. We know the risk of accident or fire at any given moment could happen.

Will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs indicate who will be responsible for providing these services as a fire-medical emergency at the new gas bar?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope when the member gets up to ask a question on this that he would acknowledge that right from day one he has missed the boat on this, because this is entirely a responsibility of the federal government. They fast-tracked the Treaty Land Entitlement that is there, and that is historic obligation. They now have put I believe Charlie Mayer who may be someone known to members opposite in to deal with some of the issues that have been created perhaps by the rapid transfer.

But, Mr. Speaker, I hope when he gets up to ask a supplementary, he'll apologize to the IGA department because it is the federal government that is dealing with the First Nations, not the department that I am so proud to be minister of. I hope he'll apologize for that when he stands up.

Mr. Eichler: This minister is responsible for issuing those permits and he knows it. It comes through his government and he should know that as well.

Mr. Speaker, accident and emergency services cannot be taken for granted. Given the fact that the Province issued the permits to construct a major project for Roseau River in the R.M. of Rosser, can the general public be assured emergency services will be provided? Who will provide these services, the Province, the R.M., and at whose cost? It's not going to be the federal government. It's this government's responsibility.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we see again that the member got up and didn't once recognize the key role of the federal government. In fact, the federal government has now hired a former Conservative MP to be involved with discussions with them. He also doesn't obviously understand the process of any urban reserve or any reserve in this province which does deal with negotiations with municipalities and with the First Nations in terms of those services.

I would suggest to the member opposite, rather than attacking an economic development opportunity for First Nations in this province, rather than, as he

did before, attacking addressing historic obligation to that First Nation, perhaps he should have more of a co-operative approach, try and bring people together. That's the Manitoba way, not this divisive anti-Aboriginal agenda of members opposite.

Hollow Water Cottage Development Property Assessments

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): This minister is talking about process. I've got a wingdinger for him, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP's failure and fumbles continue for many of the frustrated cottage owners who felt ignored during the recent Hollow Water blockade. Mr. Speaker, you can imagine the frustration that one cottage owner felt when the government had the nerve to increase his property assessment during the blockade. That's right, his property assessment increased at a time when he was not able to get to his cottage. When he voiced his concern with the government, he was told that there was some wiggle room for a reversal or even a reduction in assessment.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify for this House whether all property owners affected by the blockade will receive wiggle room or only property owners who challenge the government's mishandling of the blockade?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish members opposite would think through the implications of the kinds of questions they are asking in this House.

Is the member opposite suggesting that we should politically interfere with the assessment process in this province? That is what she is suggesting. I don't know if that was ever the case in this province, but in the year 2007 this government will not interfere politically in the assessment process. That wouldn't be fair to any homeowner, any cottage owner. We want an independent, neutral assessment process, not the kind of political interference the members opposite obviously want.

Mrs. Rowat: We want ministerial responsibility. We don't want a government that's recommending wiggle room for assessments, Mr. Speaker. The decrease in this individual's property assessment leads to one of two conclusions: One, the department is trying to appease cottage owners who were affected by the blockade by reducing their property taxes; or, two, the government is anticipating more discontent and is

reducing property assessments because the value of their cottages will decrease.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Can we interpret the fact that the department is decreasing property assessments as a sign of defeat or is this just another mismanaged file by this NDP government?

Mr. Ashton: If you ever wonder why members opposite aren't ready for prime time in this province, again it's that type of question, Mr. Speaker. They clearly don't understand that in this province the minister or MLAs don't get involved in the assessment process. And if she's criticizing the assessment process, she's criticizing the very capable staff that are in a very difficult position.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you about ministerial responsibility. As Minister responsible for IGA, responsible for the assessment process, I and this government will back up our assessing staff. We're not going to interfere politically.

The Maples Constituency Nomination Invitation to Public Meeting

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): At 6:30 today at the Keewatin Street public library, I'm going to be premiering a video production. I must admit, Mr. Speaker, my budget was somewhat low and I'm not working with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking for the Premier to come out to Inkster this evening to see if, in fact, he would have the courage to defend the positions or the lack thereof that he's been taking in regard to The Maples nomination.

I'm wondering if the Premier would indicate that he would be able to come this evening, and if he does come this evening, I'd even be prepared to cancel the production and have him star live.

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his notice for an invitation tonight for the next obvious gimmick.

Mr. Speaker, I have been invited to the AMM convention to speak this evening. I have a responsibility to—you know, let me think, 1,500 delegates from all across Manitoba or the Member for Inkster. That's a real dilemma of what commitment to make tonight.

I know where our priorities are going to be. It's going to be for all of Manitoba on serious business for the future of Manitoba.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Premier himself is the master of all gimmicks. Everything I know and do I learned from the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I said to the Premier, he could pick the day, he can pick the time, he can pick the location. I'm not scared to debate the issue in any public forum with the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, someone has suggested to me that I should broaden it. It should include more than just The Maples nomination scandal. I could talk about the Crocus scandal. I could talk about the Seven Oaks land deal. I could talk about—remember the land deal when you were minister of urban affairs and the hush money that was given there. I could elaborate about the Wellington resignation.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier's a master at manipulating the media to avoid the controversies that this government has gotten into. This Premier needs to start looking in a mirror and saying, it's time that we start having investigations so that Manitobans will know what kind of character we have in this Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there was no question. We have a great deal of confidence, and I want to reiterate our commitment to the officers of the Legislature, whether the Auditor General, the Child Advocate, Elections Manitoba, the Ombudsman. We trust their integrity, unlike the member opposite.

Government's Record Invitation to Debate Issues

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I think that it begs the question when you have a land development in which hush money is given in order to put down a cone of silence, when you have the Seven Oaks land deal, when you have The Maples nomination, when you have the Crocus Fund, when you have the Wellington resignation, these are all inappropriate behaviours of serious allegations.

This Premier has been very successful, very successful at avoiding accountability. My question to the Premier is: Will he take any one of those issues and be prepared to debate in any sort of a public forum in which he can pick the date, the time and the location? Does the Premier have the ability to be able to defend his actions or lack of actions in terms of not calling for investigations?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, all the yelling and screaming doesn't change the fact that independent people have investigated every one of the issues he's raised.

You know, there was a debate; it was called an election campaign. All his sky-is-falling projections were wrong. The people debated the issues in the last election campaign a few months ago. He may not have noticed, they've rendered their judgment. We respect the judgment of the people of Manitoba.

Manitoba Economy Labour Productivity Growth

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, let's talk something which is important for Manitobans. Manitoba continues to have a strong and growing economy in spite of the rising Canadian dollars. Productivity is a very important factor for the business. Yesterday, Statistics Canada issued a report on labour productivity for 2006.

Will the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade please advise the Legislature as to the results of Manitoba?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, according to a Statistics Canada report issued this morning, Manitoba's labour productivity growth led all provinces in 2006 with a 2.2 percent increase.

This was far above the 1 percent gain posted for the nation as a whole, and led most provinces. What's nice about it is our government started out the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative which works with manufacturers, the federal government and our provincial government to lead people and to lead manufacturing in new processes.

We worked with the federal government for the composite innovation centre, which again works the private-public sector and has led to things like the expansion of Boeing, looks at the new ways of incorporating composites in buses and airplanes and other new goods. Mr. Speaker, we also have the vehicle technology centre. We are improving productivity—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Tabor Personal Care Home Replacement of Facility

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, after visiting the Tabor Home August 16, the Minister of Health agreed that the personal care home was in

desperate need of replacement. Could the minister inform this House where she is at in regard to the replacement of this personal care home?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member opposite for the question, and I thanked him privately and publicly for the advocacy that he puts forward on behalf of his community.

I did have the privilege of meeting the board and touring Tabor Home and indeed we know that that particular facility is in need of repairs. We're going to work very diligently with the RHA to ensure that we put their capital needs in the context of the capital needs that exist throughout the province. I know we were able to talk further about it just recently at the opening of the MRI at Boundary Trails hospital, and we know that we're going to continue to work with that excellent community that continues to work so diligently with their foundation to build their community.

Trade Agreements Government's Response

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Rondeau) can talk about percentages all he likes and productivity, but the facts are that our real productivity numbers, according to Stats Canada, are still near the bottom of the pile.

Mr. Speaker, this morning at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce's round table on trade, the Premier admitted that we are a long way away from getting 13 premiers to agree on an internal trade agreement. While the NDP wait for this far-off agreement, we are going to continue to fall further and further behind and lose thousands of young, educated Manitobans to more dynamic provincial economies.

Mr. Speaker, there are already bilateral agreements being established between Alberta and B.C. and between Ontario and Québec, and the Premier himself has said that these are Manitoba's biggest internal trading partners.

So, Mr. Speaker, why isn't this Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade entering into one or both of these bilateral agreements and why are the real numbers of Manitoba's productivity still near the bottom of all the provinces?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member opposite will note that our productivity numbers last year

were second to Alberta, and this year they're the No. 1 productivity numbers in Canada.

Secondly, the first bilateral Agreement on Internal Trade, the first bilateral agreement was between New Brunswick and Manitoba because we were, under the former government, giving \$14,000 a job in competition with New Brunswick for call centre jobs. We actually negotiated the first bilateral trade agreement to eliminate corporate welfare that was the policy of the former government.

The biggest challenge we have in internal trade is in agriculture. I'd like to let him know what his position is on some of the internal trade issues of agriculture.

Highway 2 Bridge Repair

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): The bridge on Highway 2 was closed last winter when a large hole was found in the deck. We are now receiving concerns about the quality and safety of the repaired bridge. A Wawanesa resident stated: a semi-trailer travelling over this bridge would have problems staying the course. This is not the quality of bridge repair that we are expecting from this government on such an important highway.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with the House whether further work is being considered on this unsafe structure?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): First of all, you hear the opposition, they're criticizing civil servants or they're criticizing private corporations. We just attended a function from the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association at which they gave a great credit to not only the people in their industry but also the civil servants of the province of Manitoba that work for the Transportation Department, day in and day out, ensuring that our structures and our highways are safe, Mr. Speaker.

So I would just add that to the member's comments that, again, they're criticizing people in the industry or the department people who are working very, very hard on our behalf, day in, day out, to ensure our highways are safe.

Trans-Canada Highway Twinning at Headingley

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Well, Mr. Speaker, I recently received the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation advertising schedule for the 2008

construction season, and there's no mention of dividing the Trans-Canada between Headingley and Winnipeg. I've been reading petitions in this House for several weeks now asking the minister to advance it in the five-year plan or to take steps that might help prevent any future accidents. As we know, it's snowing today and the conditions are only going to get worse.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation if his department has even looked at evaluating that stretch of highway and putting a plan in place to mitigate any further serious accidents on that stretch, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): The department has added many, many new snowploughs. The member opposite talks about snowy highways and conditions. We've purchased brand-new snowploughs last year, this year. We're going to ensure our highways are safe.

I just want to add, though, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite, they had—there was unfettered development outside of the city. So our obligation as a government is to take a look at development, economic development, but also look at the safety initiatives that need to be necessary to be put in place to ensure that businesses can grow and yet there can be safe traffic flows as a result.

* (14:10)

You know, Mr. Speaker, we entered into an agreement with the Municipality of Headingley not long ago to take a look at the different aspects that need to be looked at to ensure that that highway will be safe. There are many different options that are coming forward. The reeve stated that the speed should be raised on the highways. Some say it should be lowered. There are many different—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Highway 59 Upgrades

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, a survey conducted by the Northwest Regional Development Commission of Minnesota and the Eastman Regional Development incorporated found a good percentage of the trucking business from Minnesota was headed to Winnipeg. Highway 59 was a preferred route, but many use 75 instead because of the state of Highway 59. Highway 59,

from Tolstoi to St. Malo, needs shoulder work and upgrading to A1 loading.

Will the Minister of Infrastructure commit today a date for upgrading that portion of 59 highway from the U.S. border to help the trucking industry?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we work very, very closely with the Manitoba Trucking Association as well as a lot of the industry within Manitoba to ensure trade is flowing north and south and as well as east and west.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that, you know, to have a question where we've got an unprecedented amount of money in Transportation now where it was unheard of before, over \$400 million, \$4 billion over 10 years.

We have a plan. We're going to ensure that we address the infrastructure needs of this province. We know we're not perfect, but we're far ahead of where the opposition was and where they would ever be.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the fact that we have an unprecedented amount of money and I would expect from the minister today an answer then.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has a significant trucking industry and a good portion of that is based in southeastern Manitoba. Having access to quality truck routes is important and the upgrades to 59 highway would be beneficial to the industry for north-south trade.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Infrastructure: What is his long-term plan for upgrading 59 highway?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have twinned Highway 59 just south of Ile des Chênes, Manitoba. It's very, very important to transportation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot about highways within certain constituencies. We certainly don't hear about the highway on the east side that we are going to build. We have \$15 million committed to a highway on the east side.

Mr. Speaker, there will be an all-weather road on the east side, and this is the government that's going to do it.

Health Care Wait Times

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine, Ed Johner, was diagnosed with prostate cancer on July 20. An ultrasound on August 7 also found a kidney tumour. A CAT scan was scheduled for October 2. He was told to expect surgery in November.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johner went to the Mayo Clinic for surgery on August 27, fearing to wait another three months, a good call because his tumour had grown by 50 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Is this the health-care system she is so proud of, one that would jeopardize a person's life waiting for surgery?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly say to the member opposite that she and virtually every member of this House has in one way or another been touched by the tragedy of cancer and people living with cancer. I know every member in this House at one time or another has faced terrible fear.

I can tell you that we will work every day with her, with her constituents, to ensure that people get the care that they need when they need it, they get the diagnoses when they need, and in those occasions where these things do not happen in the most timely way, we will investigate and ensure that it doesn't happen again.

CIHI tells us that Manitoba provides the fastest treatment for radiation therapy. We're proud of that and we're going to keep—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Proposed Women's Jail Time Line for Development

Mr. David Faurschou (Portage la Prairie): On March 23, 2005, the Public Consultation Committee on the proposed new women's jail reported to the NDP government with its recommendations. There were three components to these recommendations: a conventional correctional facility, a healing lodge and transitional housing.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government accepted these recommendations on April 3, 2006, and agreed to act on them. It has been more than a year and half since the commitment has been made, and we are yet

to hear about the healing lodge, as recommended for Portage la Prairie, or the transitional housing.

Will the NDP follow through with their commitment and tell us when we can expect the announcement?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that consultations have proceeded further. I understand that indeed correctional facilities, when it comes to the needs of women, are going to go to a very different level in Manitoba and that there are unique needs that women offenders face. That is being addressed, I understand, as a result of the insights from Manitobans and, in particular, women and other stakeholders.

It's my understanding that those consultations now are leading to final decisions on the aspect of this new era for women's corrections in Manitoba.

R.M. of Rosser Land Transfer Responsibility for Traffic Light

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, residents in the R.M. of Rosser and neighbouring communities are truly concerned about the process that took place when the land in Rosser was transferred to Roseau River just three days after the election this spring. The land transfer was rushed. Manitobans are going to pay the price for this government's lack of planning in public safety.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the minister going to ensure that a traffic light at 6 and 236 will be installed? Who's going to cover the cost? The developers in many cases, although the taxpayer may end up for the mismanagement of this government.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think what I'm going to have to do is offer the member a briefing on how Treaty Land Entitlement works because clearly, maybe he hasn't been hearing the responses to the questions. The Treaty Land Entitlement process is a process that the federal government—in fact, it was the federal minister, the former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs that indicated that they'll be fast-tracking Treaty Land Entitlement. That's what took place. Jim Prentice, indeed, was the minister. I think what the member doesn't get here is that even the federal government has acknowledged that there are some issues. They've appointed Charlie Mayer to deal with a lot of those issues, the local committee.

My suggestion to the member opposite is learn the process. Maybe phone your Member of Parliament. Maybe talk to your federal cousins because they have a lot more to say about this than the provincial government. We'll work with all of the committees, Mr. Speaker.

PTH 304 Rebuilding

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Powerview-Pine Falls has been demanding that this government rebuild Provincial Trunk Highway 304, south of the community. It's the most dangerous road in the constituency. The community was so concerned that they signed by more than a thousand names from that community, presented in this House, asking for action on that road from the Minister of Infrastructure.

So I ask the Minister of Infrastructure: When will this road be placed on the five-year capital plan?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, what we hear today is spend, spend, spend, spend, but when it comes to time to voting on the budget for dollars to go into Transportation, what do they do? They vote against it. A great Throne Speech comes forward with regard to a vision. What do they do? They vote against it.

When it comes to their own backyard and taking care of roads in their own backyard, they're front and centre standing up for that, but we have a greater obligation, Mr. Speaker, to take care of highways and infrastructure throughout the province of Manitoba. We're very proud of our record of doing so.

PTH 15 Bridge Replacement

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): What the minister doesn't understand, Mr. Speaker, is what this is all about is safety, safety, safety.

Speaking of safety, CNR mainline bridge over the floodway, which actually took two bridges, two sets to rebuild, is soon to be open, yet PTH 15, Dugald bridge, which was deemed unsafe is not going to be replaced.

So the question is: Why safety for trains and CNR and not for Manitoba citizens?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, it's truly not

factual. Highway 15 bridge is absolutely safe. It's at a one-in-700-year flood level. The engineers in our department certainly look over and review bridges on an ongoing basis and Highway 15 bridge or Dugald Road bridge is absolutely safe.

I have to say with regard to bridge inspections overall, we've added another \$125 million to our bridge inspection budget. We take bridges very, very seriously. What the member opposite is doing is fearmongering, fearmongering, scaring the residents of Springfield and people that use that road and bridge to think that there's something wrong with it. Mr. Speaker, that bridge is absolutely safe and I've received assurance from the department that it is so.

* (14:20)

Provincial Parks Signage

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, this government is blowing millions of dollars on the Spirited Energy campaign, allegedly trying to promote the province, yet they cannot effectively promote our own resources in friendly Manitoba.

The Rivers Daly Community Development Corporation has been trying for over a year now to get this government to put up provincial signage to help direct visitors to the provincial park near the community of Rivers. This is not rocket science, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister explain to this House why he fails to care if visitors can actually find one of our precious provincial parks? All signs are pointing to this government's inept-ineptitude, sorry.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I'm glad the member can actually say the word.

I think what we have to do is when we're talking about Spirited Energy, we're talking about where we're going. I think what we have to do is look at the Auditor General's report. I hope the member actually has opened it and can read what the image campaign said. It said: The place branding is a marketing tool aimed at forwarding and promoting a particular impression about a place. As such, place branding can be a process aimed at shifting perceptions, addressing stereotypes about a place, as well as getting people to perceive the benefits.

That was what the business community said that we should do for the Spirited Energy campaign and we followed their advice, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Charles Finnie

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): On October 26, Charles Finnie of Kenton was one of eight Manitobans and three community organizations honoured with a Manitoba Council of Aging Recognition Award, acknowledging his outstanding contributions to the well-being of the communities of Kenton and Harding. Mr. Finnie has extended himself beyond anything that has ever been asked of him. His drive and perseverance are a true inspiration to all those he has touched. He has given of himself to others and to communities, and he is most deserving of recognition through this award.

From the time Mr. Finnie was a youngster, he has been involved in all facets of community life. Prior to joining the army during World War II, he worked for farmers, on road construction and in mines at Red Lake, Ontario.

These days, Mr. Finnie's activities have somewhat changed, but he is more involved in the community than ever. Mr. Finnie is a member of the Royal Canadian Legion and he takes great pride in taking part in annual Remembrance Day activities. Since the 1950s, he has also been involved with the United Church and is always willing to lend a helping hand in the capacity of a handyman. Mr. Finnie helped in construction of both the Memorial Hall and the local rink. Further to that, he was involved in the National Farm Radio Forum, Knights of Pythias, Greenwood Cemetery and served on the Kenton Village Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members here today to join me in congratulating Charles Finnie for being honoured with the Manitoba Council of Aging Recognition Award. His dedication and outstanding leadership have made him a role model to people everywhere. We thank him for his hard work in helping to make the community of Kenton and the province of Manitoba a much better place to live. I would also like to thank Woodworth Senior Services who recognized Mr. Finnie's work and who nominated him for this honour.

Zane Zalis

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, music teachers are not only teachers of the arts; they are also artists themselves. One particular artist I would like to make note of is Zane Zalis. Mr. Zalis teaches

at Miles MacDonnell Collegiate. Students, staff and community members alike will recognize that the name Zane Zalis is synonymous with excellence in artistic direction.

Mr. Zalis received his Bachelor of Education in 1980 from the University of Manitoba, majoring in music and history. Since graduating from his studies in 1980, he has demonstrated tireless dedication to his students and to furthering not only music education, but all forms of performance art. He has also been involved in the development of the music education curriculum in Manitoba.

Zane Zalis is the founder of the music production program at Miles MacDonnell which is recognized in Manitoba and beyond as a cutting edge music education program.

One of Mr. Zalis' many musical achievements is the internationally renowned Prodigy vocal program. Prodigy has had both radio and television performances with CBC as well as extensive radio play with major recording stations in Canada and Mexico. Prodigy has given performances all over the globe. From Austria to the United States and Mexico to Scotland, Mr. Zalis and the students in Prodigy have been outstanding ambassadors for our province.

Recently, Mr. Zalis has been recognized for his work as the composer and lyricist of *I Believe*. This piece is a full-scale oratorio about the tragedies of the Holocaust. I was very pleased to attend the Miles Mac music concert where two excerpts were performed, and it was announced that next year the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra will perform the world premiere of Mr. Zalis's entire work at the Centennial Concert Hall. This piece will only add to the remarkable splash that Zane Zalis is making on the international arts and cultural scene.

I ask that all honourable members join with me in recognizing the excellent work of this Manitoba teacher and artist. He's a shining example of why Manitoba is a leader in the arts and cultural industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bernard Warren Hayward

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to a man who was a pillar of the Springfield community and dearly loved by his family. Bernard Warren Hayward passed away recently after a long life that was well lived. Bernard was born in Saskatchewan 95 years ago but spent the majority of his life in Manitoba. As a young adult he

obtained an Electrical Engineering Certificate by correspondence.

Bernard developed a lifelong love for flying at an early age. One treasured family memory recounts how Bernard would hike over 17 miles with his friend Harvey McCallum to Stevenson airport in order to acquire his private pilot's licence. In 1936, Bernard joined Britain's Royal Air Force learning to fly a Tiger Moth, Hart trainer, Anson, Witley and Lancaster. Bernard was a war veteran having served bravely in World War II and was involved in many historic events. The night World War II was declared, on September 3, 1939, Bernard flew with 51 Squadron to drop leaflets over Germany.

He continued to serve valiantly even after his bomber was shot down in April 1940 and he became a prisoner of war in Germany. He was involved in the Wooden Horse escape and the Great Escape at Stalag Luft III, a prisoner of war camp. Later in the war Bernard survived the forced march away from the advancing front which saw him and his fellow POWs being kept as hostages.

After returning to Canada, Bernard married Beth Kennedy, and together they started a family, having four children: Jean, Gladys, May Ann and John. Bernard's great joy for life and flying was shared with his grandchildren. After renewing his pilot's licence in 1984, Bernard would fly a Piper Cherokee and drop marshmallows in mock bombing raids for his grandsons.

Now that both Bernard and Beth are gone, they are sincerely missed by their entire family, friends and community. Bernard Warren Hayward will be remembered as a loving father and grandfather, heroic war veteran and adventurous pilot. And to the family, may God bless them in their time of sorrow and all the best to the upcoming generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ring Rage Ringette Tournament

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): I rise today to congratulate the organizers and volunteers along with those who took part in the Ring Rage Ringette Tournament in Southdale from November 17 to 25.

For many years the Southdale Community Centre has played host to this tournament for 7 to 13-year-old ringette players. Teams are now coming from across Manitoba to take part in the week-long event, and there are plans to invite teams from out of province next year.

This year, to my delight, I was asked to hand out trophies to the winning novice team, and I'm always happy to see kids getting involved in healthy competition, learning to be good team players and enjoying physical activity. But I have to admit I felt a lot of community pride as I handed the winning trophies to the Southdale Wildcats. And if you don't mind me bragging, the Southdale Storm also won their loop.

But, regardless of whether or not the players went home with a trophy, I hope they all felt great pride in what they accomplished. Many of the players were new to ringette. Several strapped on skates for the first time at the start of the season. It is this kind of enthusiasm for sport that we can all learn from.

I'd also like to recognize the hard work it takes to put on an event of this magnitude, from coaches to parents and volunteers. It's a group effort to organize and encourage our youth. Thanks to this tournament, more young people will have the opportunity to get involved since the money raised will go toward paying expenses and supplies for local teams.

Congratulations to everyone who took part. You are all positive role models for our community.

* (14:30)

Invitations to Public Meetings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, for the last little while I've posed some serious questions to the Premier (Mr. Doer), and the Premier has been unable to answer the questions. It's ultimately led to one, now two public meetings, where I've extended an invitation for the Premier to attend. This evening I do plan on releasing a short little video, and, you know, one of the things that I'd be interested in doing—I'd be prepared to do is to cancel the video if the Premier would have answered three very simple questions.

The questions are: Will the Premier clearly state that the staff person in question did absolutely nothing wrong with regard to The Maples nomination? Will the Premier enforce the code of ethics that was established and agreed to by all political parties? Will the Premier tell us why he misled the House by saying he forwarded the letter directly to Elections Manitoba when we know that he gave it now to his own political party?

If the Premier would be straightforward and answered questions of this nature, then we wouldn't

have to be as creative in terms of coming up with challenges for the Premier to be able to attend to try to draw attention to what is a very important issue to all Manitobans. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned 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 the Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, who has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to rise once again, as the hour of 5 came before I concluded my comments yesterday. So I felt it's really important to recap, recap where we were at yesterday and where the government positions had been over the case.

The government themselves on that side of the House have had eight years to address all of the wrongs that they extolled prior to their being elected in 1999. One of those wrongs was the sale of MTS, but I see no effort on any members' part of the government side of the House to recapture ownership of MTS. In fact, I asked yesterday whether any members opposite had in fact invested by purchasing a share in MTS and none, none had done so. So, therefore, there's your answer about the NDP and whether or not they truly, truly wanted to own MTS. So, again, through their own actions it was the right move on behalf of the Conservatives and Manitobans that MTS be made available to all Manitobans to invest in. So the NDP again support the Conservatives on that move, because their inaction to the contrary is obvious.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Also, we're looking to discussion about the honourable Minister of Justice's (Mr. Chomiak) comments about the closure of the Misericordia

hospital, a real play on words, because Misericordia hospital was only redesignated for health-care services and not closed, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know the criticism was there that the Misericordia hospital was closed when in opposition, but then the Minister of Justice also spent more than three years as the Minister of Health, and yet he stood in this House a few days ago and was very, very critical of the Misericordia hospital's current health services designation. Yet there was nothing done through his entire tenure as Minister of Health, billions of dollars added to health-care spending, and yet he stood in the House and talked about the dark days of the '90s and the Misericordia hospital.

Well, we can only conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it was the right move, because the NDP government has had eight years to change the designation of the Misericordia hospital and has not done so. So, because, once again, their inactions speak far, far louder than their words, it must have been a good move by the Conservative government.

Also, we talk a lot of what was considered at that time frozen food. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what does this government do when they get into office about what they concerned a centralized kitchen and frozen food? What do they do? Holy Dinah, they found out that it was the best thing since sliced bread, so they went out and bought it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, their actions speak so loudly, so loudly that they—and in support of Conservative decisions, time and time and time again. Even right now, the biggest major construction project in our province at the present time is expansion of the floodway, Red River floodway, which was constructed by a former Conservative government. Once again, their biggest construction and their biggest project to date is just a renovation of a Conservative idea.

An Honourable Member: Conawapa's coming up.

Mr. Faurchou: Ah, and we have the honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) suggesting that Conawapa's coming up. But, indeed, yes, Conawapa, and it has gone through the CEC, and the project looks like it has merit. I will say that I support the Conawapa proposal. But what is happening with Conawapa once the power is generated? This government decides that this power has to be distributed through the existing network of hydro lines because they have yet to truly decide upon what is going to be the routing of the new bipole 3.

They have, though, suggested, and are committed to, a corridor which is on the west side of Lake Manitoba. Now, we've got to remember that Conawapa, if you draw a line north, is almost north of Kenora. You're wondering, then, why would the transmission line, in order to get that power to southern Manitoba, go all the way into the Russell constituency before heading south and back into Winnipeg, when that power, which is expected to be made available for export sales, is going to be exported out of the southeast side of the province? Again, we wonder why the corridor is being even considered.

Why not, perhaps, sit down—and I know the members on the opposite side of the House said they've had 80 meetings already to discuss a potential east side of Lake Winnipeg hydro corridor. How about having 81? Maybe 82. Let's get the deal done because that is the most efficient corridor routing for Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Hydro will be the first to say that the capital costs, the overall lineage lost, and the long-term viability of that line, security-wise and maintenance-wise, is best served by an eastern routing along Lake Winnipeg.

So, I ask the members opposite, don't stop at 80. Keep going till you get the job done, because I believe each and every one of you, independently, if you were investing your own dollars—that's the question you must ask of yourselves—If you're investing your own dollars rather than the hard-earned taxpayers' dollars, would you be making this decision? I believe that the answer to that question is, no, you would not.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the reason I was elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, or reason for running for election to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, was that of the topic of education, because education is the foundation of everything we are or hope to be in our lifetime. I see that this government, again, has fallen short on the area of education. We talked during Question Period about the infrastructure of our post-secondary educational institutions, the deterioration, and the lack of government support for renewal that is desperately needed.

* (14:40)

We've also seen the second-class citizenship to which we who live on the outside of the Perimeter Highway experience in post-secondary education, because if we take a course in rural Manitoba it's considered continuing education, and under this

government, continuing education—because they really, truly don't want persons to get any smarter in this province, because their policies speak for themselves. There has been no tuition freeze on continuing education programming because they believe that we out in rural Manitoba are flush with cash and only those that are inside the Perimeter of Winnipeg really count. So we've seen what the differential has cost.

I look to the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and I asked very specifically in the House and in Estimates as to whether he feels that \$1,500 tuition in Winnipeg and a \$6,100 tuition in Portage la Prairie for exactly the same course material, the same curriculum, whether that was fair. Obviously, it must be because he's not responded to the question, and his colleague in Advanced Education said, well, we'll think about it; we'll study about it. In the meantime, these young women that are taking the early childhood educators program are having to borrow and mortgage their homes a second time in order to continue with their education, because it's not only the payment for the education, they are giving up time away from their employes.

So, really, it is very costly for individuals to continue with their education in the rural of Manitoba, and this government thinks that's all right because, obviously, they are not so naive as not to know their own programs.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is beyond my comprehension how individuals can say how proud they are of their accomplishments when, truly, they are failing most of Manitoba. Yes, they will say a lot about the College of the North, but if you really want to get into things, the College of the North has a lot of shortcomings and is still to date in a near state of confusion and is far behind the projected place of course offerings than they currently are.

We also would like to draw Manitobans' attention to where this government is going with their environmental policy. I looked to the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) when I brought to this House a proposal that this province consider, as every other province has in this nation of Canada, and that is a deposit-return recycling program for beverage containers. In fact, the honourable Member for Wolseley got up and said it was a bonehead idea after his own minister had stood up, from Conservation, and said that it was a good idea and would be included in a forthcoming announcement.

So it really is beyond me, when you have the Member for Wolseley calling the Minister of Conservation's idea for deposit recycling a bonehead idea that his own party is endorsing, and every single province across the land. I don't know why he thinks it's a bonehead idea to try and recover beverage containers and recycle them before they hit the landfill, but he obviously does.

He did state, though its being a bonehead idea, he thought that perhaps recycling and reusing and reducing programs should, in fact, resemble—wait for it, guys—resemble the program that is used in the oil recovery. Now, I looked to the Member for Wolseley, and after extolling how good a program it was, then I asked if he would conclude by thanking the Conservative government for putting that model program into place. He was unaware that it came from the Conservative administration and was thoroughly embarrassed, by the colour of his complexion, after that information came forward.

I would say that we should look at what works and in fact employ those programs that have demonstrated success. A deposit recycling program for return of beverage containers works in every jurisdiction in all of Canada. Why wouldn't it work here? So I ask the government: Why not? Because the current voluntary system is recovering only about half of the beverage containers sold currently in our province.

Further to the environment, we also know that this government has only about one month, one month left in a provincial federal program to find a process through which this province is going to deal with specific risk materials. Specific risk materials, for government members who don't follow their own government news releases, are materials such as birds that would be affected by the avian flu—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Faurschou: —and further, the BSE infection.

The members opposite make a slight joke of the question there and the delay. I was looking to try and perfect my pronunciation of the BSE, but I will leave it as BSE. But animals—it is something that this government has yet to deal with, and we have one month left, one month left. I look at government members over there who think this topic perhaps is one that they can joke off. It is not. We have no facility here in Manitoba to deal with specific risk materials, and we have just one month and three days

to get our application in to the federal government. This is no joking matter.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that this government really does get the priorities in place because timing is very important. I know a lot of government ministers don't recognize that you have to make hay when the sun shines, but coming from the farm, you learn to appreciate that term.

Further to the environment, I know that this government has now gone, once again, an even further grave degrading in regard to the environment. They went from a D+, I believe, to an F-. It was in regard to their failings to protect important areas within the province. This is coming from environmental groups that in 1999 stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the NDP toward their election, and in the few short years, this same environmental organization has seen fit to turn their thoughts away from support of the New Democratic Party because of their failings of the environment, and indeed, they are failing.

In this Throne Speech, they committed to an all-weather road down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Talk about environmentally unfriendly. Every single person that talks about being in tune with Mother Nature would not be proposing an all-weather road. There is a much better way of making available goods and services to those communities on the east side of Lake Manitoba.

* (14:50)

I want to ask the members opposite to consider, before building a roadway, to consider the possibility of a railway. A railway is the most cost-effective, environmentally friendly way of delivering goods and services. It is also in harmony with a transmission line, which Manitoba Hydro does need coming from the new plants, hydro generating plants, as proposed.

If one could really, truly come forward and look at every single component; every single component is a consideration for a railway and a transmission line in the same corridor bringing power from the north down the east side of Lake Winnipeg and this would provide not only economic development to the east-side communities, it would provide for a long-term revenue and a very cost-effective supply of electrical power to southern Manitoba, either for use in our province or transmission to other points in need of clean energy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that I would like to continue talking about our infrastructure, which was the announcement stated nationwide of \$123 billion, that's billion, of the deficit in our infrastructure which many of the questions during Question Period attempted to address, but this government, once again, says a \$4-billion plan over 10 years which, \$4 billion divided by 10 is about \$400 million—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time is expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, want to put a few words on the record in regard to the Throne Speech and to kind of start off by indicating it is, indeed, and I believe I've stated this in the past, a privilege and a pleasure to be an elected member of this great Assembly. I look forward to being able to address the multitude of issues that come before us to try to hold government accountable. That's my secondary role. My primary one being that, of course, of servicing the needs of my constituents.

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I often hear comments, whether it's on the record or off the record, in terms of the status of the Liberal Party. I know that, quite often, especially members from within the government benches, feel that they have the power to do whatever it is that they would like to be able to do and view the Liberal Party in a very small way. They base it because, after all, in the last election, they won 36 seats, and the Liberals won two seats.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I like to think that members of the Legislature should be more broad-minded and more reflecting on the benefits of democracy and the whole issue of accountability. If you really want to look at the facts of the matter, what you'll find is that the Liberal Party, unlike what some might try to imply, is a very strong force in the province of Manitoba. If you look at it—*[interjection]* You see, this is where the minister is wrong. You shouldn't pass judgment just because of the size of caucus.

What you should be looking at is what Manitobans, as a whole, had to say, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would suggest to you, for example, we had over 420,000 Manitobans who exercised the right to vote, and they should be applauded for doing so. The New Democratic Party, I believe, got, roughly, about 47 percent of the vote. The Liberal Party got 13 percent of the vote. Far too often, the government feels that because they happen to have

an overwhelming number of seats, that they, ultimately, reflect the opinions of all Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a significant percentage of the voting population that supports and has confidence in the Manitoba Liberal Party, and that is why we provide the services, contribute to the debates and want to hold the government accountable. When Manitobans recognized the value of getting rid of the New Democratic Party as government, you'll recall back in 1988, where the Liberal Party's vote almost tripled, and the NDP were no more.

Look what happened in the province of Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker, and when we see that there's a mood for change, when people get tired of a government, as what happened in Saskatchewan, it doesn't really matter how the economy is actually performing. One could cite what happened in Ottawa. Sometimes there's a mood for change and people will vote accordingly. I believe that this government is on its last legs. We have three, maybe four years left, and then we will see a significant change in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Liberal Party, as it was in 1988, will be in a good position to be able to provide that viable alternative to Manitobans. I must say that the government is actually making our job easier. When I say it's making our job easier, all you really need to do is read the government's Throne Speech. All you really need to do is look at this Premier's (Mr. Doer) track record over the last few years. What you will see is that there is and there will be a change and it's only a question of time.

I was interviewed, as the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) was, from a newspaper in Portage la Prairie, the *Graphic*. It asked in terms of what my comments were in regard to the Throne Speech. I had indicated, I believe it's the first time I didn't even have to take any notes.

In listening to the Throne Speech, there really wasn't that much to it. There was no big bold vision for our province, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is, in essence, a Throne Speech that followed a provincial election. One would have expected some bold new initiatives that were going to be coming out over the next four years, some ideas to provide Manitobans more hope.

The reality is that one needs to remember that during economic good times anyone can be a

premier of a province. The challenge is that, when you come across difficult times, how are you going to be able to manage the difficult decisions that are going to have to be made? This is where this government has not been tried yet. This government has been blessed with the finances from Ottawa. I think it was Jim Carr, a year or so ago, commenting on the budget, and said, well, all Manitobans should stand straight, look to the east and salute the Canadian flag.

Well, of course, what he is referring to, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the amount of federal dollars that we get from Ottawa. When you compare that to other provincial jurisdictions, we're really not doing that well. In certain areas, the economy is performing. Maybe there might even be some opportunities for the government to take some credit in some of those areas. But what about some of the other issues, some of those other economic issues which the government has collapsed on?

Earlier today, the cattle producers provided a luncheon for us. We heard first-hand in terms of how difficult it is for the cattle industry. I question, especially coming from a New Democratic government, why this government failed in not coming up with a slaughter plant for our cattle industry in the province of Manitoba. Other provinces had done so. Why couldn't Manitoba do it?

What about our garment industry? The garment industry at one time employed thousands and thousands of Manitobans. Today, I think it was MWG, our factory on Logan and Salter, is closing down. One of the strengths that the Manitoba economy has had over the decades has been a diversified economy. To what degree has this government assisted in the diversification of our economy? How is our manufacturing industry doing?

* (15:00)

If it were not for immigration, our province would be in serious, serious problems. Immigration is saving our province in good part, Madam Deputy Speaker. The best program that we have is, in fact, that Provincial Nominee Program. The government is just administering the program. That program wasn't their idea. That was a Liberal idea back in '98 and Gary Filmon was the first premier to sign on, recognizing the value of the program.

All this government has been able to do is to—*[interjection]* Well, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says, expand it. Well, you know, they've

allowed the program to grow as one would like to think, but they have put up roadblocks in terms of the potential growth within that program by some of the restrictions that they've put in place.

The economic diversification of our economy is critically important. You know, I look to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and I challenge in terms of his ability to lessen our dependency on Ottawa and how we are becoming more and more dependent. The more dependent we become on Ottawa, the more difficult time we are going to have when the Canadian economy turns down, starts to slow down, because what's Ottawa going to do.

There was a time in the '90s when the economy wasn't doing as well, and you had governments of all political stripes across the country, including in Ottawa, where there were cutbacks. Could you imagine if there was a 10 percent cut to all transfer payments? At one time that was something that was being talked about. Madam Deputy Speaker, if that were to happen it would cripple many of our social programs because this government failed in recognizing the value of storing and doing the right things when the economy is doing well.

What this government has done is it has proven its ability to spend money. We spend, you know, and they say the second-highest per capita dollars on health care in the country. I know how numbers can be manipulated. I would be surprised if in fact we were not the highest. I don't necessarily believe, and you have to excuse me for not necessarily believing, when a minister will say we're the second highest, because I think that they know the ways in which they can make the numbers look a little bit better. We're the second worst in Canada in terms of administration and the costs of administration in health care. I believe that we could even be worse than the second—I mean than the nine out of 10, Madam Deputy Speaker. So I think that the government really needs to address the whole revenue and expenses that the government has entered into.

There are many ideas that come from both sides of the House. You know last session was interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker. We did get a couple of bills passed, and I acknowledge the government did even recognize some private members' bills.

I want to give a plug for the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder bill, Madam Deputy Speaker. FASD is a very serious disorder in the province of Manitoba. The impact of FASD is very difficult to

measure because of the high number of individuals, and we don't know how many people are affected. I've heard in some areas of the province in terms of new births that it is well in excess of 50 percent of new births that are being affected with FASD.

You know, I bring forward a private members' bill and this particular private members' bill is something in which Judy Wasylycia-Leis has been talking about doing in Ottawa. So the NDP, in opposition in Ottawa, talk about the importance of FASD. Yet we see a government in Manitoba which is NDP, or they call it today's NDP—I would argue today's NDP are not NDP, Madam Deputy Speaker—but the so-called New Democratic Party here in Manitoba that happens to sit on the governing side of these benches do not even recognize the value of progressive legislation like the bill that I've introduced to have labelling on alcoholic bottles, put up signs in some of our liquor establishments. Why would the government oppose something of that nature?

They talk about distilleries; you know, there are see-through labels. If the political will, Madam Deputy Speaker, is there, it could be done and it could be done overnight.

One has to question why it is the government doesn't want to deal with that particular issue. If you take a look at it, you know, the Throne Speech talks about FASD, but that's all it is, talk. Why don't we see action? The government should take action on this critical disorder that needs to be addressed, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'm bringing in another bill, the bill to equalize the amount of money that we're charging for the price of milk. You know, we don't have a problem saying, a bottle of beer will cost X no matter where you live in the province of Manitoba, but not for milk. For milk it's okay to rip off some northerners, four or five or six times, or four or five times the amount that you would charge here in the city of Winnipeg.

Again, I can appreciate government members will tell me, well, this is why you can't do it. I'm not interested in why you can't do it. It's a question of, if the political will is there, you can do it. If that means diversifying some of these northern communities so that you would have that milk production on the local site, well, maybe that's what you should do. If the political will is there, you should be able to do it. I believe this government, this Premier (Mr. Doer), is more interested in being the Premier of our province

than anything else. It's not about social programming. It's not about making Manitoba a better place to live. It is more about the Premier himself staying in power.

I'm amazed, in terms of so many wonderful opportunities. The Marymount school, an excellent institution, and why is it that we have not seen the type of resources being provided to that organization and the people and the volunteers that make that organization work and be effective? You know, we'll take someone from the streets, put them in a situation, or put them into a Marymount, and just as they're about to turn the corner, they're getting their life straightened out, and what do we do? We put them back in the environment that led them to prostitution, that led them to crystal meth and many of the other drugs that are out there, Madam Deputy Speaker. How is that being progressive?

We could talk about housing. You know, a progressive government would recognize. They'll talk that we've done this for housing, we've done this for housing. The bottom line is the overall housing stock of the province of Manitoba. What is the condition of the overall housing stock in our older communities in the province of Manitoba? Is it getting better, or is it getting worse? Madam Deputy Speaker, I will suggest to you that it is getting worse. I drive in an area of the city which covers the North End to our inner city all the time, and I see it every day, virtually. I've seen the places being refurbished in Gilbert Park, and I applaud the government in doing that, but you need to do more than just even refurbishing in some of the larger non-housing complexes. What you need to talk about is the social infrastructure. You have to be able to deal with some of the social problems that are there, the non-functional families, and so on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is so much that a person can talk on in regard to this bill. You know, health care is that critical issue, and I've said so much on health care in the past, the bottom line is it's not an issue of money when it comes to health care. It's an issue of management and managing the changes that are necessary in order to make our health-care system more efficient and better so that, as the Member for I think it was Morris, talked about a constituent in terms of cancer. You know, we want to ensure that we're doing what we can to provide good quality health care. I remember the promises. It was the hallway-medicine slogan. It was this Premier that coined the phrase hallway medicine, and he's the one that made the commitment that he would get rid of

hallway medicine. It's still there today, even though I believe he said within six months.

* (15:10)

We look to the government to show more leadership. There should be more money in bedside care as opposed to administration, and it concerns me greatly the amount of bureaucracy and how it has grown over the last number of years by tens of millions of dollars.

We could talk about public education, you know, and the issue in terms of facilities, whether it's south Winnipeg or even in north Winnipeg. We can talk in terms of the whole idea, concept of zero tolerance on bullying and ensuring that there's standard—*[interjection]*

Well, the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) says I don't understand the issue. You know, one of the nice things of being afforded the opportunity of being a member of this Chamber for a number of years is it has afforded me the opportunity to become a critic for different portfolios. Education is one of those portfolios in which I did spend some time in. I can tell the Minister of Education that from a parent's and student's perspective that they do support, I believe, the need for standard codes of ethics, of behaviours province-wide.

We don't see that in terms of whether it's racial behaviour, whether it's bullying. In most cases, it still is the school divisions that play the lead role and you will see different policies in those school divisions—

An Honourable Member: They know the students' needs.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, the minister says that they know the students' needs. Well, you know what? The Province should also know what the students' needs are. There need to be standards, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know, the whole issue of the way in which we finance education—

An Honourable Member: I need advice from you like I need a haircut right now.

Mr. Lamoureux: You know, when you have revenue coming in to the degree in which you have over the last eight years and you're unable to address

the way in which we finance education, I think you do need lessons.

You know, the Minister of Education likes to boast about well, you know, when the Tories were in government, here's how they financed public education. I should tell the Minister of Education that his party, his leader, supported three budgets, three Conservative budgets which dealt with education and the funding issue. So, when you're critical of the Tories, in essence you're being critical of your leader when he voted in favour of some of those budgets—*[interjection]* Well, the Minister of Education says, well, it's a bit of a stretch. Well, sometimes maybe I stretch a little bit. A little bit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do believe that there are opportunities within the government to be able to make statements of conviction, to talk about what it's going to do and how it's going to make Manitoba better. This particular Throne Speech they have presented, ultimately, I believe that they have failed in doing so, that this could have been a better document tabled. What I sense is a government that is getting tired, and it's right after a provincial election. You would have thought that there would have been a whole lot more.

I appreciate those who were involved in terms of ensuring that I was afforded the opportunity to be able to speak as long as I did. I don't want to necessarily abuse that opportunity and would like to give the floor for another member to be able to add their comments.

I appreciate this particular opportunity. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's nice to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and to speak to the budget—I'm sorry, not the budget, but to the Throne Speech. As you may have noticed, when the Throne Speech was being presented to the House, behind me, directly behind me, I had the opportunity of having my granddaughter and grandson here. It was a big moment for them. My grandson is only four, but he's very perceptive. Towards the end of the Throne Speech, I asked him what he thought. He said, Grandpa, it's boring.

He was absolutely right. It was boring.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to work on different issues and try and work my way through this. If you'll be patient with me, I'd like to start with the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. The Throne

Speech is very short on strategy for the Aboriginal people and, as it's the fastest-growing demographic in our population or in our communities, we expected the Throne Speech would reflect this with some social and economic changes. It completely failed to address the local bipole line, which this project would have provided a lot of economic benefit and opportunities for First Nations people on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. This line, having the support of former MLAs, Elijah Harper, the Grand Chief Sydney Garrioch, eleven chiefs on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the former premier of the province, Mr. Schreyer, and also an MLA by the name of Sidney Green supported the east-side line. I'm surprised that the members opposite continue to talk about the west side when there are so many benefits to the people and the Aboriginal people on the east side.

There were references to building an all-weather road, and we heard that again today in the House. They're talking about building an all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I suppose that road would have as much or more impact on the boreal forest; however, it would provide an access, I suspect, for a certain amount of development for that side. However, the bipole line would also add to that with a lot less, at least a much smaller environmental footprint. Our government would be pleased to have changed that, and we will change the direction of that line. It won't take that terribly long because the line is not slated to be built for some time, and by that time our government will change that to the east side, and with the blessings, I might add, of Premier Ed Schreyer and Elijah Harper and countless Aboriginal leaders from that same side.

The Throne Speech indicated that work is under way with the Manitoba Métis Federation to develop economic strategy. That strategy has not been laid out, and we're wondering if that's another hollow promise from this government on the other side.

It's unfortunate that the First Nations people feel that they must resort to illegal land blockades and side deals to achieve results with this government. It's unfortunate that, after 80 consultations, the roads get blocked. It presents a stressful situation and actually leads to situations where there is they, them and us, and that type of confrontation is not healthy. It's not something that we support at all and we would have—from our side of the House, a Progressive Conservative opposition believes that First Nations communities should have access to the Premier (Mr. Doer) on a regular basis rather than at

the current and ineffectual patchwork that they currently enjoy, and only after confrontation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we would put relations with the First Nations group back on a principle basis, by creating the Premier's First Nations, Métis and Aboriginal council, and I think that's a positive step to rebuilding the relationships that have been vastly deteriorating. We often read now in the papers of proposed blockades: we'll stop this train, or we'll do this and we'll do that. This wouldn't happen with this type of a council. So I think that's a positive step and a positive suggestion from this side, and if the other side of the House cares to adopt that, we would certainly support it.

*(15:20)

Under the heading of Advanced Education, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Red River College has programs in rural Manitoba, and we certainly appreciate this type of extension; however, the difference in the funding for these programs is significant. It's significant in the fact that the students in Steinbach, for the same program, which would be a child-care program or training people to deal with child care and going into that type of a field, those students are charged double. In Steinbach, they're charged double; they're discriminated against. Why? Because we're only funding in Winnipeg. We're not funding—even though they provide us service out there, there is no additional funding, which is done in Winnipeg. The discrimination to rural Manitoba is deplorable, not acceptable, and it needs to be addressed immediately.

The Throne Speech should have contained an announcement that the government is going to eliminate tuition freeze on the universities. That freeze on a university, on a tuition freeze, how it's accepted by some of the students, of course, as we will be able to afford to go to school. That's a good-news selling story of that type of announcement. The truth of that announcement is that the necessary repairs to the university are not being done. The buildings are deteriorating. As we heard today in the House, there is mould, there is asbestos, and this has not been addressed. This is directly, directly caused by tuition freeze. There is no money to do these types of things.

To compound the problem, Madam Deputy Speaker, to address these issues and to address the issues of no money, we are going to see the quality of education decrease because the professors—we cannot afford the top-notch professors, and we

cannot turn out that top-notch product that we have been so well known for in the past. The tuition freeze should be abolished. We should address and guarantee access to the lower-income students, while restoring our post-secondary institutions to a position of strength and respect throughout the educational system in Canada, at the same time, bringing our facilities up to the expected standard, respectable standards that people need to live in.

Under Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, it's unfortunate that the minister's not here. I have good news for her. I know that she's handicapped on that side of the House as being the only person with an agricultural background, and so she faces a huge challenge trying to access, first of all, knowledge to help her in her decisions, and also support, support for the money necessary to run her department, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We recognize, on this side of the House, the importance that agriculture and rural development have to our communities. We recognize the importance of that for the economy, and unlike our colleagues across the way, the Doer government's Throne Speech fails to recognize the serious challenges facing some parts of our agricultural economy, issues such as the impact of the rising Canadian dollar. High input costs, trade matters, traceability programs, country-of-origin labelling, they're all creating a great deal of uncertainty with many Manitoba producers, Madam Deputy Speaker, these on top of the BSE problem that happened in May of 2003, which producers have not fully recovered from. It's unfortunate that our government across the floor doesn't understand business, agricultural business, and they don't seem to realize that just because you have one bad year and then one good year, that everything will be fine. We have had five bad years.

Particularly hard-hit in recent months has been the livestock sector. Combined, Manitoba's 11,000 cattle producers and pork producers contribute \$1.5 billion to the Manitoba economy. That's more than the export sales of Manitoba Hydro, Madam Deputy Speaker. Their industries create thousands of direct and indirect jobs. However, we have rewarded these stewards of the land with a moratorium. We've rewarded them with an excess of regulations which these stewards of the land make their living off of. They're not going to pollute or destroy their equity; their equity is the land. That's where their income comes from. That's where their children's income will come from. That is where their heritage has

come from and their goal is to preserve that for future generations in this province. However, if we could get the same commitment from the City of Winnipeg to our environment it would be no problem in the Lake Winnipeg.

These two sectors that I pointed out are heavily reliant on exports. The high dollar has had a negative impact on them. The safety nets that we contribute to in this province as producers, these safety nets that are federally and provincially funded are not responsive. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has been approached many, many times in this House in the last month and a half to put a plan on the table that would address the inequity in these safety net programs. She was apprised of this situation when the CAIS program first came out. She knew that that program would not be responsive in good times, certainly not in bad times.

I have heard the Minister of Agriculture many, many times speak about the family farm as our greatest concern. However, she and her colleagues support a program that destroys the family farm. Madam Deputy Speaker, it destroys the family farm by simply not allowing for diversification; it discourages diversification. Diversification allows you to have your family work together on a farm in different enterprises. When these enterprises offset each other, you end up flat-lined. You have to understand that flat-line is not a good thing in human life, certainly not a good thing in economics. So, if you could just talk to your colleague at some point and let her know that the CAIS program is not working, because we have had difficulty getting that through to her.

Our pork producers are losing thousands of dollars weekly. In challenging times such as these it's important for the government to provide a leadership, Madam Deputy Speaker. Sadly, that leadership has been lacking under this NDP government and the latest Throne Speech demonstrates how out of touch with agriculture the government really is. Today, however, they enjoyed a nice meal by the MCPA. The MCPA has made many presentations to this government outlining the dilemma that they're in. For example, Canada's agricultural ministers met recently to discuss the next generation of farming. But I might point out is in this Throne Speech, it will eliminate the next generation of farmers.

* (15:30)

The average age of the farming community is well over 55 at this point. In the next three, four and five years we will lose up to 30 percent of our farmers through retirement, retirement and discouragement and bankruptcy. We will lose more than 30 percent because of the inaction, the simple inaction of no plan to move forward. We have discouraged diversification. We have regulated people out of business. We will lose that generation that's so terribly important to carry on in this province. You cannot just go and pick someone up and put him or her on a farm, and say, here, you can do this. You have to grow in that environment.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The cattle and hog producers desperately need details now of a plan from this government because of the tremendous losses that they're experiencing. Some have already been forced to leave the industry and we fear others will exit as well. This is not good news for the farming families or our rural economy.

As the rural economy shrinks, many of our small communities disappear, and that's unfortunate, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's unfortunate when that happens because then our schools—and I see our Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is here, and he certainly has a daunting task—because in the country it's not uncommon to ride a bus for two hours to go to school. That's not an uncommon thing because our communities have shrunk into the state where now we have large school divisions. These school divisions will stretch for 120 miles. Many of those students ride the bus for 120 miles. They are not afforded what we have in the urban centres. They are not afforded the same standard of education. In fact, some of the rural schools today do not have qualified teachers. Not qualified, unlicensed, not qualified—that's what non-qualified means—is unlicensed instruction in our schools because they do not want to live out in the country. In other provinces, the tax system treats them better.

We're still waiting for key components to any program that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) wants to put forward to deal with the crisis that we have in the livestock industry. We on this side have raised the questions of the potential impact of COOL; that's the country-of-origin labelling. We have raised the questions of what the impact would be, Mr. Acting Speaker, and to date, after a month and a half of raising these questions, we have no answers. We have no plan and no direction. This causes unnecessary stress, and

because of the economic situation in the beef industry and the pork industry, many of the operators say, if the government doesn't have a plan, we don't know where we're going. We go to the bank, and the banker says, what's your plan? We have no idea. So the banker says, well, if you don't have an idea, the government doesn't have an idea. We're getting out of this business. Today the banks are seriously looking at equity and cash flow. There is no cash flow in either one of those industries today.

COOL is going to have a significant impact on the livestock sector. The minister says she'll be speaking with her federal and provincial counterparts. If she is speaking with them, what is her plan? She has none. It was not outlined in the Throne Speech. There was nothing in the Throne Speech to deal with serious issues, serious issues that affect agriculture.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, there's a time for talking and there's a time for taking action, and I would suggest that the Minister of Agriculture take action. I'm sure she is, right now, on her way out to Brandon, with another speech that does not deliver a plan. She had the opportunity today, speaking with the cattle producers who served a wonderful dinner here. They served a wonderful dinner, and no plan put on the table.

The provincial government's track record in this area is less than stellar. In fact, the need to expand the cattle processing capacity did not get a mention in the Throne Speech. The current Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) was the Minister of Agriculture when BSE broke out. There was a meeting I attended in 2003, probably sometime around October—terrible ice storm that day, a terrible ice storm in St. Claude—1,500 producers in their local meeting area. The suggestion was made at that time to the Minister of Agriculture: Keep your subsidy—which amounted to \$800. It didn't fill my fuel tank. Keep your subsidy and build a slaughter plant. Give us the bill and give us the shares equal to the subsidy that you wanted to give us now, but give us the bill.

That was the time to build a slaughter plant. There would have been a bust, a bronze bust, of the Minister of Agriculture on the front steps of the Legislature had she had the courage to do what was necessary, had she had the courage to convince her colleagues to do what was necessary for the province at that time. Instead, they fumbled the ball. They

fumbled along, fumbled along and fumbled along. And they're still fumbling along.

There will never be, there will never be a slaughter plant in this province. As my colleague pointed out earlier, there is no facility to deal with the SRM. There is no facility and they have until the end of this year. So I might point out to you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the slaughter facilities in our province, under the current legislation, will be closed. Local abattoirs will be operating illegally. There is no announcement today on the floor, yesterday in the paper, and nothing, I'll guarantee you, nothing before the end of the year, because that is how this government operates.

We have more work to do. We just don't have time to get it done. The government has dragged its feet so long on the cattle processing that the border has reopened. That's a good news story for the cowboys. However, it's opened for over 30 months. The details were terribly sketchy. I spoke with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) the day before it opened. She had no details.

I had the details and I got them from the USDA, not from our Minister of Agriculture, not from this NDP government, but from the USDA veterinarian. Why on earth can we not have that type of information in the hands of our producers so that they can make decisions that affect their bottom line?

When I look around this House, there are very few people that sit in this House that have ever made a paycheque, that have never sat down and said, I have employees. No. No, they've all had a job. I'm not saying that they've all been on welfare, but our province is on welfare. Our province is on welfare when one-third of our income, one-third of this budget, the last budget, was \$3.5 billion of federal money.

It's important to understand how business works, and you need to have certain facts. When the Minister of Agriculture cannot deliver those facts to make those decisions, then, yes, they're guilty of dragging their feet. This is not the way that the cattle producers thought they would be handled. Handled. That's a terrible word. Handled. That's what you do with cattle. But the cattle producers were handled in a terrible, terrible way by this government after BSE struck in 2003.

* (15:40)

The Doer government did make an effort. I'll give them credit. They made an effort. They applied

a negative tax on our cattle producers. They applied a negative tax on top of the economic hardship that they were facing. They applied a negative tax and now have made an announcement of what that tax can be used for. They have made an announcement that they will support a slaughter plant in Saskatchewan. Mr. Acting Speaker, we are thrilled with that announcement. That's what we have received from this Minister of Agriculture.

We believe a more progressive approach would be to maintain provincial support for the cattle sector by matching voluntary investments from producers and from those from the private sector who wish to invest in initiatives such as a slaughter expansion. We will partner with those without a negative tax. We will partner with the voluntary investments.

If we're not careful, the hog industry, the pork industry in this province will go the same way that the cattle slaughter facilities went in this province. We gave it away.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to speak to the amendment to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to indicate that I will not be supporting the amendment. I think rather than focussing on the negative I will talk about the positive today and examine all the good things that are part of our Speech from the Throne.

Prior to starting to discuss the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to welcome our new interns, Andrea Dyck, Katie Strachan, Daniel Voth, Matthew Hamilton, Ash-Lei Lewandoski and Elisabeth Saftiuk. These individuals are to be commended for their interest in politics and the success they have achieved in their academic pursuits which has allowed them to be considered for the position of intern. I have read their résumés which show a strong indication and inclination to participate in political science courses and a background in a variety of areas including history, music and volunteering in the community, to name a few. These interns have already proved that they are a great addition to the Legislature and, undoubtedly, they will be of further assistance to all members here in the House.

I would like also to welcome our new pages who will be assisting the members with our work in the Chamber and in committees. I am especially pleased that a student from one of the high schools in my

area is serving as a page this year. Laura Dutfield attends Fort Richmond Collegiate, and I'm thrilled to have her here in the Legislative Assembly serving as a page. The position of a page requires composure, patience and an ability to memorize names as well as great map-reading skills that allow the pages to navigate the confusing corridors here in the Manitoba Legislative Building. Akosua Matthews, who was the recipient of the St. Norbert MLA award in 2003, showed her abilities in all these areas when she served as a page in the Manitoba Legislature. Last year, she worked as an intern for the Conservative caucus, and she's been recently named as a Rhodes Scholar. It is my hope that the pages who are here with us now have a very positive experience in the Legislative Assembly, and that someday they may emulate Akosua and follow in her shoes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to welcome back the table officers. Over the last four and a half years I have had the pleasure of chairing several different committees for the Legislature, and this year I am serving as the chair for the Committee of the Whole. I want to thank the table officers for the fabulous job they do in assisting me to perform the tasks related to these positions. The Clerks for the committee always handle themselves in a very professional manner, and I know I can count on them to provide well-researched advice to the chair. This has helped to instil confidence in me and help to ensure the success of our meetings. I very much appreciated the training sessions we received prior to our first time chairing budget debate. The sessions proved to be very helpful, even the mini skits we played, and I understand the process a lot better, and it's allowed me to conduct the debate a lot more effectively.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if you visit the Web page for the Legislative Assembly for Manitoba you will find the following statement: "Manitoba's Legislative Building is reputed to be one of the most impressive public buildings in North America." How fitting that this beautiful building has become the first legislative building in Canada to provide full access at its front doors with the development and unveiling of a universal access ramp at the front entrance.

I believe universal access is very important, as does our Premier, who stated: For the first time, all people will have full access to the front doors of this historic and magnificent building. Mr. Acting Speaker, everyone should be allowed to enter this building in a dignified manner that encourages them

to attend functions at this fabulous building, a building that is showcased in so many movie scenes.

The company that installed the ramp and the architect are to be commended for the excellent job they did in ensuring that the character and style of the ramp fits with the style of the Legislative Building. Bravo. Our government is working hard to ensure that our province, as well as our Legislative Building, is open and invites people.

Last month I had the privilege of attending a celebration evening for the graduates of the Internationally Educated Engineering Qualifications Program. I was very moved to hear from the foreign-trained engineers who have attended this program and have been provided with an opportunity to update their professional skills and then pass an equivalency exam. One of the graduates of the program talked about how this program has ensured his commitment to Manitoba and how Manitoba has now become home for his family and for himself.

The program is now being funded primarily at the university, and it's opening doors for engineering companies who are recruiting new employees. This program is now nationally recognized and many universities are modelling their programs on ours. It is programs such as this and the new internationally trained agrologist pilot program that are helping to make Manitoba home to new immigrants. It is activities such as these that help to fast-track skills recognition and integration into the labour market.

In the past year, Manitoba has welcomed over 10,000 immigrants. Many of these Manitobans are professionals who have international education and work experience in their chosen fields. Mr. Earl Geddes, the president of the Manitoba agrologists, said that the IEAP is a tremendous opportunity for the Manitoba Institute of Agrologists to help well-qualified people reduce frustration with hope and to help internationally educated agrologists demonstrate to employers that they have the appropriate level of knowledge and skill so their talent and experience will not be wasted.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this type of professional training program for immigrants helps to address the shortage of engineers and agrologists and provides great opportunities for immigrants to put their training to work for Manitobans. We are also ensuring Manitoba's growth and prosperity by providing an additional 4,000 new apprenticeship training spaces in the next four years. This will help

Manitoba employees have the skill sets needed to fill our labour market.

It is very important to our province that we work in co-operation with employers to identify apprenticeship opportunities and programs that are needed to train people to fill the jobs of the future. These 4,000 new apprenticeship spaces represent the largest increase ever in the history of this province. These new spaces will be created through a partnership initiative that will be guided by the new Apprenticeship Futures Council.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Manitoba has adopted a seven-point growth strategy that pays attention to the key areas of innovation, skills training, affordability for both citizens and businesses, and strategic plans for key sectors in our economy.

I would like to take a minute to talk about taxes, and I think our government is to be commended for moving ahead with the tax reductions announced in this year's budget. Our Throne Speech confirms that, effective January 1, 2008, a further reduction in the middle-income rate from the existing 13 percent will be taking place to 12.75 percent. This will be combined with a \$200 increase in the base personal exemption and a 60 percent income tax rebate on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba.

* (15:50)

During the election I must admit that many university students talked to me about being very impressed by the 60 percent income tax reduction that they would have the opportunity to apply for if we were elected, and we were, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The changes that will be taking place add to our very positive record that has seen Manitoba income taxes reduced in every budget introduced by our government since 1999.

Also, effective January 1, 2008, Mr. Acting Speaker, further reductions will be made to the corporate capital tax, which will go from 0.5 percent to 0.4 percent. We will see on July 1, 2008, the corporate income tax will be reduced from 14 percent to 13 percent. On January 1, 2008, the small business tax rate will be cut again, from 3 percent to 2 percent. With this further reduction, Manitoba will go from having the second-highest small business tax rate in Canada in 1999, when we took office, to the lowest in 2008. I think our Manitoba government is to be commended for that.

Our steady progress and tax reduction has helped to ensure that Manitoba has a stable economy in Canada, and it has made that the past year has recorded the third-highest growth rate among provinces, with a projection for the second-highest growth rate in 2008. This places Manitoba with the third-best employment growth combined with the unemployment rate of just 4.4 percent, and equates to the second-largest increase in investment and the largest growth in exports.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to make sure that I mention a big thank-you to two western football teams that put on a great show for us on Sunday night. The Grey Cup was very exciting and, although our Winnipeg Blue Bombers did not win the game, they have provided our province with a great example of how to face adversity with courage and determination.

I was really pleased today to be able to attend a pep rally at the University of Manitoba to honour another great Manitoba football team. The Manitoba Bisons also played their final game of the season in Toronto, where they were victorious in a 28 to 14 victory over the St. Mary's Huskies to win the Vanier Cup. The last time the Bisons were successful in taking the title was in 1970. I am sure that everyone here in the Legislature joins me in congratulating the Bisons on the fabulous seasons of football they have had, where they have had 13 wins and zero losses.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I mention the Manitoba Bisons from the University of Manitoba, I want to ensure everyone is aware that the university is as proud of its researchers as it is of its football team. These researchers are undertaking groundbreaking research in a number of areas. On July 11, 2007, our government announced that the University of Manitoba will be receiving \$1.6 million in provincial support to examine the impact of climate change in the Arctic region. It is research money such as this that has helped to encourage scientists such as Dr. Barber and Dr. Plummer, to call Manitoba home. I was very pleased to see Dr. Plummer, one of the world's most-renowned HIV-AIDS researchers, receive the prestigious Michael Smith Prize in health research at an awards banquet, in Ottawa on November 20. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research awards it annually to an outstanding Canadian researcher who has demonstrated a high degree of innovation, creativity, leadership and dedication in health research.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the University of Manitoba is moving forward and embracing the 21st century. It has new facilities such as the high-tech engineering and information technology complex that are leading the way. Facilities such as this, which we have supported through our capital campaign, encourage students to work productively and allow students to design prototypes in each program and it supports design-based teaching approaches.

The University of Manitoba continues to be a university of choice for students. Estimates for the fall term, the first day of classes, showed 26,800 students attending the University of Manitoba. This figure is on par with the last year's enrolment at the start of the year, and it does show a huge increase in the numbers of students attending from the 1990s. It's a level that has not been reached before.

I was pleased to see the Province of Manitoba participating in the University of Winnipeg's A World of Opportunity Capital Campaign. Our contribution has helped to support the university's new Richardson College for the Environment and science complex, the CanWest Centre for Theatre and Film. Our government shares the university's goal of making university education more accessible through its new Opportunity Fund. In addition, the expansion we are undertaking at the new University College of the North ensures that opportunities are available for students to attend college close to their home communities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, another win, undoubtedly, for Manitoba is our green and growing campaign. Our commitment to invest \$206 million as part of the tri-level negotiations to upgrade all three waste-water treatment plants in Winnipeg is great news. We know that water is a precious commodity that needs to be preserved and protected. That is why we're also going to ensure that rural and northern communities are looked after by investing \$150 million in their waste-water projects. These investments in waste-water treatment will be part of a larger strategy to ensure clean drinking water.

The strategy includes new restrictions on phosphate content in dishwasher detergent and lawn fertilizers. Over the last year, I have become an increasingly enlightened shopper when it comes to the purchase of automatic dishwasher detergent. I have stood in many shopping aisles to read the side panels of the detergent boxes to ascertain the level of phosphate in the detergent. I am happy to say that I am now a much more informed shopper, and I have

found that I can achieve the goal of having clean dishes and reduce my impact on the environment. This is something, I think, that we need to encourage everyone to do, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Our Premier (Mr. Doer) has made history by being recognized as a world leader on climate change strategies. To have our Premier pictured and given credit in *BusinessWeek*, as one of the best world leaders addressing climate change, is fabulous.

Our green and growing strategy has proven successful and will continue to be successful in the future. We are making commitments to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Included in this is a commitment to plant one million trees a year over the next five years in partnership with the Manitoba Forestry Association and other groups, and a phasing down of the Brandon coal plant and a commitment to reduce total greenhouse gas emissions below the 2000 levels over the next two years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not talk about the great things we are planning to do to continue improving the health-care system. We are committed to adding more nursing training spots for nurses at Manitoba universities and colleges. We are committed to consulting with Manitobans on what they want to see included in the new construction of the Women's Health Clinic. I was thrilled to be at the announcement of the new Women's Health Clinic that will allow mums and babies to be located together in the same building. Having been a mother who has given birth to a child, I know how important that is.

We will also be adding new training spots for medical students at the University of Manitoba School of Medicine, and we will be providing more dieticians, respiratory therapists, and occupational therapists as part of our long-term strategy to improve the care for seniors.

The Province is also teaming up with Red River College to develop a training program for the health paramedics starting in September of 2008.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the health-care facilities that staff work in are very important to the delivery of service. The \$100-million redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre is an amazing project. I am thrilled to see the redevelopment of the Victoria Hospital moving forward. The hospital is scheduled to have a new oncology department, new emergency department, and a Mature Women's Centre. Our government is committing to having first-class

health-care facilities and an expanded number of nurses and doctors to provide quality care for Manitobans.

*(16:00)

Our government is also working hard at encouraging Manitobans to make healthy choices as a part of their everyday routine. The addition of funding for walking trails since 1999 has been a positive move in our throne speeches. Walking, as many of us know, is an activity that is affordable. All you really need, is a pair of runners. Making this activity accessible through the construction of a bicycle/walking trail to be named the Duff Roblin Park along the floodway will mobilize citizens and communities. When completed, the trail will extend 40 kilometres starting at the gates of the floodway, or the opening of the floodway, which, I must say, is in my constituency, and travelling all the way to Birds Hill Park. Looking at the usage of the Sentier Cloutier Trail, which is in my constituency, I know that the development of this park will be a welcome addition to many communities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was thrilled to be present at the announcement of a new modern indoor soccer complex at the University of Manitoba. This will also go a long way towards encouraging people to be healthy. As a previous president of the Richmond Kings Community Centre, I can attest to the interest in indoor soccer and to the positive aspects that this allows people to have. The Province will be a significant contributor to this new facility that will help meet the growing demands for indoor soccer among all ages and all abilities. Over the past 10 years the number of registered players in Winnipeg has doubled and I am pleased to see that we are focussing on the needs of indoor soccer people.

Mr. Acting Speaker, young children will see also something great happening with our commitment to the development of a Safe Child Care Charter to provide further confidence for parents that their children are being well taken care of while they are entrusted to a child care centre. I know many parents in my area were very happy to hear that we are continuing our commitment to child care with the addition of 2,500 new spaces over the next two years.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of St. Norbert for the trust they have shown in me by re-electing me this past spring. It is a profound honour to be re-elected for a second term

with a substantially increased plurality. I very much appreciate the support they have given me during my term in office.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are lots of things to be proud of in this Throne Speech and I recommend all members support it. In conclusion, I must say this Throne Speech is good news for the environment, for health care, for child care, for the economy and for the constituents of St. Norbert. It gets an A+ in my books. Thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It's my honour to stand in the Legislature today. The first time I've had the opportunity to speak on a Throne Speech I wasn't able to take my seat when the first Throne Speech of this government was presented back in the spring because I was in the midst of a recount in the River East constituency, which was a very close race the last time. [*interjection*] I know the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), I think, fondly calls it a landslide victory.

But I do want to indicate, Mr. Acting Speaker, that there aren't many individuals throughout society that have to justify their existence every three or four years, as we all do, as elected officials, regardless of political stripe in this Chamber. You know, there are times when certain issues do have some impact on the decision that the electorate makes. I'm pleased that the majority of people in River East chose to consider me as their representative this time around again. It has been my seventh electoral victory. I know there are a few in the House that have been here a little longer than I have, but I just want to say thanks to those in River East that chose to support me this last time. I want them to know that I will endeavour to do my very best to represent them and their interests as we move forward.

So it is, then, my first opportunity to say congratulations to all of those in this Chamber who were re-elected and congratulations to the new members of the Legislature who were elected for the first time this election. I want to especially recognize the women who were elected in unprecedented numbers here in the Legislature in our province. I want to say to them it's a different world in this Legislature. It's a whole different dynamic in what you may be used to out there in what some people might call the real world.

I want you to know that for the last 21 years I have tried my very best, under some very difficult circumstances, as a woman who had a young family at the time when I was first elected. It does present

some very unique challenges in trying to balance your home life, your family life and a life in politics. But I want you to know, too, that it is much easier today to be an elected member of the Legislature when you're trying to balance family and work because the hours of operation are considerably different. I know the Acting Speaker has been certainly in this Legislature long enough to know that things were different back when we were elected.

I remember the times when we sat evenings, Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, until 10 o'clock at night. I had to be here during the day, and then we're here till 10 o'clock at night and not home with our families until after 10:30. Very difficult to keep a home together under those circumstances. But we have much more civilized hours of operation today, and it does allow us to meet both work commitments and family commitments like many other normal people out there.

So I want you to know, also, that I believe that the decorum, although some may disagree—during Question Period, it still is a bit raucous, but the decorum in the House is considerably improved and has improved over the years. I attribute some of that to the increasing numbers of women that have been elected to the Legislature.

So, with those words, I just want to say welcome to all. I hope that all of you, regardless of political stripe, enjoy your time in office in the Legislature and recognize that it is a very privileged position for us as legislators. There are not that many people in Manitoba who have had the opportunity to serve. It truly is a service to community and to people who very much need support and sometimes assistance in trying to find their way around through the bureaucratic maze when they need help and when they need support from different departments within the provincial government.

I also want to say to the table officers it's great to be back, and thank you for the good job that you do, for the Chamber staff that serve us so very well, and for the pages that have the opportunity to work with us. I hope you enjoy your time here. I'm sure that some parts of your job are much more interesting and stimulating than others, but each part gives you a bit of understanding and experience of what we do.

* (16:10)

I often say to many people that there are lots of things that we do in this Legislature that we all can

agree on. There are pieces of legislation that are brought in by government that opposition very often agrees with and supports and passes. So there are lots of things that happen that sometimes the general public out there doesn't see and doesn't know, because the part of this Legislature that they see most is Question Period. Often, the only time we might see media in the gallery is during Question Period, or a budget, or a Throne Speech.

Those are probably the most controversial times in this Legislature, where it is up to opposition to try to question and make an impact on decisions that government makes, and it's government's opportunity to defend those decisions. Sometimes it gets a little out of control. I often think that sometimes with the answers, especially today, which are coming from the government, which might in some people's minds, and probably in my mind, appear to be a little arrogant, the answers. That sometimes happens to a government when they've been in power for a period of time. They believe that they will reign supreme forever. There tends to be a bit of arrogance that creeps in. I'm speaking from experience on both sides of the Chamber where you believe that you're infallible and you will be government forever. So the answers sometimes play well to members of the government benches who think that the answers are very quick-witted or wonderful, and they clap raucously for their Premier or their ministers—

Some Honourable Members: Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Bonnie—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Doug Martindale): I would like to ask for order, please, in the Chamber, so we can listen to the honourable Member for River East. Those activities might better take place somewhere else. Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker. I know that you've always attempted to support me to the best of your ability.

Anyway, I temporarily had a bit of a senior moment, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it was because of the activity going on in the Chamber that sometimes gets a little out of control.

Anyway, I was just speaking a bit about what happens to a government when they've been in power for a considerable period of time and you know, some of them—the Member for Elmwood (Mr.

Maloway) would probably be able to look back over his political career and—[interjection] Well, and I know we often, the Member for Elmwood and I often talk about the horses and the buggy back in 1988 that were used by a group of people that were protesting the then-government of the day, the Howard Pawley government of the day, for the increases to MPI, Manitoba Public Insurance.

Just a little bit of a history lesson. I think everyone needs to know and needs to remember what happened before Autopac or MPI had to get their rates approved before the Public Utilities Board. When the NDP government was in power in the '80s, they set Autopac rates with a stroke of a pen around the Cabinet table. There was political decision-making and how Autopac rates would be impacted. It was the premier and the minister and Cabinet members that decided what the increase or decrease in Autopac rates would be.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know what happened? Before an election, the year before an election, during the '80s, around the Cabinet table, they would say, well, it would be politically expedient to lower Autopac rates because we're going into an election and we don't want the electorate out there to think that we're gouging them, so we will lower Autopac rates. But, then, do you know what happened? After they were elected, with the stroke of a pen, they hiked Autopac rates significantly. You know, Manitobans saw through the political interference and the manipulation by the NDP government of Howard Pawley and they turfed them out. That was one of the reasons in 1988 that the NDP lost favour with the electorate.

Mr. Acting Speaker, what we did when we came into power after 1988 was we decided that an independent body should set Autopac rates at arm's length from government so that they could look at the balance sheet. They could look at how Autopac was doing financially and set the rates accordingly and they could not be manipulated by the government of the day. It has served Manitobans well to have the Public Utilities Board monitor and regulate our Crown corporations. That was something that the NDP government under Howard Pawley didn't do. Manitobans saw through what the government of the day was doing, and that was one of the reasons that they lost the election in 1988.

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I started off by saying that the Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and I—because he remembers full well the demonstration

out in front of the Legislature where we had a hay wagon and horses and hundreds of Manitobans out there protesting the political manipulation of the Howard Pawley government. The Member for Elmwood teases me and I tell him that I have those horses in my garage and I am feeding them and keeping them there, ready for the next protest and demonstration. They're still doing fairly well, I want the Member for Elmwood to know. They're alive and well and they will live to see another day and another protest because of some of the activities that this government is undertaking.

Just a few that I want to deal on or dwell on would be some of the really bad decision making that has happened since this government won its mandate.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Acting Speaker, I will talk, just because I followed the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), and I listened to her speech. It was quite good. She hit on the highlights of their Throne Speech, many which I don't agree with, but the one thing that was clearly absent in her comments was the issue of affordable housing, specifically, affordable housing in her constituency.

I had the opportunity today to visit Carrigan Greencrest, a housing complex in her constituency that's been plagued by mould for many, many years. The Department of Housing in its chaotic state has not been able to address the issue. You know, there was a family there with three children. I had an opportunity to look in the kitchen where there was mould underneath the sink, and it had been that way since that family moved in at least six years ago. The complex, that suite had not been fixed. I looked and underneath a board that the family had put in, apparently, was a huge, big, mouldy hole. The board had been put in a while back because the family couldn't deal with looking at that and it was a safety hazard. On top of that board, under the sink, there were three pails to catch drips of water. You could see the water stains on the board that had been put in and you could see mould starting to come up through that board. You know, I looked and I asked the question and the pipes were continuing to drip.

It seems to me that the government, having known about the mould situation in the St. Norbert constituency, should have at least been able to fix the dripping pipes as an interim measure until they could get in and replace and do major renovations. I mean, how many of us, Madam Acting Speaker, would let

pipes continue to drip when they were creating mould? I mean it was unbelievable. I'm sure that this poor family who's had to live in that situation—and one of the children has asthma. We don't know whether in fact it would have been the mould that caused that asthma.

*(16:20)

Madam Acting Speaker, I just cannot believe that there couldn't have been something done to at least fix the pipes from the leaky sink and dry up the cupboard to stop the continuation of the development of that mould. What's the policy of the Department of Housing? What policy do they have to put in interim measures to at least try to start to fix the problem?

So I guess I can understand why the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick) would not have talked about housing initiatives. I honestly believe that we've got a department that is completely in chaos. We've got a department that has been undergoing a KPMG review for almost a year now to the cost of about, I believe it's at least half a million dollars. Why did that review have to be done? It's because the department had no management ability. They weren't managing. It was a department in chaos and they needed to bring in an external consultant to try to help them fix their problems.

Well, half a million dollars, Madam Acting Speaker, could have gone a long way, I think, to fix the mould problems in the housing complex in the St. Norbert constituency. But, no, we have to spend money on trying to fix what the department, under the leadership of the minister, should be able to fix on their own. It's in chaos.

I know that in my years when we were in government, I spent six years as the Minister of Family Services and it was just the Department of Family Services. There wasn't Housing attached to it. This government, when they came into power, amalgamated the Housing Department and the Department of Family Services into one department, both very needy, very busy portfolios.

Why on earth would they take two portfolios where there are people in such significant need and make it into one ministry? How can that minister spread themselves thin enough and do a good job of either one? Madam Acting Speaker, we see both sides of that department in chaos. We see an unmanageable housing organization, and we see a Child and Family Services system that's in chaos. We

see children falling through the cracks. We see devolution of Child and Family Services pushed ahead without the system being ready to make the changes. What has happened as a result? Children are dying, and we don't seem to be able to get a handle or a control on either side of the department.

We have significant problems that need to be addressed. You know, we hear the government espousing what a wonderful job they do and how caring they are about the poor and the needy within our society, but what's happening to those that need affordable housing? What's happening to children in the Child and Family Services system that need protection?

People in needy circumstances under this government are falling through the cracks, and it goes on and on. You know, we've seen areas and scandals associated with this government that are unprecedented, and yet we're not able to tie the government down and be able to hold them accountable for anything that happens. They tend to like to go back to the 1990s and blame everything on everyone else and take absolutely no responsibility for any action or anything that has happened under their watch. I mean, ultimately, it's the Premier and the ministers that have to take the responsibility for things that have happened under their watch.

They're very quick to stand up in Question Period and try to deflect away from any responsibility, Madam Acting Speaker. Well, if it isn't the former government's responsibility, it's the federal government's responsibility. It's always someone else that is to blame. If you play the blame game too long without taking some ownership and some responsibility for the decisions that you have made, then that just leads me and many, many Manitobans to believe that we've got a government that really doesn't care. All they care about is the flippant answers that they give to try to deflect away from taking responsibility. You can only do that so long, and it begins to catch up with the government. I see that it is catching up now—[interjection]

Well, Madam Acting Speaker, time is catching up, and Manitobans will see as we move forward the kinds of lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of openness and lack of taking responsibility for actions.

Madam Acting Speaker, I know my time is running out. I had many, many more things I would have liked to have commented on, but I will save those comments for other opportunities when I have

the ability to speak in this Chamber which I believe very strongly in the democratic process and our ability to speak our minds, and, hopefully, we'll hear something from the government that would indicate that they are finally prepared to take some responsibility for their actions in the years that they have been government.

I will not be supporting this Throne Speech.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): As usual, I'm very pleased to follow the member who has just spoken. She and I have been here quite a long time now, and she's being quite modest. She says it's 21 years, but in fact it's almost 22. You know, when I first got here, we were in government, she was in opposition. Then she was in government, and we were in opposition for a long, long time. Now we're back again. The tables have just turned. *[interjection]* The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says the tables will switch again, and they will, and he'll still be there.

Madam Acting Speaker, I took some time to read over the Conservative amendment to the Throne Speech, and also their 30-page alternative treatise here, and I'll deal with that later. There's really not a lot here. I was expecting to see a lot of neo-con stuff, but there's really not too much here. There's a little bit of confusion in here. They take credit on page 1 for John Bracken's electrification of rural Manitoba, and I always thought it was D. L. Campbell. I think the Member for Inkster would agree with that.

They get into the whole issue of risk-taking. They want to support a government, they want to institute a government program of risk-taking. You know, when they were in government, their idea of risk-taking was to undervalue a telephone system that we had already paid for, a telephone system that they themselves had nationalized in 1903, and the group that ran the previous Conservative government decided they wanted to privatize the telephone system.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What they did was they deliberately undervalued it, so it would be a successful sale. They valued the corporation at \$13 a share when its true value was more than double that, and not only that. They provided a \$6 subsidy, a loan, towards that \$13, and what they did was they ended up putting it out on the market, and people were crawling over each other buying the shares.

The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) pointed it out yesterday, how he was wanting a show of hands as to who bought shares, and he was saying that 100 percent of the MLAs on the Conservative side bought shares and suggesting that none of us on this side would buy shares. Well, the issue is, why would we want to buy something back that we already own?

* (16:30)

So what they did was they were, you know, it was tantamount to bank robbers robbing a bank. I mean, you couldn't go wrong here. You bought the shares at \$13, you only paid \$6 up front, and then, when the entity went public, the shares immediately jumped past \$30, and a lot of them sold them. *[interjection]* The Member for Portage la Prairie sold his and took his cash.

What did they do with the money? Did they pay down debt with the money? No. They used it in the '99 election. They tried to buy support in the election. Now what have we got? No telephone system and the money's all gone. So that's Conservative planning for you. They got blown out in an unsuccessful attempt to win re-election.

Now the new Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) yesterday was lamenting the fact that his cellphone wouldn't work. I have to adjust for the fact that he wasn't around 10 years ago and probably wasn't paying much attention. Well, he may have been buying shares, but I've got news for the honourable Member for Ste. Rose. The reason his cellphone isn't working is because you sold the telephone system. Right? You privatized the telephone system. Right? Now its focus is all outside the province. It's worrying more about taking over other companies, maximizing profit to its shareholders, who are largely outside the province, and it's not worried about the Member for Ste. Rose's cellphone. So perhaps he should think about it a little bit before he complains about his cellphone coverages, because there's an obvious one.

The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) makes statements about, well, why don't you buy it back? Right. As if we're going to buy the telephone system back. When they sold it at half price, we're going to pay twice as much to buy it back. Why? So that, if they form government again, they can resell it to their friends a second time. I think we learned the first time. *[interjection]*

Now, Mr. Speaker, now that I've got them all warmed up, I want to get into the Throne Speech itself.

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, we talked about the child poverty rate in Manitoba, and it's dropped by 25 percent since 1999. There's been a 47 percent reduction in the child poverty rate of families headed by single women. Now, this is obviously an encouraging sign, but we are not standing still here. We want to make further improvements.

Now, last year, the government introduced the Rewarding Work program—as a matter of fact, one of the Conservative opposition members did say earlier that he thought this was a very good program, and, perhaps, something that even they would do—a four-year strategy designed to support low-income working families and to help more Manitobans move from welfare to work. We're fighting poverty with jobs and helping employers fill the many vacancies in the province.

Now, recently, programs were announced to increase training and connect potential employees to jobs, and the municipalities' non-profits and other employers are now in a position to receive a minimum-wage subsidy to hire and train people receiving welfare. Further to that, we're planning to increase the minimum wage in the near future.

But at this point I'd like to point out, and would suggest, that perhaps the government, in following on what the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) just talked about with Manitoba Housing, that perhaps we should look at rewarding people who are involved in this program, the Rewarding Work program, with the opportunity to rent-to-own units of Manitoba Housing. I'm not talking about the apartment buildings. I'm talking about single-family housing. Where we have housing like that, perhaps we should start a pilot project. Perhaps we should look at the possibilities of allowing people who want to rent-to-own their units, single-family units, that they should be allowed to do that. The government, on a vendor buy-back situation, could always put a caveat in there that it cannot be resold or remortgaged for 20 years or whenever the mortgage is paid off. Once it's paid off, people would actually own their unit.

The pride of ownership, I think, is probably something that we should be looking at as something positive. I spoke to a Brandon activist about this a

year or two ago, who actually admitted that he, too, was thinking of the same thing.

So perhaps the government could look at that, test that, and see how well it works, because, clearly, we keep doing the same. You know, there's an old adage about, if you're doing things, why keep doing the same things that aren't getting good results? Right? So we should be looking at other approaches that maybe will get us better results. *[interjection]* Well, I'm just trying to help the member out here.

Now, I wanted to also deal with the whole issue of the enhanced driver's licence, which we've announced in the Throne Speech. The enhanced driver's licence is something that, from my point of view, these initiatives are very, glacially slow in their development. I remember attending meetings in Washington pretty well every year. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) was at one of them or more. On an annual basis, we would go down to get an update on what Homeland Security was up to that particular year. We'd be told that they were planning to institute smart card programs and things like that. We'd come there the next year and nothing much had happened. So I'm really happy that the government has announced this, and the provinces, Ontario, B.C. and Manitoba are getting together now to put this program in place. There are two or three states in the United States that are working on this as well. As a matter of fact, I read in the newspaper today that the state of Washington is ready to go. I think in January they're going to be rolling out these cards.

What I would suggest is that, while the cards are being developed, we do it and look at the big picture here. We bring out a smart card that has the ability to add on up to eight to 10 additional features to it similar to what the Ontario smart card was planned to be originally under Bob Rae, and then under Mike Harris. As I've said previously, under Bob Rae they did a border test in Fort Francis and in Windsor, and they found that they were looking for Americans who were coming across the border for free medical services. While they had six million people in the province, they had seven million health cards. So the Bob Rae program didn't really amount to much at the end because the smart card technology was still in its infancy. The same was true with Mike Harris, although he had a better chance because they were working with the banks who are developing the smart card program.

Now, Mike Harris got out of the program as well, but technology is developed now to the point

where the cost of the cards are not \$10 anymore. We're talking about a much more reasonable price. The banks themselves are test marketing the smart cards in a couple of markets now in Canada. You're going to see, probably, your credit cards will be replaced in the next year or two with smart cards that will also involve a PIN. So that's going to help an awful lot to reduce identity theft and reduce some of the problems that we've got.

So, if we are, as a government, planning to bring in an enhanced driver's licence, then we ought to be thinking of, perhaps, using that same card as a health-care card as well. Right now, the health-care card is just a little pink card with a number on it. Right? But it could be so much more than it is right now. As a matter of fact, we should have our drug information on that card. So, when we go into emergency wards or any drug store, they can put in the PIN number. They can put in the card and they'll be able to tell you what sort of drugs that you have, and the quantities that you need, and make sure that you don't end up getting the wrong kind of drugs.

* (16:40)

In addition, there should be room on the card for some vital medical information. In my own case, I have a little wrist band that I'm supposed to wear. I have no idea where it is. I see it once every two or three weeks, but on the back is some medical information that would be very important if I was involved in a car accident somewhere. It says don't give this guy streptokinase because, if you do, he's going to die. So, if I'm having a heart attack and they give me streptokinase, well, you're going to have a by-election pretty soon, and you don't want that.

So, rather than me carrying this little bracelet around with me, that kind of information can be put in the smart card. You know, for those who worry about privacy and so on, you can have all your privacy issues dealt with. In my case, I don't care about the privacy issue. I just want the medical professional to know now to give me the streptokinase, right? So I'm not looking for PINs to block out the information. I don't give a hoot who knows about this. I just want that card to be available; and, coupled with that, when we get into SmartHealth programs, which are being brought in at St. Boniface Hospital right now, that information will be put on the SmartHealth program. So it will match up with what's on the card.

Alberta had a SuperNet project going back three or four years now, and, of course, they have the

money to do this. They were running big, dark fibered cable right across the province connecting all the schools, connecting all the hospitals, but, more importantly, they were connecting the doctors' offices and all the clinics. So what you would have is the doctors' offices and the clinics and the hospitals all connected, so if you have this card, no matter what clinic you went into, you'd be able to see the results of your tests. You wouldn't have to be retested if you're involved in a car accident on the highway; any medical professional will be able to get this information.

So this is a big, big important thing for people to be getting their minds around here as we move forward. You know, the Conservatives, I'm sure, will have comments to make on this as well, but this project is moving forward. Mr. Speaker, I just don't want to preclude the possibility of having the drug information, having the hospital information and any other pieces of information, or at least the ability to expand the amounts of information on there.

In Ontario, their plan was to put eight, not initially, but they were going to go with driver's licence and health-care information. Then, after that, they would have the ability to add eight more layers of information onto these cards.

So let's not jump too fast into this. We should try to make sure that we have a comprehensive approach and not exclude things.

One of the other things you will know is that there is a real resistance to having so much identification in your wallets. I mean, we all walk around with big fat wallets with dozens of cards, and we're trying to cut down on that. If we can eliminate the multitude of cards that we have in our wallets and so on, that would be a plus for our members of the public.

So I give the government high marks for announcing this program and certainly want to see it succeed. I think we should work together to make sure that it does.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to deal with another issue here that has come up recently, and that is the whole area of lemon aid. I was in Ottawa last week, and I got a call from CBC wanting to know, what about lemon law, that there's a car that's been sold, it belongs from Florida, how'd it get here, and why it's being sold at twice the price. The Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou), yesterday, is wanting to bring in a lemon law bill; fundamentally,

we should be introducing a lemon law bill in this province. Regardless of the fact that their CAMVAP program was set up in 1994 by the Member for River East's (Mrs. Mitchelson) former government, and it was signed on by all the provinces, but when you have programs like that they tend to drop to the lowest common denominator. I tell you why. When Bob Rae's government was elected, Peter Kormos announced, the sunshine boy announced, a lemon law, and within hours, Mr. Peapples from General Motors or Ford was on the phone with the remier's office. That was the end of lemon law, just dead.

So, in the United States what you see is, states like Michigan have very weak lemon law—that's where all the auto manufacturers are, right?—whereas states like Florida, have very tough lemon law. Each state has its own degree of lemon law.

So what we have in Canada is a very kind of watered-down approach, watered down so much to the point where in Florida, and I sat through some arbitrations there a few years ago, when you buy a new car in Florida, they are required by law to give you this book, the booklet, and explain what it is: If your car doesn't work, you can take it back up to four times, and if it still doesn't work the manufacturer—not the dealership, the manufacturer—has to give you your money back with a deduction for depreciation. That's how you resolve the issue.

In Canada, there's no requirement, none at all. CAMVAP has no requirement that you get a book. I bought three new cars now since this came in, and not one of the dealers offered me a lemon-law book or said anything about it. As a matter of fact, in a couple of cases, I asked them. I said, well, you know, what do you think of this? Is there such a program here like there is in Florida? They didn't have a clue about that. *[interjection]*

So I'm trying to help the members. They want to cackle and make noise in their seats here. I'll shake up the poultry house here a bit. I mean, I'm trying to help your Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou) because he's offered to bring in a bill and he should know what's involved in that. I give him full credit. If he wants to do it, then let's do it.

So, at the end of the day, the best solution is to have our own lemon law, make it a very comprehensive program. It will get support by the Manitoba public. Within a couple of years, I'm sure that people will be demanding lemon law for used cars because Florida has that as well. I don't want to

go too fast on it too soon, but, certainly, we'd be looking at that shortly thereafter.

So I applaud the federal government has just set up an identity—or has brought in identity theft legislation, which is a very good step because identity theft has been growing in leaps and bounds over the last 10 years. The federal law, if passed, will make it a federal offence to be procuring people's identification for bad purposes. It will supplement and augment what people are already doing, and that is shredding documents that they should be shredding.

The smart card program is a big part of this. When the banks bring out the smart card program, then that should cut down on a lot of the abuse right there. So, you know, a combination of making the offence a criminal offence, the smart cards from the bank, and a combination of vigilance on the part of the consumer should cut this down, this identity theft—cut it down dramatically. The banks for the last 10 years have known this is going on, but it's been too expensive to bring in the cards. So they've watched their losses mount as the price of the cards have gone down and the two have met. So it's taken—it was supposed to take 10 years. They've done it—well, probably it has been 10 years since they started doing this. So I think you're going to see some big improvements there, but it is important that the federal government get onside with this. In fact, they are showing leadership.

The member for—who had trouble with his cellphone, from—

An Honourable Member: Ste. Rose.

Mr. Maloway: Ste. Rose. I wanted to advise him that he should be looking at advising his local communities to do fibre builds in his area. As a matter of fact, there are a number of municipalities and school boards in eastern Canada and the states who actually did their own fibre build, and they leased the space back to private enterprise. So, rather than having private enterprise do it and they lease it out to the government, you can have the city or town—you can have the school board develop their own fibre build and they can lease it back. We have school boards in Québec, I believe, that are actually making money. They paid for their own. They're getting their Internet access for free for their schools because they're getting the businesses in town to pay for access. So I just ask the member whether he could look at that solution.

* (16:50)

Now, I wanted to just, before I conclude, I wanted to talk about the whole issue of car thefts. The members are not going to want to hear this, but, while they were asleep at the switch for 11 years, the amount of car thefts kept rising. In 1990, there were 2,000 car thefts a year. Well, by 1990—sorry, 1999—well, 1995—from 1990 to 1995 it had jumped from 2,000 to where?—7,000. We had a jump from 1990 of 2,000 car thefts in just five years to 7,800 while that group opposite was asleep at the switch. By 1999, the amount of car thefts kept increasing to 8,000, and it just went up from there.

So, by my precise calculations without a calculator, I have calculated that Autopac has spent probably \$220 million on stolen cars. That amount, \$220 million, could have been saved since 1995, if the PCs had done the right thing then and did what we finally did, right?—legislated the immobilizers in cars.

I know that I've had immobilizers in all three of my cars now since 1995, and they can't be stolen. Thieves will damage the doors and damage the locks, but they can't steal the cars. So this problem will take care of itself over time because the federal government has mandated that new cars sold in Canada must have immobilizers as of this year for all of 2007. The older cars are getting older and older as we speak, so the program that we have to require people to have free immobilizers is eventually going to take care of the problem. Everybody in Manitoba who has an at-risk car will be driving a car with a free immobilizer, and will be getting a \$40 discount off their insurance.

That's the kind of solution that a thinking government, a government with motivation, a government with a desire to solve the problem, rather than ignore the problem, did. We are going to solve the problem, and people are going to look in the future and say that it was that government that took the bull by the horns, showed the leadership, and did the province.

Having said that, I want to finish, Mr. Speaker, by thanking the members for listening to this speech and many others over the last 21-plus years, and I hope there will be many more to come. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I wish to put a few comments on the record in regard to this Throne Speech. I, clearly, haven't lived through the many, many, many years that the Member for Elmwood

(Mr. Maloway) has lived through. In fact, he mentioned he's served 22 years in this House. I point out to the Member for Elmwood that he'd been an MLA already for five years by the time the pages were born. So it kind of puts it in perspective how long he's actually served in this House, Mr. Speaker.

This is another one of these very troubling Throne Speeches. You have a government and a Premier (Mr. Doer) that actually have an opportunity, have political capital. They've won their third mandate and, as the numbers show, an increased majority. They had a lot of political capital that could have been spent. This is a Premier who chooses not to spend his political capital. This could have been a Throne Speech in which he could have laid out an amazing vision, an amazing way forward for the province of Manitoba.

Instead, he squandered it, as one of my colleagues said, on one of the most boring documents to ever have surfaced in this Legislature. It basically was uninspiring. It took our province nowhere. In fact, it took it in the exact opposite direction of the NDP provincial campaign; it went backwards, not forwards. It spent more time talking about the years of '99 and previous than it did talking about the years 2010 and beyond. It was very disappointing for anybody who was in the Chamber who wanted to see a vision.

What kind of a Manitoba do you view—would you like to see in 2010, 2015, 2020? Where would you see this province going? Instead, what we heard was, well, we have three more doctors than we had in 1999. We've got two more nurses than we had in 1999, and this kind of stuff which really doesn't do much for those individuals who we might captivate on a day, who might pay attention to this Legislature, might view this Chamber as being something where we drive society, where we move our province forward. Instead, it was squandered by a government that's had now its third mandate, has political capital.

I would say to members opposite that was the right opportunity to have spent some of your political capital and have put forward a very bold program. They didn't do that. This is not a Throne Speech that members opposite should be proud of. Of course, I know they have to speak in favour of it. It's their bread and butter. Why wouldn't they? But I know in their heart of hearts they have a very, very difficult time speaking to something so trivial and so boring that is basically a disappointment for anybody who was in the Chamber listening to it.

I do, however, wish to pause, as I always do in these Throne Speeches, and reflect upon my constituency and my constituents. I do represent and serve the people of Springfield and East St. Paul, a great community. I travel across this province, across this country and, in fact, around the world. People ask me about my community and I, with great pride, tell them I represent God's country. It is a great community.

I'm always amazed at the kind of support, the kind of love and generosity that is shown to myself and my family—great understanding from the people of Springfield and East St. Paul. We are a young family. Over the years, I've collected some pretty amazing stories of the kinds of things and stunts my children have pulled off. In fact, I'm convinced I could probably have not had my wife and me on our Christmas calendar this year, and people would have enjoyed it just as much. They love to see the children.

In fact, interestingly enough, at the 60th anniversary of the Legion 215, Lily Schreyer commented to me. She asked me when my next calendar was going to come out. We all know that the Schreyers aren't exactly Progressive Conservative supporters, though they were big investors in the MTS sale—they saw the value in buying MTS shares. That having been said, Lily said to me, so when is your calendar coming out, because I love to see how much your children have grown? So it's the kind of thing that I find, when I cross my constituency, it's universal. I would like to thank the people of Springfield. I consider myself unbelievably blessed to represent such a great community—individuals who have embraced myself and my wife and my family, and do it in such an amazing way.

We will be having our Christmas open house tomorrow evening and it's always a packed house. I really appreciate the people that I have been given

the honour—and with great humility I can say I represent just one of the greatest communities in this province, in this country. So I'd like to thank them again for the opportunity that I may address this Chamber as the MLA for Springfield and East St. Paul.

I also would like to thank those who serve me and my employees. I joke around with my constituency assistant that I seem to be working for her, not even with her. She tells me what appointments I should be at and what exactly I can expect. Gayle Dowler started with Glen Findlay, the MLA for Springfield before myself. I was very fortunate to inherit such a great individual. I texted her the other day, and I said, you know, I think the day she retires is the day I'll have to get out of politics. She's just one of these unbelievably outstanding women. I know that all 57 of us have individuals like that that serve us. They are so great to us, and they are really underpaid. I always feel it's important to stand here and recognize them and show appreciation.

To the table officers, the pages and all of those who serve us in this building, thank you very much. If we don't have the opportunity, I'd like to say Merry Christmas to all of you because you do a great job. You make sure that this Chamber runs, and runs in a proper and efficient manner. We'd like to say thank you to all of you.

I know that I'm racing against the clock today, so I will conclude the rest of my statements and my comments when I have the opportunity to get up.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 23 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

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