

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 30, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 9—The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 9, The Protection for Persons in Care Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection des personnes recevant des soins, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends The Protection for Persons in Care Act to further protect the identity of a person who reports an abuse or who provides information respecting a reported abuse. The bill also clarifies the minister's authority to designate employees of the office of the Protection for Persons in Care as investigators and to appoint other investigators as appropriate.

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

Bill 212—The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 212, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, Bill 212, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, is a bill which is now being introduced for the third time, once by my honourable colleague from Tuxedo and now twice by myself. It amends the section of The Teachers' Pensions Act regarding the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund board by increasing the number of board members to nine, requiring at least one member to have investment management experience and requiring one member to be a retired teacher nominated by the Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba Inc.

I am pleased retired teachers have joined us once again for the introduction of this bill. I hope all members of this House support this bill to ensure its speedy passage.

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

Bill 218—The Public Schools Finance Board Amendment Act

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I move, seconded by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), that Bill 218, The Public Schools Finance Board Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, in Bill 218, The Public Schools Finance Board Amendment Act, under The Public Schools Finance Board Act, the Public Schools Finance Board is required to consider several factors when it allocates resources among school divisions under the capital support program. This bill amends the act to ensure that an allocation of resources designed to make efficient use of school lands and buildings within divisions and across divisions, (1) properly takes into account all the relevant factors, including the role of schools and local communities, and (2) does not result in unreasonable transportation requirement for communities without schools.

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

PETITIONS

Bovine TB Surveillance Programs

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In the Riding Mountain Eradication Area, RMEA, many cattle producers' herds have been subject to repeated testing as part of bovine tuberculosis surveillance programs. In spite of the fact that on October 31, 2006, the RMEA was reclassified as TB-free, many Manitoba producers' herds will continue to be tested in the future to track possible outbreaks.

Cattle producers recognize the importance of the surveillance program, but it does come with potential impacts such as stress on cattle, including risk of injuries and abortions, stress on producers; labour costs; facility costs; feeding costs and market losses.

Monitoring for bovine TB is beneficial to the entire Canadian cattle industry, and the work being undertaken by Manitoba producers helps their counterparts across the country.

The provision of a presentation fee would help producers required to take part in ongoing TB surveillance programs to offset their associated costs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) to consider allocating funding to go toward a presentation fee for Manitoba producers required to take part in the mandatory bovine TB surveillance programs.

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) to consider ensuring that there is ongoing surveillance of wildlife for bovine TB and to consider taking steps to stem its spread to livestock.

This petition is signed by David Todoruk, G. Tereck, Ernie Koygtko and many, many others.

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

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.

Signed by Bev Wilson, Linda Fortier, Susan Allen and many, many, many other Manitobans.

* (10:10)

Waverley West—New School Construction

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

The government has taken upon itself to develop Waverley West, a suburb that will eventually be the size of Brandon, without any funding for new schools in this part of Winnipeg. This will ultimately put a strain on other schools in the Pembina Trails School Division.

With the realignment of catchment areas caused by this lack of funding, families will be required to move their children from one school to another.

Disruption for children attending southwest Winnipeg schools could be harmful for their education and present a difficult and unnecessary change for these children and their families.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider setting aside land and funds to construct new schools to accommodate the needs of the new provincial government development of Waverley West to allow kids attending schools in the southwest area of Winnipeg to remain in existing schools located closer to home.

Signed by Erin Wasyluk, T. Wallbridge, Lori Yielding and many, many others.

Dividing of Trans-Canada Highway

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

In the interests of protecting motorist safety, it is critical that the dividing of the Trans-Canada Highway in Headingley is completed as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

This is signed by Karla Singbiel, Joan Lannoo, Morris Lannoo and many, many others.

Personal Care Homes—Virден

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

Those seniors that have been moved out of Virден have not received assurance that they will be moved back to Virден when these beds become available.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Randy Browning, Bev Bailey, Gloria Slater and many, many other Manitoba residents.

Provincial Nominee Program

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial Nominee Program is the best immigration program that Manitoba has ever had.

The current government needs to recognize that the backlog in processing PNP applications is causing additional stress and anxiety for would-be

immigrants and their families and friends here in Manitoba.

The current government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health-care workers to be able to apply for PNP certificates in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province by improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by M. Munoz, L. Maglian, M. Vallance and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I'm honoured to stand in the House today to recognize December 1, the 20th anniversary of World AIDS Day.

I would also like to acknowledge that December 1 to the 5th is Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week. This is a time to reflect on the effects of HIV-AIDS on children, youth, women and men from all walks of life. Individuals, families, friends and communities across the province and around the world must cope with the challenges of this illness.

Manitoba is recognized as an international leader in HIV-AIDS research, and we are proud to support the work of renowned HIV-AIDS researchers, Dr. Frank Plummer and Dr. Allan Ronald, at the University of Manitoba.

We have formally created the Manitoba HIV program to improve the management of HIV care, treatment and support. As well, we are working with our partners to improve access and efficiency of testing.

We believe it's important to commend those dedicated health-care workers, advocates, volunteers and researchers whose contributions have made an invaluable difference to those people whose lives have been altered by HIV-AIDS.

We thank our community and health-care partners from all regions of the province such as the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, the Burntwood Regional Health Authority, Nine Circles, St. Boniface Hospital, Health Sciences Centre and the University of Manitoba for collaborating with us to support and enhance prevention, education, research, diagnosis and treatment of HIV-AIDS.

Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely thank members of this Assembly for wearing the red ribbons, a symbol of remembrance in recognition of World AIDS Day, and I respectfully request that we further honour those whose lives have been directly affected by HIV-AIDS with a moment of silence after other members have spoken.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Health for her statement on World AIDS Day which will be recognized tomorrow.

The statistics regarding HIV-AIDS have been recited many times in this House and elsewhere, and no matter how many times we hear that more than 33 million of our fellow human beings are living with HIV in this world, we are taken aback by its enormity. We know right here at home that the number of HIV-positive tests grows almost annually, and with these statistics comes the very real individual stories of families, friends and communities that have been devastated by this disease.

This year's theme for World AIDS Day is "Leadership" and in that spirit, members commend the initiative entitled, To Save a Million Lives, launched Monday by the federal Conservative government in partnership with UNICEF, with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and others to improve health care for impoverished mothers and children in Africa and in Asia. Similarly, there is tremendous need locally in Manitoba to develop partnerships between government and non-government organizations to better develop prevention, education and treatment efforts.

Mr. Speaker, more should be done, more can be done and more must be done in the fight against HIV-AIDS.

Thank you very much.

* (10:20)

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join other members of the Assembly in recognition of World AIDS Day, in our recognition of the efforts that have been made by Manitobans like Frank Plummer, Allan Ronald and, in fact, many others in contributing to the fight against AIDS on a global basis.

The advances that have come from the work that has been done by scientists, physicians and researchers from Manitoba in Kenya, in Uganda and other places have been enormous, and they've made a major contribution and should be recognized.

At the same time, we certainly could be doing better here at home in Manitoba. We need constant vigilance, and we need to make sure that we are not forgetting what's happening here in Manitoba and that we're not doing the very best that we possibly could be doing.

I would as well like to salute Manitobans who've helped with the fight against AIDS in Africa. I would mention specifically those who are involved in the Little Travellers program supporting efforts against HIV-AIDS in Africa.

Thank you.

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

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today a group of retired teachers who are the guests of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Also up in the public gallery we have with us Janet Smith who is the manager of the Farm and Rural Stress Line. She is the guest of the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

New High School Southwest Winnipeg

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure earlier this week, along with members of this Legislature from all parties, of attending meetings in Brandon in association with the AMM convention. I just want to take a moment to thank and congratulate the many municipal leaders around our province who are doing so much to serve their communities and, in particular, Ron Bell for his acclamation for another term at the helm of AMM.

It's a great opportunity, while in the great city of Brandon, to see the many good things going on, being led by various leaders within that community. I had the opportunity to speak with President Lou Visentin and with other members of the business community about the positive developments in that city coming about through the effort and energy and risk-taking of private individuals in the city of Brandon. In particular, I want to single out Mark and Jeff Fawcett.

We had a chance to attend and participate in an event in a redeveloped historic building in downtown Brandon with condominiums and retail and an art gallery in the basement. We saw many good things happening there as a result of that initiative, Mr. Speaker.

There was disappointment, however, in learning that many municipal leaders had been looking forward to opportunities for meetings with ministers in government and that in some cases ministers were not in attendance and didn't appear at meetings that had been scheduled. There was great disappointment at this lost opportunity.

In a similar vein, last night parents from across south Winnipeg gathered in a facility in the south part of the city to talk about what is happening in south Winnipeg with overcrowding in our schools, with the dislocation being created by the Waverley West development, all of which was entirely foreseeable. The Premier was the minister of municipal affairs who signed off on developments when he was the minister at the time, without any forward planning. He then as Premier signed off on the development of Waverley West without any planning around how these new developments were

going to deal with the dislocation and the issues that would arise for families and children in south Winnipeg.

Last night's meeting included the members for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). It included the former member for Fort Whyte. It included representatives of the federal, civic and school board levels of government, as well as many, many parents and families who are looking to this government for answers as to why it is that they have not planned for or committed the resources to building a new high school and to dealing with the dislocation of children in elementary schools throughout south Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. In fact, even the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was in attendance.

So my question to the Premier is: If the Liberals can send half of their caucus to the meeting last night, why is it that the NDP couldn't muster even one-thirty-fifth of their caucus to attend the meeting last night, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I also was in Brandon this week, Mr. Speaker. I could give you my whole travel itinerary if I want. I had the privilege of travelling across the new bypass that was built in record time. Some of you condemned it; some of you praised it. I had the privilege of listening to Dr. Enid Slack who dealt with and made a presentation on the fact that Manitoba has twice the unconditional grants of any other province in Canada. She also reported that we had less reliance on property taxes. This, of course, follows the Stats Canada report that we just received last week which pointed out Manitoba was the only province in Canada that had a reduction in inflation numbers of 1.5 percent in property taxes based on the education tax reduction brought in by this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had meetings with the school divisions, the parent organizations. I had met a couple of years ago with them.

We also have an independent report, and, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to build—first of all, I'm surprised that there are more questions about one school in Fort Whyte than there's any question from the Leader of the Opposition on agriculture. On farm appreciation night, the only thing he can ask is to build a school before it's needed in Fort Whyte.

Mr. McFadyen: It's too bad that they couldn't muster even one-thirty-fifth of their caucus to attend last night because if they had, they may have had a

chance to brief the Premier and advise him that this has much more to do with a high school in Fort Whyte. It has to do with an impact on children throughout south Winnipeg, including children in Fort Garry, children in St. Norbert, children in other parts of the city. In fact, the city councillor for St. Norbert was present, as was the city councillor for River Heights and Linden Woods. The deputy mayor, Ms. Leipsic, was there as well.

I can tell the Premier that there were many questions arising there last night, including how is it that the government has more than a billion dollars to waste on a power line, more than \$3 million to spend on Spirited Energy, why they can overspend by \$60 million on the forced unionization of the floodway but can't even muster a fraction of that to deal with families and children and schools in the south part of Winnipeg. Never mind the money, Mr. Speaker, why they can't even muster an MLA from Fort Garry or St. Norbert or any other part of the city, for that matter, to send the message that they even care.

What is their plan? Will they lay it out today? Will they make a commitment to addressing the impacts of their Waverley West development, Mr. Speaker?

* (10:30)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with 35 school divisions. The members opposite are only dealing with one school division. There are proposed mergers of schools in almost every school division in Manitoba.

Now the fact of the matter is members opposite only care about one school division and can't ask questions about Steinbach, can't ask questions about Winkler, can't ask questions about St. Vital, can't ask questions about River East. They can't ask questions about Winnipeg west. They can't ask questions about the Rolling River School Division. The fact that they're only fixated on one school division I think is atrocious for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. There are legitimate issues.

Secondly, let them not ask another question on tax cuts again because it is the position of the Conservative Party and some of their surrogates that we should build a school for 30 percent enrolment. We should use taxpayers' money to build a school for 30 percent enrolment. If that's the policy of the Conservative Party, never ask another question on tax cuts again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I thought the Premier was in Question Period yesterday. It was less than 24 hours ago that we were asking about schools on reserves throughout the province of Manitoba. We were asking about a pilot project. We were talking about the urgent need for better education for Aboriginal children in school. Now I know 20 hours may have been a long time ago to the Premier. Many things may have happened in the intervening period to erase his memory of yesterday's Question Period, but the fact is only yesterday we were asking about schools in other parts of Manitoba, and so the entire premise of his response is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Manitoba Hydro Power Line Opposition to Location on West Side

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to ask the Premier, speaking of being completely wrong on fundamental issues, on a new question, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier if he—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question?

Mr. McFadyen: On a new question.

I want to just ask the Premier, on the issue of the catastrophically damaging decision to force Manitoba Hydro to build the power line on the west side of the province, whether he has received the letter sent to him this morning signed by eight eminent engineers in the province of Manitoba, including engineers both within the world of academia and practising engineers, Mr. Speaker, who have signed a letter to the Premier this morning saying, that the decision to build a west-side line will force Manitoba Hydro to implement what we consider to be a major design limitation which will for the functional life of the project reduce the integrity of our power system and the security and safety of Manitobans.

Will he heed the advice of the eight eminent engineers who have signed the letter this morning, and will he reverse this decision which will be catastrophic for the finances of Manitoba, for the environment and for the safety and security of Manitoba's power grid?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the request from members opposite to only look at the capital issues in one school division, and I say that an independent report, the Suszko report

which was commissioned by the Public Schools Finance Board recommends that the school be built at a much later time and not be built by 2010 because it would have a 30 percent vacancy rate.

Dealing with capital costs of schools, there are other educational capital issues. We talked yesterday about the tripartite agreement on Aboriginal schools, not capital costs. Mr. Speaker, they can't have a position on tax reductions and their surrogates can't have a position on tax reductions if it's their position to build schools or maintain schools with 30 percent occupancy rates.

They're asking us to overrule a former superintendent's recommendation not to build until the occupancy rate is sustainable for taxpayers, but only in one school division are they recommending that, Mr. Speaker, only in the one. They should change their name to the Fort Whyte party because that's the only thing they care about in this House.

Many eminent engineers also appeared before the Tritschler commission and criticized the Schreyer government for proceeding with hydro-electric development. They said we should proceed with coal and natural gas. They were good engineers.

I'm sure the people are good engineers. There's no question, a straight line from—if you could ever build it, if you could ever get permission and not be tied up in courts for decades, there's no question a straight line is cheaper than a more circuitous route. There's no question about that, Mr. Speaker, if you could ever build it.

Now Hydro had a recommendation for a straight line on the east side in '68, and they went the more circuitous route through the Interlake because of issues in 1968. The issues of environmental licensing, the issues of revenue are also very important issues. That's why Hydro has other reports dealing with the \$800 million in revenue, the Minnesota and Wisconsin. You have to look at capital costs, yes, but you also have to look at the risk of revenue.

We are looking at both sides of an issue. I respect the engineers, Mr. Speaker. There were also engineers that recommended building the Ste. Agathe dam as opposed to the floodway. Engineers are entitled to their opinion, but you have to look at all factors and that's what we're doing.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, it's like coffee time with Uncle Morley. He can't remember yesterday's Question Period but he remembers every detail of the

Tritschler report. We need to bring the Premier to the here and now and maybe address some present and future issues as opposed to obsessing over the Tritschler report.

I just want to ask the Premier if he's aware of the fact that the report he refers to that was commissioned by his government, the report he refers to refers to declining enrolment in schools in the community, but it bases that on the fact that in one year they moved children from grade 7 into the middle school because the elementary school was overcrowded. On that basis came the conclusion that there was declining enrolment, a completely false, phony assumption that formed the basis to get him to the conclusion that the government wanted him to get to which was, let's not build the school for an awfully long time even though we rush ahead and build schools in divisions headed up by the Premier's former campaign manager which was criticized by the Auditor General in terms of the lack of transparency in that process.

So I feel the need to correct the incorrect information he's put on the record, but I would like him to come back to the issue of the billion-dollars-plus that he's going to throw away on the Hydro decision. You know, if we had good government in Manitoba we could have competitive taxes and invest in schools, Mr. Speaker. It's not an either/or proposition. When you throw away hundreds of millions, you get high taxes, you get no schools and that is why this government is increasingly out of step with the priorities of Manitobans.

I want to ask him: Will he address the issues that have arisen in this letter from these eminent engineers? It's not just about wasting hundreds of millions of dollars. It's not just about environmental damage but engineers who are experts in HVDC transmission, engineers that are experts in alternate energy are saying that this is going to damage the safety and security of Manitobans. It will force Manitoba Hydro to abandon its efficiency, its mandate and its ability to serve the interests of Manitobans.

That's the words of these eight eminent engineers. Will he not heed their advice and reverse his decision today, Mr. Speaker?

* (10:40)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Manitoba Hydro appeared before the Legislative committee for four and a half hours and pointed out in the

committee and then in subsequent media interviews that there would, quote, be no question there would be much more opposition to an east-side line. He also stated that the yellow-brick-road position that the members opposite have been proposing on the transmission line and the east side, he completely demolished that argument because he confirmed that the remote line through the east side, if it was ever built, if it was ever approved, would be separate from the road. He further raised the issue there would be more problems with customers south of us, \$800 million a year versus a capital cost. So you have to look at both engineering and customer relations.

On the Public Schools Finance Board, the member opposite—the former principal of the Seine River School Division has said that there would only be a 30 percent occupancy rate by 2010. This is an independent report written to the Public Schools Finance Board. The member opposite wants us—the great tax cutter, has proven himself to be the great phony, because if we went with a policy to have 30 percent occupancy rate in all the high schools in Manitoba, it would bankrupt the province of Manitoba. We wouldn't be able to cut taxes, and no wonder he came up with reckless ideas like bringing back the Jets in the last campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh. Oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We're wasting a lot of time here in Question Period. We're trying to get as many questions and answers as we can. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Health-Care Wait Times Staffing Levels

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this week in Winnipeg there's a production entitled *Walking with Dinosaurs*. Perhaps the Premier could see if there's a starring role for him with an answer like that.

Mr. Speaker, the Wait Time Alliance of Canada indicated that there is a direct correlation between a province's ability to recruit and retain medical specialists and the length of wait times that its residents have. The fewer specialists in a province, the longer patients have to wait for treatment.

Can the Minister of Health indicate whether a recent Freedom of Information request showing that there are 102 vacancies for medical specialists in Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority alone, whether or not that's the reason so

many people in Manitoba are waiting for treatment, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I appreciate the member opposite taking note of the Wait Time Alliance report that came out this week, a report that did concede overall that wait times not only in Manitoba but across the country are coming down as a result of our co-operative efforts.

I can certainly tell the member opposite that our efforts in our recruitment, and not only on the specialist side but on the generalist side for doctors, have borne fruit. We know that the College of Physicians and Surgeons has reported recently that this past year we had a record-breaking year of acquisitions of doctors registered in Manitoba, a record-breaking number of 54 additional, which, Mr. Speaker, brings our number of more doctors in Manitoba at 235 more than in 1999.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is simply wrong. In fact, in November of 2005, there were 80 specialist vacancies in the WRHA. In June of 2006, that number went up to 96. In May of 2007, the number went up to 99. As of September of this year, there are 102 vacancies.

The minister likes to stand in this House and say she's got more work to do, but the longer she's on the job, the worse the problem gets. Why is it she keeps working and the problem keeps getting worse?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. According to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, there are indeed 111 more specialists working in Manitoba today than in the year 2000.

Let's just talk about the nature of some of those specialists. Let's talk about Dr. Allan Menkis, recruited here in 2004 to head our new revamped cardiac sciences department. Let's talk about Dr. Sarvesh Logsetty, who came here from Alberta. He's a burn specialist who's working at our newly built burn unit at HSC. Let's talk about Dr. West and Dr. Kaufmann who've brought with them a neurosurgery field of dreams, brought all of their friends here to Manitoba. We've got more work to do, but we're—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Health-Care Wait Times Nursing Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, personal care homes in Manitoba have closed beds because of a nursing shortage. Heart surgeries are being cancelled at an all-time high

because of a nursing shortage. There's a serious shortage of ER nurses and waits in ERs, particularly for some elderly people, are 10 to 12 hours long. According to the latest Freedom of Information document, it shows that the nursing shortage right now in Manitoba is over a thousand nurses. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health—and this has been happening under her watch. For the last three years, this nursing shortage has grown significantly and is now over a thousand nurses short.

Can the Minister of Health tell us: Is this going to be another boondoggle by her and another failed promise in terms of fixing the nursing shortage in Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, the member who was the legislative assistant to the Minister of Health who took advice from Connie Curran to fire a thousand nurses, it's the gift that keeps on giving. What a coincidence that she should mention that number. I can inform the House, of course, that since 1999—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: I don't think that you can blame the members opposite for not wanting the rest of Manitoba to be reminded of those wrong-headed decisions. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that since 1999, those devastating days of the '90s when a thousand nurses were fired and 500 more were driven out of the province, we've turned that ship around. Our colleges show us that we have 1,589 more nurses than we did then.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, according to this Freedom of Information document, we have seen over a thousand nurses now short in Manitoba and that's under her watch. Also, this document shows that we have a chronic shortage of health-care aides for the last eight years under this government, and now this shortage of health-care aides is at an all-time high. It's the highest it's been in eight years. We are short over 500 health-care aides in Manitoba. Yesterday, she promised she was going to hire 100 new health-care aides.

I'd like to ask the minister: Considering the shortage is 800 now, or pardon me, 500 now, where is she going to get the other 100 that she promised yesterday?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, and certainly, I can inform the member, I'm not sure she got to the

bottom of that press release yesterday, but we're investing \$40 million to educate and train nurses and health-care aides and allied health professionals including physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

I'll keep it very simple for the member opposite. When we went to the people of Manitoba a few months ago with our platform that committed to hire 700 more nurses, to add 100 additional training seats, we asked them to look in contrast to the Conservative Party platform on training for nurses. How many was that, Mr. Speaker? Let's say it together, people. It was zero.

* (10:50)

Rural Personal Care Home Nursing Shortage

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, East View Lodge, the personal care home in Neepawa, has closed one floor for lack of nursing staff. They are now operating at 80 percent efficiency even though they have a waiting list.

I ask the minister: Why has she failed to address the shortage of nurses in Neepawa, Virden and many other personal care homes across the province?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Of course, I didn't hear in the member opposite's question his thank you and congratulations for the announcement of the new personal care home in Neepawa. But I'll just assume he forgot that unprecedented capital construction on the Health side, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly I can inform the member, of course, that the Canadian Institute for Health Information has said that Manitoba has seen an increase of close to 10 percent of both R.N.s, L.P.N.s in just three years. Manitoba has had the largest increase of all the provinces between 2003 and 2006.

Mr. Speaker, respectfully, every time a Tory stands in this House and utters the word "nurse," Manitobans all across the land shudder with fear.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, I hope our new personal care home is fully automated because the minister certainly isn't providing nurses. Personal care homes are short-staffed, 14 ERs closed, many more cancellations of services because of shortages of doctors and nurses.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have been in power for eight years. They have increased *[inaudible]*

spending by almost 50 percent. Still the health-care system fails, falls further into chaos and crisis management.

I ask again: When will the NDP take responsibility for the failures and put a plan in place that will restore Manitobans' confidence in their health-care system?

Ms. Oswald: Let's just check this out: A new personal care home in Neepawa; turning around the devastating decision of losing 1,573 nurses. We've added 1,589 and we're not finished yet. Let's just reflect a little bit, truly, on the Tory position, the Tories who couldn't make it to Neepawa during the election. They only got to Portage once. They got out of Winnipeg just once during the election to talk about health care.

Let's talk a little bit about those tax cuts that they were promising, \$800 million in tax cuts during the election. That would have been the equivalent of, I'd say, the salary for 10,000 nurses in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. That's two-thirds of the nurses we have now.

Russell Hospital Loss of Beds

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Russell community and surrounding area have waited for eight long years for the dialysis unit which was supposed to be added to the Russell hospital. In the announcement that was made by the minister, the community learned, to its dismay, that 10 hospital beds are going to be closed in the Russell hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this hospital is one of the busiest in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority. Doctors and professionals at the hospital are just at a loss as to what and how they are supposed to serve the needs of the people there when 10 hospital beds are going to be closed as a trade-off for the dialysis unit.

I'd like to ask the minister why she's proposing to close 10 hospital beds in a region where emergency services have been discontinued in surrounding hospitals and in an area that serves First Nations people, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I've spoken with the member in public and in private on the issue of Russell dialysis. We were very pleased to make our announcement earlier this week that the Russell dialysis will indeed be constructed and open in the spring of 2009. We're certainly working diligently, not only with the regional health authority

and the Manitoba Renal Program, to ensure that those spaces are appropriate for people in the surrounding area, including First Nations, and the development of the configuration of beds will be an ongoing discussion with the region to ensure that that care is appropriate.

We're building in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, not what the members opposite were attempting to not promise during the election.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the issue here is that for 10 long years people in the area have waited for a dialysis unit. Now the minister announces it, but as a trade-off closes 10 hospital beds. This area has largely been ignored by this government. In 1998, a personal care home was promised. Today there are at least 10 people waiting for placement in the personal care home, six of whom have waited for almost two years in a hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister when she will start to pay attention to rural health needs and ensure that people in rural communities, like mine in Russell, will not have to endure hardship because the government has finally decided to give them a dialysis unit, but as a trade-off close 10 hospital beds.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

I can tell him once again that the regional health authority, in conjunction with the Manitoba Renal health Program and in conjunction with the community, are going to work together to see this project come to fruition. We know when individuals, in addition, are waiting for personal care home beds it can be a strain on the family and that's why we're ensuring that not only are we building capital projects across Manitoba, not just in one region, Mr. Speaker, but we're also, as we announced yesterday, improving the complement of staffing, reviewing those staffing guidelines for the first time in over 30 years, investing \$40 million to ensure that that staffing complement is up.

We want those people to get the care that they need when they need it and we're working to do that.

Nursing Education Opportunities to Upgrade Designation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, wait, wait, wait, wait. One year, two year, three year, four year, five.

Andrea Gordon-Cameron wants to upgrade from her position as a licensed practical nurse to becoming a registered nurse. She's tried every conceivable approach, but she's been told repeatedly that the option she has is to wait five to eight years to get into a spot at the Red River College.

I ask: Why is it the government's policy to wait, wait, wait?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Well indeed, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question because it does give me the opportunity to clarify and put the real facts on the record.

Indeed, I have had a letter from the individual cited by the member and we have written to that individual and suggested several other options that are available.

I think what the member here fails to understand is that the L.P.N. to R.N. program was designed as a rural program and indeed, many of my colleagues opposite wrote to me requesting this program. I had letters from many, many reeves and councillors throughout Manitoba and we have three rotating L.P.N. to R.N. programs in—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the sad reality of the situation is this, that Andrea Gordon-Cameron wants to improve from being an L.P.N. to being an R.N. and she can't do this unless she waits for five to eight years here in Winnipeg. I've confirmed this with people at Red River College, that this is the situation and this is the problem if you're in Winnipeg and you want to improve yourself. You may be able to go to Saskatchewan or Alberta or somewhere else, but the reality is that this should be available here in Winnipeg. People should not have to wait five years to get an education.

Why does Andrea Gordon-Cameron have to wait five years to get an education?

Ms. McGifford: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had had his way, there would be no program at all for anybody to enrol in because—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Gerrard: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, that was a bizarre comment imputing something from who knows where. It is way off base and the minister should stick to answering the question: Why can't Andrea Gordon-Cameron get access to education?

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

* (11:00)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I don't think the member has a point of order, but I want to add to my argument that when the Red River program was set up, the member opposite led the protest against the government having the program and said, nursing as we know it would end if we put in the Red River program. He led the protest. I guess—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order should be raised to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or departure from our practice. It should not be used for a means of debate. The honourable member does not have a point of order. It's clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to continue with my response, as I was saying, if the member opposite had had his way, there would be no program at Red River for this individual to enrol in. As it is, I have written to the individual. The letter went out yesterday. We have suggested several options, because this government currently has 3,000 nurses in training.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) was talking about all the training possibilities, all the nurses we're educating, and we have presented the individual with several options.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, if you're going to offer a program, it should be available to people who need it. The reality is, here, that the government has said we want the R.N. program. Fine, but waiting for five years to get access doesn't make any sense. It is time that the minister of higher education moved the education program upgrade from L.P.N. to an R.N. out of a straitjacket and made it available to people like Andrea Gordon-Cameron in a reasonable time frame.

When will the minister do this?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, I find this ironic because I would have thought that member and indeed all members opposite would be thrilled by the fact that because enrolments at our universities and colleges have gone up 35 percent, sometimes there's a little waiting list as is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, of course, this is normal in programs across Canada and internationally. Popular programs sometimes have slight waiting lists. Indeed, the individual in question has been presented with several options for upgrading her qualifications.

Retired Teachers COLA

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, for the fifth time this fall, retired teachers have travelled to the Legislature and joined us in the gallery with hopes that the NDP government will start to listen to them and treat them fairly. The NDP continued to fail retired teachers by denying them a fair cost of living adjustment, something retired teachers have made significant contributions to throughout their entire careers.

Will this Minister of Education do the right thing and ensure retired teachers receive a fair cost of living adjustment and begin by supporting Bill 212?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): First of all, advice from members opposite who actually struck a commission to look at teacher compensation and he looked at rolling back teachers' salaries 30 percent, advice from members opposite who actually had 284 teachers laid off in one year because of their funding announcements—our government has been committed to pension improvements, Mr. Speaker, and we have done so with a \$1.5-billion funding of the unfunded liability. We have a teacher on the TRAF board. We have teachers from RTAM who have been engaged with the teacher Pension Task Force.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment has been very clear with respect to the role that we have taken on improving teachers' pensions. We've opened the act four times. We'll open it again. I need advice from the member opposite like I need a haircut.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

We're now going into Members' Statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gas Station Theatre

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to speak about the positive impacts of a well-known institution in my constituency, the Gas Station Theatre. This organization offers much more than a performance space where one can experience a wide variety of entertainment supported by a superb technical crew.

The Gas Station Theatre is a model of how a community can come together to constructively address issues like neighbourhood safety. Faced with concerns about crime in the area, the theatre did the right thing by embracing community youth as part of the solution. This approach has been of incredible value to the neighbourhood as a whole. The theatre has put up beautiful works of graffiti art and is working to make the Gas Station Theatre and surrounding area an open and welcoming place.

I have been privileged to attend several events at the theatre. This summer I enjoyed their patio series which featured local musicians. I also attended a very touching memorial service for Cathy Day who was a fixture in the Village for many years. It is important to note that the theatre helped to arrange this memorial service at no cost.

The holiday season will include *A Village Christmas* on December 22, and the *Bundle and Walk then Unzip and Dip II*, the theatre's New Year's Eve party. Recently I was pleased to present our government's contribution to the legendary Winnipeg Comedy Festival which is organized through the Gas Station Theatre and will take place this spring at several venues around Winnipeg.

I would like to congratulate the board, staff and volunteers of the Gas Station Theatre for their excellent work. They have enriched Osborne Village with music, art, dance, comedy, film and theatre as well as a great example of community spirit in action. Thank you.

Brandon 125th Anniversary

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, the wonderful and progressive City of Brandon has celebrated this year its 125th anniversary. Settlers to the area and visitors today continue to fall in love with the picturesque countryside and fertile land. The Canadian Pacific Railway's main line passed through

the Assiniboine Valley, causing rapid settlements in the area in the 1800s, and on May 30, 1882, Brandon was incorporated as a city.

The citizens of Brandon have every reason to be proud. They are part of a dynamic city for that 125 years that has contributed to the success and growth of the province of Manitoba. The people of Brandon are among the friendliest, the most talented and most capable people, not only in Manitoba, Canada, but have a worldwide reputation.

Brandon served and continues to serve as a hub for agriculture, culture and business enterprise for southwestern Manitoba. His worship, the first mayor of the City of Brandon, Mayor Daly, would be very pleased to see the success that this community now has.

Over the years many first-rate institutions, organizations and social groups have made their mark on Brandon. Our city is home to Brandon University, to the Brandon University Bobcats, the Assiniboine Community College, the Brandon Wheat Kings and many, many other institutions that have got a reputation across this country, Mr. Speaker.

We in Brandon continue to build with recent additions such as the Riverbank Discovery Centre and booming, booming private developments. Businesses and industries are growing. Immigration is at an all-time high, thanks to the resolve not of the provincial government but of local families and businesses. The citizens of Brandon are very proud of where we have come from and very excited as to where we are heading.

As the MLA for Brandon West and on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus of Manitoba, I would like to congratulate all of the citizens of Brandon on their 125th birthday, and may there be many, many more.

*(11:10)

Children of the Earth High School

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to recognize the achievements of Children of the Earth High School. Children of the Earth is a unique school where students are given the opportunity to gain knowledge of Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom on a daily basis. This school, selected in 2005 by

Maclean's as one of Canada's top 10 high schools, allows First Nation youth the freedom to practise their culture in a setting where it was once prohibited, in school.

Along with its unique programming, however, this school offers its students something that many schools across Canada have yet to master, a greater chance at completing high school and graduating with their diplomas. Mr. Speaker, a recent Canada-wide study of the Centre for the Study of Living found that only 52 percent of Aboriginal students receive their high school diplomas in comparison to 70 percent of non-native youth who do graduate. Children of the Earth High School, however, has a graduation rate for Aboriginal students that is equal to that of non-Aboriginal students across Canada. These statistics speak to the hard work of the school staff and demonstrate the importance of combining a regular academic curriculum with an exploration of Aboriginal traditions and culture in order to engage their First Nation students.

Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal youth are a vital part of our society. They are our future teachers, politicians, professionals and businessmen and businesswomen. It is an inspiration, therefore, to see schools like Children of the Earth High School provide their students with the opportunity to realize their full potential. Thank you.

Town of Neepawa

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the town of Neepawa continues to be recognized for its great community character. In 2002 the *National Post* recognized Neepawa as one of the 10 prettiest towns in Canada. Now *Harrowsmith's* first *Truly Canadian Almanac* recently recognized the community as a rural gem. I, of course, completely agree with the publication's correct observation.

Introduced in September, *Harrowsmith Country Life* magazine created the almanac to include all the regular features found in this classic book of information and entertainment. Given its unique Canadian perspective, *Harrowsmith's* first *Truly Canadian Almanac* toasts the prettiest towns from coast to coast of this beautiful country and road trips feature. Neepawa is one of 11 prairie communities recognized by the almanac in its road trip section. In fact, Manitoba is represented well in *Harrowsmith's*

almanac, as Morden and Dauphin were also identified as rural gems.

According to the writers of the book, the value of the town is reflected in its ability to illustrate the heritage of its region. Neepawa has willingly embraced this role as the home to Beautiful Plains Museum, Margaret Laurence House and the Beautiful Plains County Court Building. In addition, the town is the lily capital of the world and will celebrate its 125th anniversary with many events, including its annual Lily Festival.

I would like to congratulate the town of Neepawa for its special recognition by *Harrowsmith's* first *Truly Canadian Almanac*. Residents should be very proud of this great community. I know I truly am. Thank you.

Aboriginal Sports Achievement Centre

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to pay tribute to the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre. They are providing after-school and summer sports programs for children. I believe they are working in 103 schools. They have involved 1,700 children with 93 staff. They've been using Old Ex park and Sargent Park recreation centre and recently they acquired new office space at Sinclair Street and Flora Avenue in the North End.

I want to congratulate them on all the good work that they are doing with youth in the inner city. It's one of the most exciting and innovative partnership initiatives in sport. It's helping to realize a significant increase in Aboriginal participation in sport and recreation activities. They've been using open space, an indoor pool, a wading pool, a play area, recreation centres, indoor and outdoor ice surfaces, providing soccer, football, softball and offering something for everyone.

I would also like to pay tribute to their executive director, Mr. Kevin Chief, a former star of the Wesmen basketball team. He's doing a great job. He's providing leadership for his staff and for the participants. I'm very pleased that this program is partly located in Burrows constituency. I congratulate them on all the good things that they're doing and encourage them to expand their programs so that more and more children can take part. In conclusion, I would say to them, keep up the good work. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
THRONE SPEECH
(Eighth Day of Debate)

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

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Science and Technology, who has 22 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, in just finishing, I talked about the Composites Innovation Centre, the Advanced Manufacturing and the Vehicle Technology Centre where the government's working in co-operation with businesses to grow the economy. I think that's where we have increased labour force. We have 602,000 people in our labour force, which is a record in this province and about 60,000 over 1999. We have an increased minimum wage, increased mining production—it's up about 300 percent—increased petroleum.

We have increased productivity. So, while Manitoba is a leader in increasing productivity, which means there's more value-added for the amount of people working, I'd like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we are growing.

We have an increased population, lots of new young people. I note that 4,080 more people between the ages of 15 to 24 came to Manitoba than left during the period of 1999 to 2007. This is an improvement from the net loss of 3,463 during 1991 and 1999. So we have a record of growth. The Tories, the Conservative Party has a record of decreasing the amount of young people here.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair.

We have new media that's growing by leaps and bounds. We have the film industry. We have the composites industry. We have life sciences. Biotech is growing here. We have lots of wonderful economic good news. The GDP is going up and our taxes are going down in all cases. It's a wonderful, wonderful picture of economic growth. I'd like to look at and contrast our economics versus the

Conservatives. I notice that ours is working with the private enterprises, growing the economy, increasing value-added, increasing productivity, and moving forward on improving our tax competitiveness. The Tories did not do anything with taxes. They talked a lot, did nothing.

I would like to point out the idea of Tory economics. As was pointed out by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurchou), his idea of Tory economic growth was to sell a Crown corporation. He said two days ago, that every member of the Conservative Party bought shares and made profits. So, while people's telephone bills went up double, while the company made profits, the Conservative members opposite, and I repeat, the Member for Portage la Prairie stated that all the people bought shares and got rich off the increase of the bills on the average Manitobans.

So we believe in growing minimum wage, growing the economics, growing the labour force, growing the wages, decreasing the taxes. The members opposite believe in a totally different value on growing the economics because they believe in the economics of their own pocket.

Just look at the members on the board of MTS now. Look at who's making the profits. I would like people to do some investigation of what's happening because they will definitely find out who's making the profits in this case.

So we believe that we need to have—a rising tide should raise all ships, as Woodsworth has said. We believe the average Manitoban should be getting more money and increasing the take-home pay, increasing the real take-home pay. We have said that and we will continue to do that. I'm proud to be in a government that gets the idea that we govern for all Manitobans. We reflect all Manitobans and we care about all Manitobans, not just the select few from a select few ridings. Thank you very much, Madam Acting Speaker.

* (11:20)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to stand in this House, this place, this wonderful place that is the seat of government for the province of Manitoba. I would, first of all, like to, as I said in my private member's statement, congratulate Brandon on its 125th, but I'd like to perhaps just explain to the members here just a little bit about my constituency and my community.

First of all, I would like to thank the constituents of Brandon West for allowing me to be in this place. There is no bad seat in this House, and I am so pleased to be able to represent them. I humbly accept their recognition that they would like to have me be their voice in this institution, and I promised them, and I will promise them again, that my voice will, in fact, be heard. It will be very loud.

Brandon is a community of about 45,000. It's 200 kilometres west of here. It's the second-largest community in the province of Manitoba. We consider ourselves to be the first, but in size we're second. We have a wonderful balance of industry and culture and economy. The community itself is very in-tuned to agriculture. A lot of our industrial base is agriculture with Koch—not c-o-k-e but with the K-o-c-h—fertilizer company in Brandon which used to be previously Simplot. We have Ayerst. We have Maple Leaf which I'm sure members from Winnipeg probably could make some sort of a comparison to the high-tech proposal that they had in the city of Winnipeg. We do have a state-of-the-art processing plant with Maple Leaf. We have a wonderful corporation called Canexus, which uses a substantial amount of the power that we produce here in Manitoba for a process that they send to the United States, for the most part. But the point I'm trying to make is Brandon is a very sophisticated community, a very smart community, sending one member of the Progressive Conservative Party to this Legislature. I appreciate their—

An Honourable Member: Don't insult the voters.

Mr. Borotsik: No, no. The voters were not insulted by any stretch of the imagination. As a matter of fact, I am very pleased to say that the voters in my constituency for the past nine elections have been certainly very knowledgeable and certainly have been very well represented. I do appreciate the opportunity to continue with that.

The one thing that we do want in the city of Brandon, and this would be very nice to have the members listen to this, the one thing we do want, being the second-largest community in this province, is to be treated with respect, is to be treated as equal partners in the province of Manitoba. We generate a substantial amount of the economy that goes into this province. We feel that we have the right, Madam Acting Speaker, to be able to demand that we be treated in a similar basis of that of the city of Winnipeg.

What I would like to say, Madam Acting Speaker, is that we aren't treated equal. Right now, in the city of Winnipeg, they have what's known as the City of Winnipeg Charter. The city of Brandon should have the ability to govern themselves. They should have the ability to have the autonomy to make decisions. We are not a kindergarten class; we are a well-established, mature community that should have the right to have our own destiny in our own hands. We should not continually be told by the provincial government, this provincial government, that we are, in fact, a product of the provincial government and we have to be ruled under The Municipal Act. That is wrong. We are mature. We should have the right to be able to be the master of our own destiny, and we should have a Brandon charter, not unlike the city of Winnipeg that has their charter, the City of Winnipeg Charter. So that's being treated with a little bit of respect. I believe we should have that respect.

Madam Acting Speaker, we in the city of Brandon do not, because the provincial government will not give us the opportunity, and this is a symbol only. Don't think that this is something that is the absolute must for the community but as a symbol. We should have the right to have a private wine store. That doesn't sound like a lot. That doesn't sound like a lot but, the fact of the matter is, is that there are eight private wine stores in the city of Winnipeg, eight. All we're asking for is give us the opportunity to put forward a request for proposals and have a private wine store. We're large enough. We have industry. We have retail sector. We have a community of, a market area of 180,000 people. We can support it. It's a private-sector investment. All we want is this government to say, yes. Brandon should be treated exactly the same as the city of Winnipeg and be given the right, even if we don't want it. At least give us the opportunity to say we don't want it. Give us the right to have a private wine store.

The same is true, and I'll touch on an issue here that's certainly is fraught with some controversy, the same is true, as simple as a casino. The city of Winnipeg has two casinos right now. They're operated by the provincial government. They are operated by Manitoba Lotteries. They are operated here in the city of Winnipeg.

If the citizens of Brandon, if the city of Brandon in their wisdom for development in their core area would like to have that opportunity, why should they not have the same opportunity of having a facility on the same model as the city of Winnipeg, having it operated, controlled by Manitoba Lotteries for the

province, in my community? Is that too much to ask? Should we not be treated with fairness and equality? Why should they say no? We can do it in Winnipeg, but we can't do it in the city of Brandon. That's wrong, Madam Acting Speaker. That battle, that argument, certainly has not stopped at this point in time, and we'll have many other opportunities to discuss that.

Madam Acting Speaker, let's talk about the Throne Speech. Members on that side of the House take a great deal of pride in what I consider to be a typical NDP legacy of mediocrity, a legacy of NDP mediocrity. Wheat City cashes in. Brandon was mentioned quite a number of times in the Throne Speech. *[interjection]* No, no, let's talk about that.

Brandon was mentioned in the Throne Speech because they're going to complete the eastern access. Yes, well, what wasn't mentioned there is that the eastern access was probably on the drawing board back in the early '70s. There was a Filmon government, by the way, that continued the eastern access by putting a bridge in. It was the Filmon government who extended that eastern access from the south on Highway 10 up to 110, going into Chater. It was the Filmon government that did that.

We've had a government in place now for the past eight years, unfortunately, which is an NDP government, and nothing's happened. But all of a sudden now we're going to extend the eastern access. We've have two grade separations, one under the CP Rail mainline. We've got a grade separation that's required on Highway No. 1. I'll be in this House at least for another three and a half to four years, and I can assure you that that will not be completed under this watch of the NDP government. So they've mentioned that.

Oh, by the way, they also mentioned the ACC relocation which, by the way, was announced, I think, probably seven or eight times previous to this last election. So there we are in the Throne Speech, rehashing old things again.

Oh, they mentioned a bridge. They mentioned two bridges that they're going to put into place, which was mentioned, I think, about 17 times prior to the election. By the way, that didn't help save their minister in Brandon West either, although it was a good shot. It was a good try.

My question is, rather than announcing all of those things that have already happened, wouldn't it have been nice—Brandon cashes in, as the Member

for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) said. Wouldn't it have been nice to be just a tad bit proactive? Wouldn't it have been nice to have in this Throne Speech something that said—well, I'll tell you what, if we're going to do flood protection for the city of Winnipeg and spend close to a billion dollars and overexpend and all of the rest of the stuff, why don't we consider flood protection for the city of Brandon? Why wasn't that in the Throne Speech? By the way, it won't cost a billion dollars, but we could also protect a community, the second-largest community in the province could be protected, not unlike what the city of Winnipeg was.

Why wasn't the flood protection mentioned in that particular Throne Speech? Why wasn't 18th Street redevelopment from the new bridges that they're talking to Highway No. 1—why wasn't that mentioned in this Throne Speech? Why won't they be proactive and talk that that is going to be the vital artery into my community? Why didn't they mention that? Because that's proactive, not reactive. *[interjection]* No, it's not being built. As a matter of fact, it's 25 years on the drawing board. Why didn't they mention that, from 18th Street to No. 1 highway? Why didn't they mention the 18th Street overpass that's going to be the bottleneck now? Why didn't they mention that in this Throne Speech? Why didn't the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) put that in the Throne Speech, instead of rehashing all of the others that have been mentioned and have been announced years previously?

* (11:30)

Why didn't they mention social housing for my community? Why wasn't that in the Throne Speech? If they're the government of compassion, why didn't they put those plans forward for social housing in my community? That wasn't done. Why didn't they put in this Throne Speech improvements to our airport, which they could have put into this Throne Speech? But, no, that's proactive. They don't like to do proactivity; they like to do reactivity.

There's a lot that we have to fight for, Madam Acting Speaker, in this House over the next numbers of years, and I would hope that the Member for Brandon East would be supportive when we go and we put forward suggestions that are proactive, not reactive, not reactive or rehashed or things that have already been done by a previous government and they're prepared to take credit for it.

I don't know if they have mentioned the Brandon general hospital, but I'm sure if they had thought of it, they would have mentioned that too because they've taken credit for that for the last eight years.

Madam Acting Speaker, I mentioned, when I went through the Throne Speech, the only thing I could possibly think of was, as I said, the legacy of mediocrity of this government.

I'd like to share with you, and this saddens me actually—I talk about my community. I am very proud of it, very proud of the fact that I have represented it for almost 25 years. I'm very proud of the fact that they put that responsibility back on my shoulders. I am very proud of the city of Brandon. I've had the opportunity of living in other communities, and one doesn't really understand what they have until they have comparables. I've compared other communities and I've always moved back to the city of Brandon because it's my home. It's where I want to remain and, when I am no longer an elected member, I will stay in the city of Brandon. I will not leave the city as other elected members have done after they've represented that community. I will always stay and always be a member of my community.

But I have to say, Madam Acting Speaker, that I do have a fear for the province of Manitoba. This government has proven their inability to manage. This government has proven their inability to take this province higher, instead of trying to drag it down to the bottom.

I'd like to share with you some comments that were made by Vic Grant on CJOB, and the reason I mention him right now is because this is, if not the reality, the perception that's out there with respect to the province of Manitoba. But, unfortunately, Madam Acting Speaker, this is what people think and this is what the NDP have caused to happen, and I quote: I was proud to be a Winnipegger. I spent well in excess of half a century watching the city go from a bustling, hustling business centre, where all roads across the country met, to a stagnant outpost. Air Canada was taken from us and given to Québec. Our manufacturing centres have been taken to China—our manufacturing centres have been taken to China. The co-chairman of the Economic Development Committee of the Premier (Mr. Doer) has moved his manufacturing to China. Our city has been proclaimed as the murder capital of the country. Our infrastructure was allowed to

disintegrate, and we have become easy marks for fast talkers that lead us down a golden path.

It is notable—and this is the quote from Mr. Vic Grant: It is notable that cities such as Regina and Saskatoon have become better places to live. You know, Winnipeg used to be a land of milk and honey, a city offering opportunity, a city in which to raise a family, a city I convinced my kids was their future. Now I am starting to think I sold my kids a bill of goods.

That is a damning, damning comment on this government. That is a damning comment on this province, and right there is a government that doesn't care. They're prepared to put their heads in the sand and not do anything to try to change this typical downward spiral.

It brings me to a bit of a story. When I was in Nova Scotia, there were two pots. There was a lobster fisherman and there were two pots. One pot of lobsters, and they were both filled with lobsters. One pot of lobsters had a top on it. The other pot had no top on it. I asked the lobster fisherman, I said, why is there a pot on those lobsters? Why is there a lid on that pot? The lobster fisherman said, well, that's the Conservative pot of lobsters. I said, the Conservative pot of lobsters, what does that mean? He says, well, if I don't put the top on the lobsters, the Conservative lobsters are so active, so aggressive they'll climb out of the pot and would be gone in a flash. I said, what about the other pot? He said, well, that's the NDP pot of lobsters. I said, well, why is there no top on that one? He said, well, that's the NDP pot of lobsters. When one of them tries to crawl out of the pot, the rest of them will pull him down and not let him get out of the pot. That's the NDP attitude. They'll pull you down. They'll take you to the lowest level, and then they'll say, let's not worry about the province of Manitoba because we're so low.

As a matter of fact, I was giving a speech in this House not that long ago, and I was talking about how Saskatchewan was doing so much better than Manitoba, and we can talk about that. The Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) said, yes, Saskatchewan's doing better than Manitoba; of course, they are, they've got oil. I said, you know, that's a heck of an attitude to have. Simply to say, no, we're not going to try to make any changes. We're not going to do anything differently. We're not going to try to improve our lot in this world simply because they have oil and we don't. I said, well, you know,

we have so many opportunities, if only that Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) would look at the possibilities that we have.

If they would only look at how, if we did reduce our tax rates, that we could attract more people to this province. If we only could take Manitoba Hydro and develop it into the resource that it really should be and could be, that we can be more than Saskatchewan. But, no, their answer was, we can't do that because they've got oil. We don't have anything. Now, that is a sad, sad tribute to the province of Manitoba. But it's the legacy that this government is so proud of to send forward.

Let's talk about Saskatchewan, Madam Acting Speaker. Canadian Federation of Independent Business just did their report. They took 11 different economic categories, and they compared Manitoba back in 2001, which was the beginning of this unfortunate downturn of the province of Manitoba, and they made a comparable of those 11 different economic categories for 2007. Let's just walk through them. Okay? But don't forget, don't forget. They have oil. They have oil, remember, so let's not try to make comparables between us and Saskatchewan because, heaven knows, they can do things that we can't do because they have oil.

But, back in 2001, personal income tax paid: Saskatchewan led, and in 2007, Saskatchewan still leads. In 2001, low-income threshold: Manitoba led. We were better than Saskatchewan in 2001. In 2007, for the low-income threshold: Manitoba loses to Saskatchewan. In 2001, middle-income threshold—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

By the way, I just heard a comment, and that just says exactly what I was trying to say. A comment from the backbenchers of the government said, well, then, if you like it so much, why don't you just move there? Well, guess what? With that attitude, that's exactly what's going to happen. We are going to continue to lose. We are going to continue to take this to the bottom rung.

Middle-income threshold: in 2001, Manitoba led Saskatchewan. Our middle-income threshold was better than Saskatchewan in 2001; 2007, Manitoba lost; Saskatchewan's winning. Basic personal exemption in 2001: Saskatchewan was ahead; they're still ahead. In 2001, spousal exemption: Saskatchewan was ahead; they're still ahead. Small-business tax rate: in 2001, was a tie, and, hey, across

the benches there, listen to this: Manitoba, in 2007, is better than Saskatchewan. You should be cheering. You actually have got one category that you now had tied Saskatchewan and are now better. The small-business tax rate, we're better in Manitoba. That's wonderful. The small-business threshold, however, was a tie in 2001, and, in 2007, Saskatchewan is better. General corporation income tax rate was a tie in 2001; in 2007, Saskatchewan's beating us. Corporate capital tax, Manitoba was winning in 2001. Right now in 2007, Saskatchewan is beating us. Equalization? Saskatchewan took less money from the feds in 2001, and they're taking substantially less money from the feds in 2007. Provincial sales tax, 2001, there was a tie; right now, Saskatchewan's beating us in sales tax—*[interjection]* Well, I got a little blinking light.

* (11:40)

I should tell you that the—*[interjection]* Oh, no, it's not boring. Believe me, it's far from boring. Far from boring if you would listen, you would learn something. There's a reality out there. It's permeating the province of Manitoba and you're sticking your heads in the sand. Our tax rates are too high. Our businesses are leaving. We do not have the opportunity to compete in this province, and all I get from the NDP is, if you don't like it, why don't you leave? Well, it's my home. I would much rather make this province proud of itself as opposed to be a legacy of mediocrity that's been put into place by this government. I want people to stand across this country and say, Manitoba can stand on its own feet; it doesn't have to have the federal government feeding it almost 40 percent of its total budget. I don't want to be that person in this province. I want to be able to stand on our own two feet and say, we did it because we have pride in our province. You don't have pride in your province. What you have is, you have your hand out constantly asking the federal government for more money to put in programs that you can't manage. You don't know how to manage the government.

Now, that's only the tax side of it. We have the Finance Minister telling us always how wonderful we're doing on the debt side. I had a wonderful father who taught me when I was growing up, look after your finances and you'll be a much better person for it. I wish that this Finance Minister would follow the same advice. He probably does personally because I don't see, at all, an individual putting themselves in

this kind of a debt situation without having some fear for the future.

Right now in Manitoba, back in 1999, which was, unfortunately, a bad year for this province because they lost the Conservative government and put in the NDP government—back in 1999, the general purpose debt in Manitoba was \$7,661,000,000. Today, 2007, the general debt for Manitoba is \$10 billion, an increase of almost one-third the general debt. If you add in the Crown corporations, in 1999, the debt for this province was \$13,459,000,000. Today, it is \$18 billion, an increase of 36 percent. We cannot afford any more NDP government. We cannot afford any more debt. That doesn't include the \$2-billion liability that we have—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, my House leader says that, unfortunately, we have to give the NDP government an opportunity to close this debate. I'm sorry about that. I'm sorry that we have to close the debate with the NDP government.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to simply say I have a fear for this province. I have a fear for this province with the direction that this Throne Speech has gone. I have a fear for this province with the way that the finances are being handled in the province of Manitoba. I have a fear for this province, because they do not understand the realities out there. Eventually, those chickens will come home to roost, and the only positive thing I can say is that we will be there, once again, to pick up the pieces of NDP folly and NDP mediocrity. I will be so happy when that happens in the not-too-distant future, to be able to say, we told you so; why couldn't you do things differently? Why didn't you save the money on the bipole that you're going to spend a billion dollars? Why didn't you put it into the proper services and manage those services the way Manitobans want them to be managed?

Thank you. That was—

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to close the debate on the Speech from the Throne. I want to start by saying that I had intended to congratulate the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) on his speech, but, after listening to it, I couldn't. It's pretty passing strange when a member from western Manitoba, his only agricultural comment deals with lobsters. You know, it's sort of reminiscent of the fact that, with Tories, it's all about the butter and not about the results for the people of

Manitoba. Here it runs a whole week; here is the week, a Farmer Appreciation week, we don't get one question from the Leader of the Opposition on farmers. We don't get any comment from the Finance critic, Senator Foghorn personality from Brandon, the honourable Member for Brandon West—

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members are honourable members and they should be—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. All members are honourable members and to be addressed, they should be addressed by constituency or ministers by their titles.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, and I did refer to the Member for Brandon West.

The Speech from the Throne and the debate that's taken place over the last nine weeks in this House is really a debate between the optimists and the pessimists. It's really a debate between the people that are can-do and have the team to get it done and the negative nabobs, the sky is falling, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. Even, Mr. Speaker, the debate about Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I respect the fact that Saskatchewan is doing well, extremely well, but if you just look at the population numbers that came out yesterday, you would not get a headline like, Young people are part of Manitoba's future, with population numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I know that their old friend from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, when he handed out pamphlets for the Conservatives against the Minister of Justice, is certainly well versed in the Tory speaking points, but we certainly know the results.

This Speech from the Throne is about an energetic team that is innovative, has new ideas versus the sky is falling, the sky is falling members opposite led by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) in terms of the sky is always falling.

Mr. Speaker, this is a debate between a rising set of fortunes or a fading set of forces in terms of the opposition. How so well-stated, I might say, from the Liberal Leader in terms of the two visions. This is also a debate about a government and a team of people that represent all of Manitoba and treat each and every constituency as the same.

We now have a second theme of representation from the Conservatives. We know they represent the privileged few. That's always what they do. The Member for Portage reconfirmed that by saying, oh,

we all made money by selling shares in MTS. We all—oh, halleluiaah, we're really smart people; sell low, buy high, steal a Crown corporation and make money off of it. We know that's the Tory philosophy—

An Honourable Member: They are the most successful company in Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Well, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), I'm glad he keeps saying that. Yes, sell the company at \$13 a share, and when you know it's worth twice or three times that level, that's called theft, Mr. Speaker, as far as I'm concerned.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, it always provokes a little bit of—it's actually good to wake them up a little bit. You know we have to prop them up with little sticks most of the time, but I'm glad the telephone system wakes them up a bit.

* (11:50)

But now we have a second theme for the Conservative Party. It's not just the party of the privileged few. It is now the party only for the Fort Whyte constituency. Do they ask questions about schools in Brandon, in Beausejour, in Charleswood? Do they ask questions about Steinbach or Winkler or Morris or Neepawa? They've asked three lead questions this week, three out of five. Is it about farmers? Is it about agriculture? Is it about value-added production? Is it about municipal financing? Is it about the future of Manitoba? No, it's about the future of the Leader of the Opposition's seat. I have come to the conclusion the only thing he's worried about is the fact that the NDP candidate is on his tail and came second in the last election campaign.

An Honourable Member: A shrinking plurality.

Mr. Doer: You know, "Honey, I shrunk the party" is now "I'm worried about Fort Whyte." Mr. Speaker, when somebody is worried, we're going to put more resources into Fort Whyte in the next campaign. We're going to put more resources into Fort Whyte.

The Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). I mean, we had an 18-year-old, young, intelligent person who's spent a lot of time in Tuxedo. We're coming after the Member for Tuxedo too; I want her to know that.

Mr. Speaker, again the negative nabobs and the positive, optimistic team. It's so evident every hour in the legislative debate. Just this week alone, we brought in the first bill in Canada to protect children against child pornographers in this province. We're very proud of that—again, innovative ideas.

Mr. Speaker, we also brought in the first bill in Canada—and I want to thank the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) for this, partially for this—we were looking at it ourselves and it's a much broader bill that we're bringing in on banning phosphorus in household materials—again, the first province in Canada to do that.

When we promised to deal with the long-outstanding sewage treatment and put \$350 million into the sewage treatment plant, all members opposite could duck and hide because on Monday, in their so-called alternative Speech from the Throne, what was their position on water protection in Manitoba? They wanted to match the study, study, study of their federal minister. Actually, they wanted us to match—on Monday they said—a week ago they said, match the federal government's investment of \$3 million a year for five years. That's what their request was. That actually represents a cut on water protection and sewer investments; it actually represents a cut. So this is the water protection cut party as opposed to the positive get on and get the job done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, did they ask a question on the economy this week? I know they asked a lot of questions on building an under-occupied school in Fort Whyte. These are the so-called tax cutters.

I wonder if the member opposite clears this through his caucus because the—Mr. Speaker, the under-occupied schools in Fort Whyte—but did they ask a question, did they ask a question about the economy? Did they ask a question about youth population? Did they ask a question about the immigration, out-migration? You know why they couldn't ask a question about population? Because youth were leaving; the last one out had to turn off the lights before the NDP got elected in 1999.

Did they ask a question about the GDP? No. Why didn't they ask a question about the GDP? Because they couldn't; they couldn't stand up and ask a question on the GDP because the GDP in Manitoba is third last year, second this year, and Mr. Speaker, we continue to grow the economy here in Manitoba.

Could they ask a question on private-sector investment? No, they couldn't because it's one of the highest in Canada. Did they ask any questions about the manufacturing sector? No, the U.S. dollar and the Canadian dollar is a serious issue in Manitoba, a serious issue. How many questions this week did they ask about the impact of the dollar on agriculture? How many times did the Leader of the Opposition ask a question on the U.S. and Canadian dollar? How many times did he ask questions about the forestry sector in eastern Manitoba? They obviously don't care, Mr. Speaker. How many times—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: How many questions did they ask about the manufacturing sector? Fort Whyte school. That's, you know, the lead question every day. It's a one-trick pony over there, Mr. Speaker, led by the Leader of the Opposition. *[interjection]*

Well, the lobster member, Mr. Speaker, is at it again here. The old municipal joke. I know he had a great policy: Build a liquor store.

Our policy in Brandon is to build and relocate the ACC community college program, Mr. Speaker, and the bluster, the bluff of the member opposite will be contrasted over the next four years. The negative nabob will be contrasted with the positive, optimistic vision of our government. He better enjoy his one term in here because when the ACC college is completed in Brandon, his political career will be over in Brandon West.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: Again, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I was pleased to see that, again, in terms of our school financing, that Stats Canada, Mr. Speaker, has identified that the taxes went down 1.5 percent. The members opposite use selective tax numbers. The difference between Saskatchewan and Manitoba on property taxes is \$400 million a year. I'm surprised that any party that purports to represent a farmer in this House has not pointed out that the

tax levels for education, on farmland are now reduced by 70 percent. It's 37 percent in Saskatchewan. I know the new leader has promised to go to 80 percent where we will be, obviously, from 70 percent to 80 percent in our campaign. The municipal report on financing has been extremely positive, yesterday, when it was presented at the municipal convention. I guess that's why we didn't get a question on municipal affairs.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba has this, a double the national, double any other province on unconditional grants. I also would point out, and I don't know whether the member opposite knows this, but actually, the Leader of the Opposition's position on municipal grants is actually a reduction of unconditional grants in Manitoba by another \$10 million. That was in his speech. It's unfortunate people don't know the numbers, but that's what it is.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of credit rating, we've had four credit upgrades in Manitoba since our campaign. We've had tax reductions and not increased—we haven't done it at the expense of the deficit. You know, we did not have to balance our books by stealing a Crown corporation, taking the money, taking the money—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: —and I want to thank—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and all her colleagues for asking those questions on the Manitoba Public Insurance corporation. We have the lowest rates in Canada in public insurance. We have the lowest rates on hydro. We don't have the lowest rates on telephones anymore after they stole that Crown corporation away from the people of Manitoba.

People are going to continue to support the positive, optimistic builders. We have returned the endangered species of the building crane. We've returned it to the North Hill of Brandon with the ACC community college project. We have returned the endangered species of the building crane to northern Manitoba by building hydro-electric dams. We have returned the endangered species of the building crane to many projects in downtown

Winnipeg. We have returned the building crane to downtown Winnipeg with the new building of the Hydro building. That's why people like this government, and that's why you should vote for this Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hour being 12 p.m., pursuant to rule 45(5), I'm interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), that is, the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

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

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

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Member for Rossmere, that is, the

motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Fauschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 32, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we might call it 12:30.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 30, 2007

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