

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

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable George Hickes  
Speaker*

**Vol. LXI No. 2 – 9:30 a.m., Friday, November 21, 2008**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Ninth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
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, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 21, 2008

**The House met at 9:30 a.m.**

### *PRAYER*

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** As agreed yesterday, I and the other leaders have a statement for the House this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Leona, members of the Lathlin family, elders, friends, colleagues, it's certainly with a heavy heart that I stand today to mourn the loss of our good friend Oscar Lathlin, our colleague, and to also pay tribute to a great life lived for the people of northern Manitoba, for Aboriginal people across Canada and for Canadians as a whole. Certainly, the loss on November 1 has hurt all of us very deeply, and today is a chance for us to express that hurt of his loss and also to praise his great life and his great contributions to Manitoba.

Oscar, as many of you know, was quiet, was a very quiet leader but a very effective leader. He started off early in life being raised in northern Manitoba, and although he culminated his career as a Cabinet minister in our government, he always and effectively felt that his first duty was to his constituents in the broadest sense of the term, to his constituents who were Aboriginal people, who were northerners and, of course, were constituents of The Pas. In fact, he should be most proud of the fact that when he was first elected, he had a narrow win, and when the election took place in 2007, Oscar Lathlin, as a real tribute from his constituents, won every poll in The Pas constituency.

He wanted a better future for his community and, of course, he, himself, showed an ability, demonstrated an ability to achieve. He led his dog team at the age of nine as a champion dog sleigh runner, and he was a caregiver in his family, tragically, at the age of 11, and he chose to go to Cranberry Portage for high school.

Oscar always maintained that young people in Canada and Aboriginal children must have the opportunity to have a decent education, to have hope and dignity in their lives here in Canada. This is something he pursued from the moment he was elected in this Legislature, based on his own experience, and this was something he pursued to his final days when he was still proposing changes in

education in Manitoba and in Canada with the Honourable Chuck Strahl in his role as our minister.

After attending Frontier college at Cranberry Portage, Oscar returned home to become manager of the band. He became active in First Nations' affairs, particularly in the justice portfolio. He was instrumental for the design and scope of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry with Justices Hamilton and Sinclair, and he was a very, very articulate advocate on behalf of justice issues throughout his life.

He became chief of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in 1985, and all of us who have been to Opaskwayak Cree Nation know the great work, the great enterprise that went on in his community under his leadership and carries on today. And, of course, for 18 years he was a member and a colleague in this Legislature and Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs after first being sworn in as Minister of Conservation.

Oscar was deeply moved when he saw young people graduate at high school and universities. He always went to a high school graduation. He always went to a university ceremony. He always attended powwows with young people. That to him was more of a priority than some of the pomp and circumstance of this Chamber. I think, to his credit, he always knew what was important in terms of the people he represented.

Oscar had a humorous side that wasn't always evident in his sometimes tough, sometimes gruff exterior. I mentioned at his memorial service a story that we all heard from Oscar about the great moose hunt that took place, where Oscar told us, of course in his own way, about how he followed the wind and the rivers and he followed the scent for days to capture and hunt and be successful in hunting his first moose. He followed the traditional signs of the forest with the bending of the leaves and the twigs as he sought to obtain his first moose, and then, unfortunately, he killed the moose with an SUV, which was, of course, the ending of that story. Of course, he had us all listening to these Aboriginal traditions until the punch line came, and it was much more of an event that many of us can relate to, dodging moose on highways in northern Manitoba.

I also remember in our own caucus, barbecue and beer one day at my house, I was worried about the rain. Oscar was the first one to get there. My daughter was there and she had picked up that I was worried about the rain, and Oscar said, don't worry, I'll take this little axe you've got here on the ground—not that my kids were playing with axes, but we were trimming the trees. Oscar took the axe and said, it's an Aboriginal belief that if you took the axe and put it in the tree towards where the sun is setting it will not rain. Of course, my daughter was very impressed that it never rained that whole evening, and, of course, a tribute it is now to the traditions of Aboriginal people and the beliefs of Aboriginal people based on Oscar's story. But I remember at midnight, there she was listening to Oscar, the other side of him that a lot of media wouldn't see, a lot of public wouldn't see, and that is his tender side that every one of us knows, every one of our caucus members knows. Oscar cared a lot about his own family, about his own children, his own grandchildren and about the family of every colleague in this Legislature and expressed it in very tender ways and at very many different times.

This is just a little bit about Oscar Lathlin's life. Today we have parts of his life here, just very small parts of his life. Again, in The Pas, but even before The Pas memorial service, I was extremely impressed to meet the Cross Lake cadets, and there are 40 Cross Lake cadets that are here today. Thank you very much for travelling that nine hours. I want to pay tribute to the Cross Lake cadets for being here today. Oscar was so proud. We had a lunch a couple of years ago with the cadets and he always believed that Aboriginal kids needed educational opportunities and they needed activities to join, and he would be so proud to see the 40 of you here today.

We are so proud to have been a colleague of Oscar Lathlin and I pledge to the people of Manitoba and to his family, Leona and all his children and grandchildren, that the passion for education for all Aboriginal children will be a torch that Oscar has passed to us and that we will carry with pride. Thank you.

\* (09:40)

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I would like to thank the Premier for those very fitting comments in tribute to a colleague whom we have lost.

I want to also thank the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) for making the arrangements

for us to have this special opportunity this morning to change the rules of the Legislature in order to permit time for party leaders to express condolences and to pay tribute to somebody who has had a lasting impact on this Chamber and the people who comprise this Chamber, but more broadly, on our province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well for accommodating the desire of all parties and all members to have this opportunity to pay tribute to such a fine lost colleague.

I want to take the opportunity to welcome Oscar's family, welcome those chiefs and elders who are in attendance, as well as the Cross Lake cadets who were just acknowledged by the Premier and those others who have made the time to be here this morning to be part of this special tribute to Oscar Lathlin.

I want to pay particular condolences to Leona and to Oscar's family. I know all of you are feeling his loss greatly and mourning today as we think back about the impact that he had on all of your lives.

Also, in speaking with the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) yesterday, I know that many of Oscar's colleagues, those who had the chance to get to know him well personally and work with him over many years, are very deeply feeling this loss today. I want to just express my condolences to members who I know are feeling this loss very personally and very deeply today, on behalf of all of my colleagues to express our condolences and our thoughts for those who I know are continuing to grieve very deeply at this loss of somebody who is not just a colleague but every bit as close as a close family member to many of the members that he served with.

In his 18 years of service, Oscar was five times chosen to be the voice of the people of The Pas constituency which, in and of itself, is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the fact that he was viewed with respect and was viewed as somebody who had at heart at all times the best interest of the people that he was entrusted to serve.

I and all of my colleagues were saddened to learn of Oscar's passing at the age of 61. It came as a surprise, although all of us knew that he was labouring with health challenges. It came as a surprise to all of us and particularly, colleagues on this side of the House who have served in this Chamber for long periods of time, I know were greatly impacted. Those who got to know Oscar

well, even from opposing positions, felt that loss very deeply. I was surprised and saddened although I have had less time personally to serve in this Chamber with Oscar. I was both surprised and very saddened to learn of his passing at an age that is far too young, with so many great potential contributions yet to be made by him.

What I have learned about Oscar in the time that I have been here is that his family story, his upbringing and experiences were very special and unique, and they imbued in him a certain perspective and a certain set of values that were very important values and perspectives to bring into this Chamber and to bring into the deliberations on the bigger public challenges and opportunities that we face as a province.

We know that he had a strong mother who did what strong mothers do, which was to protect him when he needed to be protected and to instil in him certain values that he carried with him through his life and experiences.

He was also part of a large and prominent northern family who have left their mark on our province in very many positive ways. In the many occasions I've had to travel through the north that contribution to northern Manitoba is very visible and evident and the Lathlin family, of which Oscar was a proud part, is a family that is ingrained in the history of our province as a family of great leadership and commitment to the well-being of the people of our province.

We also know that Oscar carried with him the pains and the burdens of a generation of Aboriginal people who witnessed racism and discrimination and quietly suffered with much injustice through difficult and unjust periods in the history of our province. We know that the work of eradicating racism and discrimination and injustice is far from done, but that he witnessed more than his fair share in his years on this earth. In his quiet ways he betrayed a certain depth. There's the saying that still waters run deep, and I would say that that thought applies more aptly to Oscar Lathlin than perhaps any other member of this Chamber and perhaps to any other person that I have had the opportunity to meet.

He had occasionally sharp words for members on this side of the House. They were an expression of his genuine sense of what was right and wrong, his genuine desire to be an advocate on behalf of his people. I will say that even in the face of disagreement on specific points that his words were

taken to heart, even those that were ones that were aimed as criticism toward members of this side of the House. They were taken seriously and they had an impact. We will always be grateful for the way he was prepared to stand up for what he believed was right in the people that he was elected to represent.

Many of my colleagues, who have served for longer than I in this Chamber, have expressed, since Oscar's passing, their profound appreciation for his kindness and for the sense of humour that the Premier (Mr. Doer) referred to earlier. I haven't had any opportunities to play with axes or drive in SUVs with Oscar in the course of my life, but I did see evidence of that sense of humour in those hallway conversations that happen around this building and outside of this Chamber, and his very gentlemanly, quiet and warm ways were quite evident in those conversations.

I was trying to recall the last conversation I had with Oscar. I believe it was outside of a committee room during the last sitting of this Legislature in the fall. The last words I can recall him saying to me were something to the effect of, you should spend more time with your mouth shut and your ears open, which I, at the time, found a little bit abrasive, but with the benefit of hindsight and reflection, probably some of the best advice I have been offered in a long time, and I do take those words to heart. They were just typically Oscar Lathlin words and, within them, profoundly wise words.

Mr. Speaker, we will miss Oscar Lathlin. We have disagreed with him on various points at various times in the past, but nobody denies his absolute, fundamental commitment to bettering the people that he represented and to doing what he thought was right. The Premier has referred to his legacy and education. I think that perhaps the most important legacy that Oscar Lathlin will leave will be that the next generation of young people growing up in Manitoba and, in particular, those young people from First Nations communities and Métis communities and others, who have grown up in communities that have suffered under injustice, will perhaps feel just a little bit less of that burden of facing injustice and racism than what he felt and will walk through life with just a slightly greater sense of hope and optimism about the sort of future that lies ahead. That is Oscar's legacy. It is a profoundly important one.

I, again, thank the Premier and the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) for the opportunity to

make these remarks and again express condolences to Leona, to Oscar's family, to his daughter, who made the comment that he was a great role model, which I think is about the highest form of praise that any father could want. We certainly appreciate this opportunity today. Thank you.

\* (09:50)

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, Leona, elders, grand chiefs, chiefs, friends of Oscar Lathlin and members of the Chamber, I rise to pay tribute to Oscar Lathlin, to a man who has represented The Pas and northern Manitoba and Aboriginal people in our province for many years.

It is with great sadness that all of us miss Oscar and his contributions. I was recently at the funeral, and the wonderful thing about the funeral was not only the tributes but the recognition of the humour and the fun that Oscar had in his life, whether it was with moose, the stories by Edwin Jebb and the family talking about Oscar's life and paying in a wonderful way a tribute to Oscar and what he'd been able to achieve: his passion for education, for young people to try and ensure that people had opportunities; his understanding from growing up that there had been huge problems that he was lucky that he had escaped because of his family and the circumstances being drawn into the residential school system but that he'd nevertheless managed to get an education and managed to make major contributions to the Opaskwayak Cree Nation; the building of the mall; the building of the community, something that he believed very deeply in; certainly his involvement in setting up the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; his concern for what had happened to Helen Betty Osborne and to make sure that not only was it understood, the nature of what happened and why it was so wrong, but that it was an opportunity to build a foundation which is investing in young people and in the future of young people in the north. I think that that and the presence of the cadets, the formation of the Cross Lake cadets and their contribution is certainly a major legacy that Oscar Lathlin will leave behind.

I know from travelling frequently in northern Manitoba, from having raised many times to Oscar northern issues, he was always handling them with grace. Even when I raised the problems at Granville Lake, with the sewage spewing all over the community, Oscar stood up there very calmly and talked about what the plan was and how they were addressing it. And certainly whether it was that,

whether it was related to suicides in the north, to the situation of the toxic wastes at Kississing Lake, the Knapp Dam and the pump station in The Pas, the flooding when there was sewage backup in The Pas, The Sustainable Development Act and the procedures around that and the importance of a sustainable society when he was Minister of Conservation, issues at Pukatawagan, at Duck Bay, at many Northern Affairs communities, time and time again when I raised these, he was knowledgeable and he was able in his calm way to answer questions. In a sense, what we're doing in this House in raising issues is trying to get attention, and Oscar was paying attention. I think that, thanks to Oscar, many issues got dealt with in the north or at least there was an effort and that certainly is recognized and acknowledged.

So I am pleased and honoured to be able to join the other leaders today in paying this tribute to Oscar Lathlin in remembering his contributions and saying to Oscar, thank you for what you have done wherever you are. Oscar's family, you have a major loss. We know that, we understand that, and we thank you for your support for Oscar while he was alive and your remembrance of him now.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to now ask that all members follow the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) into the foyer, through the main doors, for the retirement of the headdress of the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the retirement of the headdress to his daughter.

I'd also ask unanimous leave of the House to extend the recess of the House to 10:15.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Member for Rupertsland will take the headdress through the main doors and all members follow, and—just wait please, just wait please, and also is there leave to extend the recess to 10:15? Is there agreement of the House? *[Agreed]*

Yes, there is agreement of the House, so we will now exit and we will reconvene at 10:15.

*The House recessed at 9:56 a.m.*

*The House resumed at 10:19 a.m.*

### Speaker's Statement

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that a vacancy exists in the representation in the Legislative Assembly electoral division of The Pas due to the death of Oscar Lathlin, the member elected for this electoral division. Also, I'm tabling a copy of the notification to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council of the vacancy thus created in the membership of the House.

\* (10:20)

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PETITIONS

#### Recovery Strategy – Manitoba Farmers

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Several regions of Manitoba have been hit by repeated heavy rains since spring of 2008.

This has created serious challenges for farmers, including hay and straw shortages, damage to bales, forage and pasture, barns and corrals, crop losses and lost inputs, among others.

The excess moisture has also caused other problems, including the flooding of homes and outbuildings, sewage backups and septic field saturation.

Local governments have been hit with road washouts and other infrastructure damage.

People affected by the excess moisture and flooding are very concerned that the provincial government has not responded quickly enough and that they are being left to deal with this disaster on their own.

There is a fear that, without a comprehensive strategy to address these challenges, there will be serious and lasting economic consequences in the affected regions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider developing a comprehensive recovery strategy aimed at addressing both the immediate and the long-term effects of this year's excess moisture conditions and flooding.

To urge the provincial government to consider examining all types of programming to help

producers recover from this disaster, including emergency one-time programs, as well as improvements to the crop insurance program to address its shortfalls.

To urge the provincial government to consider addressing shortcomings with drainage and the processing of drainage permits.

This petition is signed Ronald Ross, Eldon Campbell, Marlene Sucharyna and many, many others. Thank you.

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

#### Education Funding

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, even with the sombre occasion of the House, the business must continue.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to selected property owners in certain areas and confines.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

The provincial sales tax was instituted for the purpose of funding education. However, monies generated by this tax are being placed in general revenue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by E. Stolar, H. Stolar, A. Konowalchuk and many, many other fine Manitobans.

### Community Police Offices

**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:

In 2007, in the provincial election, the NDP clearly stated that making communities safer was a priority.

The NDP government did nothing to prevent the McPhillips Street Community Police Office and other offices from closing.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) to consider the important role that community police offices can play in making our communities safer.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by J. Sokoloski, H. Sokoloski, T. Sokoloski and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2007-2008 Annual Progress Report for the Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Throne Speech Economic Statement

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to thank you, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and other members for the opportunity this morning to pay tribute to the former Member for the The Pas. I am in the position now of having to disregard that last piece of advice that he did give me to keep my mouth shut and my ears open. I can't promise to keep my mouth shut, but I will promise to keep my ears open in response to the questions.

Mr. Speaker, in the current economic environment where there are certainly concerns about what is happening to the east, west and south of us and in other places around the world, governments are coming forward with economic statements that contain a clear recognition of the fact that the world has changed since budgets were

introduced earlier this year. GDP projections have been reduced. In fact, the projection contained in the budget of 2.7 percent has been revised downward to 1.6 percent in the Throne Speech, and yet the government yesterday, in spite of the commitment to provide an economic statement, provided nothing but a repeat of a variety of spending promises that had been made through past announcements. As a result, Manitobans are no further ahead in terms of our understanding of where we are today from the standpoint of public finances and where the government plans to take us through the balance of this year and, just as importantly, in the years beyond.

I want to ask the Premier whether the reason they didn't provide an economic statement yesterday was because it was the situation that they didn't know what the numbers are or is it because they're just not saying.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I take issue with the statement of the Leader of the Opposition. We did go forward on a number of decisions that we could have postponed. We've always said we'd operate within the balanced budget provisions. In yesterday's statement we confirmed that under the old rules and under the new rules, we'll be balanced in terms of GAAP and the former legislation that allows for transfers from the rainy day fund to be not calculated in a certain way.

Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the member forgets to mention that when we came into office, the small-business tax was 9 percent, lowering to 8, and that was the highest in the country. Eighty percent of the jobs in this province are created by small business. We are now going down from 2 percent to 1 percent, reconfirmed in the economic statement. We also have gone from 17 percent, the highest corporate tax in Canada, and reconfirmed our reduction from 13 percent to 12 percent in 2009, again a statement of predictability for business.

We have carried through on our personal income tax reductions. We have carried through on relieving stress in families for caregivers, again something that is important to our side of the House at least in terms of people feeling the pressure of seniors, their parents, their grandparents.

Mr. Speaker, we've introduced a new trade measure to reduce the 3.2 cent per litre aviation fuel that was in place for cargo operations, in place actually since '99. We've reduced that to 1.5, and we've made more specific the exemption for cargo



from the United States. That, in turn, we believe, will create jobs and that's why this is a very balanced approach.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know the second quarter report will be out in the typical time, but I did say in the economic statement to the media that our revenues are above where our expenditures have increased. I can go on further about expenditures if the member wants.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, what we've seen from other provinces is revised statements of projections for the current year and projections forward in light of the changing environment. It would be difficult to imagine that with a reduced projection in terms of GDP growth from 2.7 to 1.6 that there isn't some significant impact on own-source revenues.

We know that there are discussions ongoing in terms of the very sizable federal transfer payments that have been flowing to Manitoba, particularly under the last nine years. The Premier is very good at citing history in terms of former tax rates. We certainly know that the very high tax rates that were left by the last NDP Pawley administration were certainly unacceptably high and that with the record transfer payments that he has received that are in the billions of dollars in increases over the base budget from 1999 that they have taken some very small steps in that direction which he's advertised extremely well.

But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the debt of the Province, taxpayer-supported debt, is at an all-time high at over \$10 billion today while other provinces were cutting their debt. The fact is we're more dependent today on those transfers from Ottawa than we have been at any other time in our history. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which is at roughly \$600 million in available funds after the withdrawal this year, is a very small fraction of the massive increases in the tens of billions over nine years that they received from Ottawa and will hardly be in a position to sustain our province through a potential downturn of three or four years as some economists are projecting.

I want to ask the Premier why it is that yesterday, in spite of trying to brand it as an economic statement, they didn't provide a true picture of the state of Manitoba's finances today and how they project that it will get through the future. In particular, Mr. Speaker, what are their plans for growth? Where is the money coming from for all the

spending that was being announced in yesterday's Throne Speech?

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, I would point out the Conference Board of Canada and other third party independent sources have indicated that Manitoba's economy will either be second or third best in Canada. I would also point out that I did outline in my press conference that second-quarter results would be printed shortly, but we are tracking up in the first six months in revenues, tracking up in expenditures.

The largest expenditure increase in the first six months of this year is actually in an area of spending that the members opposite have called us to increase almost every day. They talk one way in a press conference, and then every day they say spend more money on agriculture, spend more money in agriculture. Well, the largest overexpenditure so far this year, because of the necessity of the livestock market, has been in the area of agriculture. I'm sure they're going to say they're opposed to that now, or perhaps they just will say one thing in one place and one thing in the other.

I also want to point out—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** I think I indicated yesterday there was close to 20 percent overexpended in agriculture in the first six months of this year. Thankfully, our own-source economy has produced revenues that are in line and slightly higher than our budget for the first six months.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that there are changes and revisions in forecasts, some dramatic in Canada. The GDP is obviously one factor. The tracking of our own revenues is another factor, but when some budgets have been built on \$80 a barrel of oil and it went up to \$147 a barrel, that produced more potential surplus for some provinces. Now, with oil down at just under \$50 a barrel, that obviously changes the equation for the federal government, which received royalties and revenues and corporate taxes from that sector, and obviously for some provinces, particularly west of us.

We have a more diversified economy. It doesn't have the absolute increases in—[*interjection*] We have a diversified economy, and I'd like to, first of all, start by saying, you know, besides all the partisan politics, that a lot of good people in Manitoba are

doing an excellent job dealing with economic pressure. A year ago they had to deal with the dollar at \$1.07. Today they have to deal with consumer demand with our largest trading partner. The United States has been radically contrasted because of the economic mess with the unfettered markets in the United States, the kind of kissing cousins of members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that people in this Chamber should pay tribute to the entrepreneurs, to the workers, to the farmers, to the communities that actually have put Manitoba in a position of being second best in Canada. My hat is off to them today and I want to pay tribute to them in this Legislature.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the reference to kissing cousins, I will say that I've never rushed to California to have my picture taken with the Republican governor of California who just went to Washington looking for a financial bailout because he's bankrupted the State of California. That is who he chooses to get his policy advice from, and we choose to get our advice from other places.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has not responded to the question of the change in the circumstances that have occurred since the budget came down earlier this year. The GDP numbers have been revised. They have made general comments about balanced budgets, but they've also introduced legislation that allows them to count operating deficits and rebrand those as surpluses by using Crown corporation income, which is not an honest picture of the operating budget of government for which he and his Cabinet are accountable.

I want to ask the Premier: Is he committing today that the level of operating budget surplus that was committed to in the budget that was introduced in the spring will remain exactly as projected last spring when the year-end reports come out at the end of this fiscal year? Is he committing to that level of operating surplus that was projected in April of this year?

**Mr. Doer:** I'm pleased now that we've had a conversion on the road to Damascus with the national government. The governor of California, the Democratic governor of Arizona Janet Napolitano, the governor of New Mexico Bill Richardson, and four provinces in Canada have proposed a cap-and-trade system. Both John McCain and Barack Obama have proposed a cap-and-trade system, so I'm pleased that some of the work we've been doing with western states from all parties, Mr. Speaker, has now

just been announced in the Speech from the Throne from the federal government.

We think that's an intelligent move that's been made. I know that members opposite may not have watched that development. I know that members opposite have a different view on climate change and global warming and its impact on Manitoba.

I would point out that the proposed draw from the rainy day fund last year was \$37 million. We, in fact, put 150—well, over \$125 million in the rainy day fund and prepaid some very needed and important capital like the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

I also would point out that we have a debt payment that we've also recommitted to of \$110 million. So if you look at a potential draw of the rainy day fund of \$60 million and you still have \$110 million, we are actually in a situation that is very, very positive. I would also point out, under the old set of accounting rules in Manitoba—not accounting rules, actually Conservative rules, you had two sets of books, numbers on the books and off the books.

Now, let me explain why this is a more rigorous test under GAAP. We now have over \$800 million in a rainy day fund. Under the old rules, we could transfer all of that money into the operating revenue, and that would not show as a deficit. Under the new rules, all entities in government, Crown corporations and the rainy day fund that come into the revenue item must be accounted for together as one set of books.

So we've gone from two sets of books that are easier to balance into one set of books which is more comprehensive to balance, and I would point out that members opposite should understand that. That's why auditors general have been recommending that to the Legislature. They should understand that before they make silly statements about it.

### **Pension Regulations Government Policy**

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

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** On a new question. The Premier is wrong to say that the Auditor General recommended a move away from a requirement to balance the operating budget. The Auditor General talked about presenting a comprehensive picture, but that's a very different thing from a requirement to balance the

operating budget of government for which he and his ministers have responsibility.

The new legislation actually creates a scenario where they can claim balanced budgets and yet increase the debt of the Province by running operating deficits in government. That's why we are looking for clarity about the state of the operating budget in Manitoba, but for reasons that he knows and his Finance Minister knows but the rest of Manitobans don't know, he isn't prepared to be open and transparent about the current state of those numbers.

Yesterday in the Throne Speech, there was reference to flexibility with respect to pension regulations. Many Manitobans today who are either facing retirement shortly or who are retired are looking at the value of their pension funds today. Many who had purchased Crocus investments on the faith of their representations were initially devastated by that collapse during good times, remarkably, Mr. Speaker, and are now looking at the value of their accounts during this global downturn.

Mr. Speaker, anytime there is a reference to flexibility in pension regulations, it's important that the government be clear about what they mean by that. The comment that was made in the speech was to avoid triggering defaults that may lead to declarations of insolvency within companies.

I just want to ask the Premier if he could please expand on that reference to pension regulations, what caused them to make that change in policy and what are the implications of that policy change for pension funds and for pensioners in Manitoba.

\*(10:40)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** First of all, dealing with pensions, Mr. Speaker, I would point out—first of all, to deal with his post-amble, we were clear that our revenues for the first six months were above budget projections, and we were clear that expenditures were slightly above budget projections or above budget projections, but primarily the biggest percentage increase was in agriculture. It's something the members opposite have called for over and over and over again, not that consistency plays any part in it.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of issues dealing with pensions. Number 1 is the whole issue of individuals making decisions on their registered retirement savings plan. We commend the Prime Minister, and we applaud him for calling a First

Ministers' meeting. We think that issues of mark-to-market accounting and pension valuation is an issue that's international in scope given the post-Lehman Brothers decline in the stock markets. We think the first priority for pensions—and we proposed this to the Prime Minister; Manitoba was one of the provinces that I think took the appropriate position with the Prime Minister—is to take the 71-age requirement of registered retirement savings plan and change that and not require people to convert at 71 given the market conditions.

So I would ask the members opposite to look at that because right now, besides the kind of patter here in the House, what's going on out there is people are sitting down at their kitchen tables, they are getting close to retirement or at the retirement age, if they don't have a defined benefit pension plan and have a registered retirement savings account, they're trying to make a decision about whether they should retire with less money in that account or should they work longer. A lot of Manitobans are deciding every day to work longer. Hopefully, we can keep the economy going so people will have the choice to work longer because in some jurisdictions, regrettably, people don't have that choice. So we still have a fairly active labour market in terms of the ability to stay and work.

So that's the first and major issue on pensions dealing with what's happening at kitchen tables, not what's happening necessarily in terms of partisan debate.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we know, we met with business, labour and government together—the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Federation of Labour and the Premier's Economic Advisory Council which includes labour and business. They all said, one of the unintended consequences of mark-to-market accounting and the whole issue of pension solvency laws, not only in Manitoba but across Canada, is to have provisions that might put companies into bankruptcy—might.

So we are going to continue to work with business and labour. On the one hand, we need to maintain solvency of pension plans obviously in our laws, but we don't want a number of 40-year-old workers laid off because of companies not being able to get credit because of the market and the issue of solvency.

We'll continue to work with business and labour. We're not going to take one stakeholder's view on this. We're going to continue to work with retirees, with older employees, with private companies, with public companies, with businesses, with different entities. Now, Mr. Speaker, hopefully, and again, a recommendation to the Prime Minister going into the G-20 meeting was to look at the mark-to-marketing accounting and how it dealt with pension solvency so that we don't put companies at credit risk and put them into bankruptcy.

So we're trying to balance jobs and pensions. We haven't got a specific proposal. We raise this as a concern, but I would suggest to members opposite, one thing we know specifically and we've recommended specifically, is that the age of 71 for converting a registered retirement savings plan has got to be changed, and we're urging that that happen in Parliament immediately, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of the conversations happening at kitchen tables around the province. Every member in this House has parents or grandparents or family members who are looking at their retirements and reducing their expectations in terms of their financial positions, and we acknowledge that this is part of what's going on globally in the current market environment.

But there was a very specific reference in the Throne Speech, without very much explanation, as to what had caused the government to look at changing pension regulations. Those regulations are there for a reason. Much of the criticism of what has happened south of the border has been an environment where there was excessive flexibility in regulations that allowed for short-term, reckless decisions to be made that turned into catastrophic outcomes in the longer term.

The regulations they're referring to are in place to ensure that there is a caution built in to accounting and to pension management and that there is no short-term consideration that is put ahead of potentially catastrophic longer-term results. So when they talk about flexibility, new flexibility in regulations, it calls for a full, open debate, full transparency and discussion about what's driving this change in policy and an evaluation of the risks for Manitobans in the next generation and the generation after.

If decisions are going to be made in the short run, they may have an impact further down the road. That's why I ask the Premier: If the mark-to-market

requirements under the current regulations have created a scenario where some companies in Manitoba are technically insolvent today, would he disclose how many of those companies are technically insolvent as a result of those regulations? What is the health of their operations, because we don't want to see companies that are otherwise healthy operating companies go out of business because of regulations.

But will he come forward with a full explanation as to what's driving the change and an analysis of the risk to future generations who may end up paying the price for regulatory changes that are made to meet short-term contingencies, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we are the party that believes in a balance with regulations. We are the party that believes the market—it should not be unfettered. We do not believe in the greed philosophy that has led to this down—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Doer:** —decline in valuations in the United States.

We do not believe in an unregulated market. It is a different political philosophy and a different set of values that is shared by members on this side of the House. It is the unfettered Darwinian philosophy of the Republican Party in the south that is more akin to members opposite in their philosophy and their values. So when they talk about regulation, I'm glad to see there's been, again, another value conversion on the road to Damascus, but certainly we believe that it's important.

Now, first of all, I am listening to the member opposite and I haven't heard his support or lack of support for the idea of taking a registered retirement savings plan, taking the rigidity of 71 and changing that in Ottawa. I certainly am listening to see whether he supports our position to the national government or he doesn't because that's, right now, the issue. Every day potential retirees are faced with this challenge.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we will work with all stakeholders, employees and owners of companies in Manitoba. We have suggested a national approach to this. It's not just Manitoba proposing this. Many other provinces have raised this issue with the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has raised this at the G-20, the whole issue of pension solvency in

different provinces and different states in United States.

There are many companies that have operational profits and their revenues far exceed their expenditures but may have accounting issues with short-term pension valuations based on what's happened in the markets.

We want viable companies to not go bankrupt and lay off people. That's what we want. At the same time, we have to have a bottom-line protection, through regulation, on pension protection. So, Mr. Speaker, you can't talk about one dynamic without talking about the other.

If the member also is irresponsibly asking me to name companies that may or may not be at risk, surely to goodness he knows that all these companies are sensitive to market reactions. It's the last thing we need to do, play politics with the viability of good Manitoba companies. That's going to put more people out of work. If that's his goal, I think he's got the wrong objective here in Manitoba.

\* (10:50)

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, that is a pathetic and ridiculous response to a serious question. I said in the question that we don't want viable operating companies to be compromised in any way as a result of financial accounting rules and short-term issues, but there's a long-term issue which he doesn't seem to want to address, and that is that in the event that the downturn in the markets today is not just a short-term event but a longer-term event, the changes in accounting rules today have the potential to take current problems and amplify them by pushing them back into the future and creating a much deeper and more severe problem down the road.

That is exactly the sort of thinking that got the United States credit markets to the position they're in today: Let's not address problems right now; let's make things more flexible so that we can push them off, and if we can push them off long enough, maybe they'll go away. That was the attitude in the United States. *[interjection]* Well, the members opposite are saying that wasn't the attitude in the United States. They have two different positions. The Premier is blaming American decision making for the position that we're in today, and the reality is that if you fail to come forward and be as transparent as you can be in the short run and honest about what the longer term projections are, you run the risk of getting

deeper and deeper into the hole by deferring the problems that are not being addressed.

I have not asked for names of companies that are technically insolvent. I asked him to indicate the number of Manitoba companies that could be in that position today. I didn't ask for names. I would ask him to be up front and candid about the snapshot of where we are today, what are the reasonable projections about where we may go into the future, Mr. Speaker, and what plans does he have to address them, because the tone of yesterday's speech was business as usual, everything is fine, nothing to look at over here, but then they've got provisions in the Throne Speech which alarmingly talk about introducing new flexibility to pension regulations.

I wonder if the Premier can be more forthcoming about the current state of Manitoba's pension plans, particularly those managed within the public sector, and indicate what their projections are and their plans for ensuring that we don't simply say, don't worry, be happy today, and have the result of that be a massive problem further down the road, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, anything we do in this regard will have all stakeholders, labour and business and other provinces dealing with this. It's not a unique issue in Manitoba. You know, we're not Singapore. This is not an island. We are affected by what's happening with the unregulated greed environment of the United States, which is not the value system that we subscribe to.

Mr. Speaker, I will review *Hansard*, but I recall the question being: list or name companies in Manitoba. I think that is actually the most irresponsible question I have ever received in this Chamber at this time. If the member opposite is interested in partisan politics and wants me to name companies or give a list of names of companies that may or may not be at risk, I suggest to him he is putting more jobs on the line than any Leader of the Opposition has ever proposed in any question period I've ever been at.

### **Throne Speech Deficit Predictions**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech yesterday the government indicated that there would not be a deficit in 2008.

Will the Finance Minister tell us today whether that commitment was made hiding behind the summary budget, including Manitoba Hydro

revenues, or will his commitment of no deficit be based specifically on the annual operating budget?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we made it clear that we would balance the budget based on the law that's been passed in this Legislature. The law requires us to balance the budget and it also requires us to be accountable for what's happening in the operating budget and be transparent about that.

We have said as recently as the Throne Speech yesterday that we expect, barring catastrophic events not yet foreseen, that we will balance the budget in 2008 and 2009, and we stand by that.

Our first half of the year has been solid in terms of performance. Revenues have maintained themselves. The Manitoba economy, like all economies, has not been immune from the effects of what's happening in the global marketplace but has performed, on a relative basis, better than most economies, although overall real growth is down.

#### **Balanced Budget Fiscal Stabilization Fund Use**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** The question that I asked under the financial circumstances of today is a very serious question, and what I received was basically some political baffle-gab about legislation, and they will commit to a balanced budget under Bill 38.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2008 budget, the minister is already using \$60 million of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They used that before the economic turmoil and the anticipated reduction in revenue.

Can he please tell us how much of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund he is prepared to use this year to balance the budget 2008?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the member forgets that we also committed to a \$110-million reduction of debt payment in the budget, and we will follow through on that. We will spend that \$110 million.

The member also knows full well that there was a \$60-million draw proposed in the budget related to investments in things like health-care wait-list reductions. That was how we took advantage of the resources made available to us to do that.

We will, as I said earlier, barring catastrophic events not yet foreseeable by anybody in the world at the moment, quite frankly, we will balance the

budget next year. We expect the draw of \$60 million to be acted upon, and if there's any fine-tuning on that or changes in that, we will report that as we put out the second quarter report in the normal time frame, which usually happens around the middle of December.

#### **Economic Downturn Government Strategy**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Yesterday, twice I heard the Finance Minister use the term "stay the course." He is going to stay the course in Manitoba.

Does that mean that he's going to borrow more money? Does that mean, staying the course, Mr. Speaker, that he's going to spend a 6.2 percent increase on budget to budget? Does that mean, in staying the course, that he's going to depend totally on transfer payments and equalization payments from the federal government?

Business right now today, Mr. Speaker, is hunkering down. Businesses right now are making adjustments to the way they operate—right now.

Is this minister not going to take the tack of business and start hunkering down and start making changes and look forward to those catastrophic opportunities that face us, Mr. Speaker, right now, in the economic downturns that we have in this province?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** It was very clear in our economic statement yesterday, we made a commitment to stay the course by having key infrastructure investments in health, education, highways, those kinds of assets that will build the economic prosperity of the province.

We made a key commitment yesterday to continue to make Manitoba businesses competitive by having the smallest low business tax rate in the country, 2 percent now and 1 percent next year. We made a key commitment to reduce corporate tax rates from 13 percent to 12 percent. We made a key commitment to continue phasing out capital tax which will allow businesses to innovate and reinvest in technology which will allow them to remain competitive.

All of those things are staying the course. All of those things have brought prosperity to Manitoba. All of those things will continue to add buoyancy to the Manitoba economy at a time when the world economy is sinking. That buoyancy will—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Bailey Esliger Critical Incident Investigation  
Notification to Family**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, patient safety is in the spotlight once again. Twenty-one-year-old Bailey Esliger had minor surgery and 12 hours later she died. A month later her family are outraged because nobody told them that there was an internal investigation going on. They had to find out from the media.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why the family was kept in the dark about this investigation that was going on about their daughter.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I would begin my answer, of course, by extending my condolences to the family. To lose a family member, one so young, is virtually too much to bear and I express my condolences.

We know that within the context of the legislation that we brought forward that requires critical instances to be reviewed, there is a statement that says that families must be notified. There was, indeed, a delay in this case in the family being kept up to date on the proceedings of that investigation which is unacceptable.

We are going to ensure that that continues to be monitored so that those kinds of delays don't occur and that the family is kept abreast of the investigation as it goes forward.

\* (11:00)

**Re-Use of Blood-Sampling Needle  
Notification to Patients**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the WRHA announced that a nurse had improperly used a blood-sampling device which could lead to blood infections, it was an announcement that came two months after the discovery had been made, and patients affected by this were only notified last week.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why it took almost two months before these patients were notified?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** As the member opposite and members of this House well know, much attention has been paid recently to the reusing of single-use critical devices concerning what we are seeing happening in Alberta, where

nearly 3,000 people are being contacted because of misuse of devices.

We know here in Manitoba that that has not been the policy and has not been the practice. We do know that at the Centre de Santé in the WRHA that this situation was discovered about an improper use of a cap of a device, and while the public health officials say that this particular kind of potential for infection is about one in a million, in an abundance of caution these individuals have been contacted.

**Critical Incident Investigations  
Family Notifications**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I would point out that the governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan both came forward and notified the public about it, and we heard nothing from this particular Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, freedom of information documents tell us that the WRHA reported almost 400 critical incidents last year. This year, the numbers are on track to surpass that.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she can confirm for us that of all of those cases, all of the families are being properly notified when critical incident investigations are started.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I would remind the member opposite that, of course, the practice in Manitoba on single-use critical devices was stopped in Manitoba years ago. That was a policy that we brought into place.

Concerning the incident with the WRHA, public health officials and medical experts needed to determine the assessment of risk in this very unique situation. Their assessment, again, was that there was a one-in-a-million chance of there being an infection, but one in a million is too many. That's why that notification for 17 people has occurred.

We know that within the context of legislation of critical incidences—which is a change in culture in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, from a time a decade ago when medical error was swept under the rug. Now we're talking about it in the open. Families are involved. They need to continue to be involved and we're going to work to ensure that that happens.

**Phoenix Sinclair Case Review  
Status of Report**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are outraged at the details

about Phoenix Sinclair's short life and tragic death as they're emerging.

In September of 2006, 32 recommendations from a special case review into Phoenix Sinclair's death involved one recommendation that I quote: "That the Child Protection Branch provide a detailed report to the Office of the Children's Advocate indicating the status of the recommendations listed in this report. This should be submitted within nine months after the completion of this case review."

It's been over two years now since this recommendation was made. Has the minister's department provided the detailed report to the Office of the Children's Advocate on all 32 of the recommendations?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Indeed the details of the tragic life and death of Phoenix Sinclair are breaking the hearts of Manitobans. It is profoundly tragic and heart-rending. What is very important, of course, in this House is that we refrain from comment on any of the matters at issue in trial.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the reviews that took place following the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair, there are recommendations that today are going to work to strengthen the practices in child welfare. Some of those were outlined yesterday and more will be put to work for Manitobans in the coming year.

I also remind, of course, members of this House that the Office of the Children's Advocate reports regularly on the status of improvements to the child-welfare system and is reporting specifically, as well, on the status of recommendations following the death of Phoenix Sinclair.

**Mr. Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

#### **Northern Manitoba Children Government Programs**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to ask my question and two supplementaries.

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave to ask a question and two supplementary questions? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** Even in difficult times, when perhaps even more so than ever in difficult economic times, there can be little more important than the health of our children.

As the Premier (Mr. Doer) knows, we have recently learned of the sad death of Cameron Ouskan of Fox Lake. I would ask the Premier to tell us in this Legislature what his government's plans are with regard to children in northern Manitoba.

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this Assembly, I think it's important that we relay and pass on condolences on the loss of this child, Cameron Ouskan, in northern Manitoba from Fox Lake.

Mr. Speaker, supports have been put in place for both the family members and community. It's important to recognize, outside of the given thrust of activity in this Legislature, the profoundly saddening and deep impact on families. So those supports are being made available.

Of course, when it comes to this particular matter that was raised by the member, the police are investigating, and it would be premature, Mr. Speaker, at this point to point any fingers.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, today when we remember the passing of Oscar Lathlin, it is fitting that we're paying attention to the children of northern Manitoba. Today, many children in northern Manitoba are unable to afford milk, and yet the government has not supported our approach to one price to milk. Children are struggling under difficult conditions, for example, to get to school, and we need to support them.

I would ask the Premier what he's doing with regard to the situation in St. Theresa Point where there have been 200 children who have had their school interrupted because of concerns over the situation there.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know Oscar would have some comments to be made about all our responsibility with northern Aboriginal children.

In terms of one of the areas that sometimes wasn't appreciated fully by people living in the south is the Northern Food program that Oscar Lathlin started and led. Many communities now have greenhouses and other facilities to grow their own vegetables, their own food products. We have some domestic poultry in some of those northern communities and some of the other programs to get more self-sufficiency involved.



I'd like to applaud—there are many areas that Oscar—you know, most of us know that a lot of his contributions were under the political radar but were certainly above the ground for a lot of people living in northern communities, including a desire to change completely the whole philosophy of shipping food from southern communities, at a very expensive rate, to northern communities and to return to some of the traditional ways of gathering food, of hunting for meat and having a more sustainable, healthier food system in northern Manitoba that has returned to some of the traditions that he started with Aboriginal people. I would like to thank him for that.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, Oscar was very concerned about education. There are, in St. Theresa Point today, concerns over 200 children in grades 5 to 7 and their access to education. There are concerns about overcrowding in the schools, not only in St. Theresa Point but elsewhere.

I would ask what the Premier is doing to make sure that children all over the north have access to the education that they need.

**Hon. Eric Robinson (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs):** First of all, let me thank all members of the House for paying tribute to a great Manitoban and a great leader. So let me say that as a starting point.

Let me also indicate to the Member for River Heights that part of the work that the late and forever honourable Oscar Lathlin began was dialogue with the federal government, particularly the Minister of Indian Affairs. I followed that up last weekend by meeting with Minister Strahl in trying to address some of these issues that the member has just raised.

This afternoon, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) and I, along with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers), will be meeting with the chiefs of the Island Lake region to talk about the ongoing issues that they have.

One of the legacies of the late Oscar Lathlin, obviously, is the cadets that we have in the Chamber, and we're very proud of them, from Cross Lake.

Those other issues, I don't have the time right now to respond to in an adequate fashion, Mr. Speaker, but I want to commend the members for their patience this morning.

**Mr. Speaker:** As previously agreed, that now concludes question period. We'll now move on to members' statements.

\*(11:10)

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Holodomor Awareness Week

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Speaker, Saturday, November 22, is the day set aside as a memorial day for the Holodomor, to commemorate the genocide of more than seven million Ukrainians who were starved to death by communist Joseph Stalin.

*Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

On Saturday afternoon, November 16, the Ukrainian community and the broader community of Manitoba gathered at the Legislature to launch a week-long period of commemoration which includes a number of activities relevant to Holodomor at the schools throughout the province and at our universities and colleges. The events of the week will culminate with a memorial service at City Hall on Saturday, this 22nd of November.

I want to take this moment to once again pay tribute to the survivors, many of whom were present on Sunday afternoon. One of the survivors who was overwhelmed by the events of the day felt that, finally, a little bit of justice was being done to the years of secrecy about this horrific event.

I also want to state, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Ukrainian and the Mennonite communities of our province should feel extremely proud for the role that they played in supporting the two bills that were presented both in the Manitoba Legislature and in the Parliament of Canada and together, finally, this day of memorial was recognized by not only Manitobans but indeed by Canadians. I encourage all of us to, throughout this week and perhaps even on Saturday afternoon, take a moment and to take part in an activity that recognizes this as a memorial day and hopefully never again will an event like this take place in the world. Thank you.

### Manitoba Deaf Association 100th Anniversary

**Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge):** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Manitoba Deaf Association. We have several members of the deaf community with us in the gallery. I enjoyed their warm hospitality when I attended the 100th anniversary dinner held on September 20, and I'm pleased to welcome them here

today and thank the interpreters who served so valiantly throughout question period.

To sustain a volunteer organization for 100 years is an incredible achievement. Like many great endeavours, the beginnings of the MDA can be traced back to the hockey rink when the silent hockey club was formed. This legacy is alive and well. In April, Winnipeg will play host to the first world deaf hockey and curling championships.

The history of the MDA reminds us how the perseverance of individuals can make a lasting difference in the lives of many. At the dinner I enjoyed a video re-enacting the story of Mrs. Sarah McPhee, whose name has been lost to history. As a mother of a deaf child who did not want to send her daughter to the States for an education, she started petitioning the government in the 1880s for a deaf school to be established in Manitoba.

Frederick Francis, the MLA for St. François Xavier, took up her cause and even paid the wages of the first teacher. In the century since it began, the Manitoba Deaf Association has provided recreation and spiritual care for its members as well as information and support. They've worked hard to communicate their needs to government and the community and have tirelessly advocated for a fully inclusive society. Our province is enriched by their efforts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would ask all members to show our appreciation for the contributions of the deaf community by joining me in a round of applause in sign language just like this. Thank you.

#### **Brandon 2010 Memorial Cup**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West):** Madam Deputy Speaker, this past Tuesday I had the opportunity of attending a major junior hockey game between the Brandon Wheat Kings and the Spokane Chiefs.

The Brandon Wheat Kings, for those who don't know, is the only major junior hockey team in Manitoba playing in the Western Hockey League. The Wheat Kings play all of their home games in the friendly confines of the Keystone Centre, but this past Tuesday's game was significant. Not only was it a 4-1 win for the home team but they beat the defending Memorial Cup champions. This in and of itself was very special because you see, Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2010, the Brandon Wheat Kings will host the Memorial Cup

Championship, the biggest tournament in Canadian junior hockey, and it will be hosted in Brandon.

Such an important tournament coming to Manitoba is cause for celebration and recognition of the hard work put in by the hockey club and its supporters. Though the Wheat Kings are one of the WHL's longest-standing franchises, 2010 marks the first time they will host this prestigious event. Playing host means playing hockey in the tournament for the Wheat Kings and showcasing the hometown Brandon pride and its unique attractions.

Three WHA clubs bid to host the 2010 tournament. Submissions were received from the Brandon Wheat Kings, the Everett Silvertips and the Kelowna Rockets; yet it was Brandon that prevailed in the competition, meaning the 92nd edition of the Memorial Cup will arrive in Manitoba to coincide with the 140th anniversary of our province from May 14 to 23, 2010. Already Brandonites are demonstrating their community spirit, rolling up their sleeves, eager to volunteer. Preparations are under way with local volunteer, Jeff Cristall, serving as chairman of the host committee. With a strong commitment to legacy programs supporting hockey at every level, these efforts will ensure a strong tradition of Brandon hockey for many years to come.

#### *Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

The Brandon Wheat Kings have been playing in the WHL since the 1967-68 season. Since then, they've represented Manitoba in the three Memorial Cup championships, and in 2010, when Canada turns its eye to the mesmerizing stickhandling of young hockey players, they will be turning their eyes in Brandon. As general manager and head coach Kelly McCrimmon says, we look forward to being the centre of the hockey world in 2010.

Congratulations to Kelly McCrimmon. Good luck to the Brandon Wheat Kings and the host committee. We're cheering for you. Thank you.

#### **Conquer the Globe: StairClimb for Clean Air**

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, on November 16, I had the privilege of bringing greetings on behalf of the government and the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) to the Manitoba Lung Association at their Conquer the Globe: StairClimb for Clean Air event. This StairClimb for Clean Air was a fundraising and awareness event that placed the spotlight on lung health, clean air and healthy living. Participants climbed 29 flights, or 580 stairs, at CanWest Place

and, through that exhausting test, demonstrated a clear commitment to the cause.

The Manitoba Lung Association has been working hard over a hundred years to improve the health of Manitobans. It is the primary source for information on lung health and on initiatives in Manitoba focussing on the issues of lung disease, tobacco use and improved air quality in our province.

Mr. Speaker, keeping people active and healthy is an objective that we all share. The Manitoba Lung Association is an important partner in our efforts to control and stop the use of tobacco. Our government is also committed to Manitoba youth, and we have supported the association's programs that work to prevent youth from taking up smoking and helping them quit if they have started.

The association also participates in the Province's Chronic Disease Prevention Initiative which enables communities to implement action plans to engage Manitobans in healthy living activities. There are currently 83 communities across the province with unique action plans.

Mr. Speaker, I have only touched on some of the important work that the Manitoba Lung Association undertakes. I wish to commend them on their work and congratulate them on the success of this StairClimb for Clean Air event. Thank you.

#### **Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre Incorporated**

**Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak a bit about an organization that is vital to our eastern Manitoba region. Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre Incorporated is an organization whose mission is to develop and maintain a sexual assault crisis intervention program and a sexual violence education program.

Survivor's Hope is being presented with a 2008 Manitoba Attorney General's Safer Community Award for the work they do in keeping our community safe. The Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre is made up of two components, the SARAH Program and the SADI program. SARAH is a program that provides support for victims of sexual assault in the form of crisis intervention services, police and hospital accompaniment, supportive follow up and referrals to support services. The SADI program focusses more on the education of youth so that abusive situations are less likely to present themselves.

Students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 attend workshops which stress the need for strong, healthy, and respectful relationships. SADI also delivers workshops to regional service providers such as the RCMP, social workers, clergy, teachers and nurses to enhance their knowledge level of first-contact persons. These workshops issue service providers with information on sexual assault, trauma, sexual assault protocol and best practices.

Survivor's Hope has reported that 90 percent of sexual assault survivors are female and 10 percent are male. People who have been sexually assaulted are represented in all socio-economic backgrounds and are of all ages. In most cases, the victim knows the assailant, making education an important tool in addressing assaults.

\* (11:20)

Survivor's Hope operates within the northeast health association boundaries, which includes 20 communities in eastern Manitoba. Statistically only 6 percent to 10 percent of sexual assault cases are reported to police and only 1 percent of acquaintance assaults are reported. It is believed that over 450 sexual assaults occur in eastern Manitoba each year as shown by RCMP statistics.

Sexual violence is a serious problem not only in eastern Manitoba but in other communities as well, and I am hopeful that the work of the Survivor's Hope organization will not go unnoticed and people will learn about how sexual violence can be averted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that under rule 36(1) the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the numerous children who have died and continue to die as a result of homicide while under the care of Child and Family Services.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable Member for River Heights, I believe I should remind all members that under rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on the matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House is allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain their urgency in debating the matter immediately. As stated in *Beauchesne* citation 390, urgency in this

context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion.

In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interests will not suffer.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to indicate that I am bringing forward this matter at the earliest possible time, and I rise to indicate that it is of urgent possible importance such that this debate and discussion needs to occur today.

There can be no concern in Manitoba greater than the concerns for our children. That our children are dying in care, are dying from homicide while in care, is very serious. That some 48 children have died from homicide in care since 1997 is very serious and must be taken seriously and be a subject of urgent public importance.

On Thursday, November 13, Cameron Ouskan of Fox Lake died while in care of a foster family, and we learn that police are treating this as a homicide, although I would caution members to be very careful in this respect until there are more details available.

It is a serious matter and, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we need to take time to talk about this in this Chamber. I want to indicate that there are some very particular reasons why we should be talking about this today on an urgent basis.

We need to make a change from a culture of blame to a culture of healing, Mr. Speaker. We are starting to do this when it deals with health-care issues, with The Apology Act and other measures which I have been promoting, and we need a similar change with respect to Child and Family Services, and we need to discuss this. I could stand up and blame the present NDP government, which has been in power for more than nine years for this problem, and we know that the government of the day must take the blame because they are the government. They must shoulder the blame for the tragic failures in looking after children under its watch.

We know this, we accept this and the government must accept it, but we must move beyond this, Mr. Speaker. We must move beyond this to look at how we help families and communities heal from the bruising that is happening in our province. In looking for answers I suggest some of the answers may be in part in better and more

adequate funding for child protection and some of the answers are in better and more adequate funding for helping ensure families have the resources to raise their children well. We need to discuss this in this Chamber because of the urgency.

Some of the answers lie in fully adopting Jordan's Principle as we've put it forward, that our goal should not be solely protecting children, but our goal should be broader in optimum child development and well-being and we should be discussing this. Some of the answers, of course, rely in relations between our province and the government in Ottawa and the responsibilities of the government in Ottawa. You know, important issues like housing may fall disproportionately to the government in Ottawa, but the Province is not without its ability to act. While we've had various missions by the three party leaders to Ottawa, we've yet to have an all-party effort which deals specifically with the needs of children in our Aboriginal communities. It's time to change this. It's time to put children in Aboriginal communities first, not last.

Some of the answers lie in not looking at what has gone wrong, but looking at what is going right. I'm told there's a First Nation community in northern Manitoba in which there are hardly any children in care. Now, I've been asked not to name the community because of, you know, we have a culture of secrecy, but I'm sure in due course this cultured community should receive the recognition and attention for what they are doing right. We should be learning from the experience and efforts in this community so that we're able to raise children in their own families rather than having to raise children in care. There's a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. This community seems to have understood how to take the concept of a community raising a child and put it into practice more effectively. We need to learn from this community, from the successes as well as from the failures which we've tended to focus on.

We need, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, to focus on other areas where there are successes. The fact that we have child-care workers who are doing extraordinary things, who are having, as I learned, to sleep on the floor in order to look after their children who are in care. We have workers who are having to spend their own money because the resources from governments are not sufficient to make sure that children are being looked after well. We have stories of children who have been raised in care who have

gone on to become lawyers, child-care workers and make major contributions to the community. We should recognize these positive things and focus on what we can do better, not in terms of just what has gone wrong.

So, Mr. Speaker, this morning on the very day that we pay tribute to Oscar Lathlin, I suggest that it's very important that we have this discussion, and this discussion, I believe, is what Oscar would have wanted, bringing not so much attention to the problems, but bringing attention to the successes, to the things that are going right, to the things that we need to do better, the pathway to the future.

That, Mr. Speaker, is why I believe we need to speak about this matter of urgent public importance today on the very day that we are recognizing Oscar, and because it is the first time that this could have been brought before the House which has just started sitting yesterday. Thank you.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few comments on the record indicating that there is some urgency to have some discussion about the chaos and the crisis in our Child and Family Services system today. I don't think any of us want to see that continue. We'd like to see some positive action and some positive results as a result of the hundreds of recommendations that have been made in review after review in the Child and Family Services system. We're still seeing children that are dying in the system. We're seeing children that haven't been placed in places of safety where they can be assured that they can grow and thrive and be in a loving family situation whether it be natural family or foster family situation.

I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we have the kind of discussion that leads to suggestions and ideas and recommendations. God knows no one has all of the answers and there's never been a perfect child welfare system in this province or anywhere throughout society, but we do know that they're—and we have learned from some of the things that have happened in the past that things do need to change, and that, you know, it is government policy and it is government legislation that sets the direction and the tone for our Child and Family Services system.

\* (11:30)

You know, Mr. Speaker, many of the recommendations that we have seen show us that many on the front lines don't have the proper tools in

their toolbox to deal with the very severe issues, the very troubled, very vulnerable children in our society. I think we may have moved ahead too quickly with the devolution process, and what we're seeing today is the result of agencies and authorities that have basically been set up to fail. They're taking the fall for policies and direction that this government has set. It's time that we all tried to sit down together and find some of the answers and some of the solutions.

We have made suggestions to the government that we're prepared to sit down in an all-party task force process that would look at where we are today and where we might need to go. Is there a halt or is there a backing up of some of the decisions that have been made in order to ensure that the child is always put first and put into a place of safety for all of the right reasons?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very timely. I think it's important that opposition parties are reaching out to government in asking to be a part of a process that can make our society and our Child and Family Services system a safer place, a better place for children to be in the future.

So I would support the discussion today on this issue.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** I wish to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that, as I've said and as we have said many times in this House, there is not a member of this House, indeed, there is not a Manitoban who does not feel the pain and the suffering of what happens when a child dies in any fashion, particularly when a child should die in a situation where they're supposed to be protected. Protection of our children, indeed, is a fundamental aspect of our humanity.

Mr. Speaker, that sentiment is felt by all members of this Chamber, and that's precisely why we have a Throne Speech debate going on right now. If members would look through the Throne Speech they would see numerous activities and numerous recommendations dealing with northern Manitoba, dealing with First Nations, dealing with family, dealing with community, and we are precisely at the point in time when members can debate that in a holistic sense.

The problem I have with the member's urgent public debate is twofold. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, there are matters, as the member has indicated, that cannot be discussed and should not be discussed in this

Chamber because there is some ongoing investigation. In fact, by doing that we may put in jeopardy the situation. That's the first reason. The second reason is to make a—and I'm not suggesting necessarily the member is doing this, but to make a political point out of a tragedy like this in fact is a tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, we saw in question period, for example, the member referenced the death of our good friend, the Member for The Pas, and talked about food programs in the north, not knowing that the Member for The Pas was the person who championed the food programs in the north that are on the ground.

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that a little bit of misinformation or a little bit of information put on the record by the member in an urgent debate in a narrow, narrow focus can do more harm than good.

The Throne Speech debate allows us to talk about the broader issues, the economic circumstances that we're facing and the related issues that are outlined in the Throne Speech.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have rulings in front of me which indicate that during Throne Speech debate Speakers have ruled consistently that a matter can be discussed during Throne Speech and is not a matter of urgent public importance.

So I cite that, but I cite further, Mr. Speaker, the points that I made. The member does have the opportunity to not only discuss the specific issue, but the broader issues during the course of Throne Speech debate, which is occurring as soon as we get into orders of the day.

So the matter can and will be discussed, but it won't be mis-discussed in the context of (a) limited information, and (b) the possibility of a narrow discussion by the member may, in fact, be counterproductive to the very children that we're trying to protect. If that is truly a matter—and I believe it is—if that is truly the purpose of debate in this Legislature, let it be during the course of Throne Speech debate which the member and all of us have opportunity to do where we can bring in all of the aspects of care, all of the relevant factors of economic condition, all of the relevant factors of social condition, all of the relevant factors for years' neglect. In fact, this afternoon, the Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) has indicated he is meeting with the minister of the

federal government responsible for relations on First Nations.

Would the member want to debate a specific narrow issue before we have opportunity to reflect on those discussions and deal with some of those discussions? I think not, Mr. Speaker. So I think, while the intent of the member—no one could disagree with the intent. I think the timing and the nature of the discussion are inappropriate, given that we're in Throne Speech. I think the children of Manitoba would be better served by dealing with this issue in the context of the issues facing all children in Manitoba, in the north and not in the north, which can and will be discussed during the course of Throne Speech debate that will follow within moments, within moments, of the conclusion of debate in this matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate, while the intention is laudable, I think it is misdirected both from a procedural standpoint and perhaps from a substantive and substantial standpoint because we have to deal with these issues, and we have to deal with them in the context of a Throne Speech in a broader approach to economic social development particularly in the context of a massive economic slowdown and restructuring that's occurring across North America. We've got to do everything we can in this province to protect and look after the well-being of every man, woman and child who lives in Manitoba.

So the goal can be achieved far better by a vigorous, comprehensive discussion during the course of Throne Speech debate, Mr. Speaker, which will follow immediately, I presume, following your ruling. I have numerous copies of Speaker's rulings which indicate, while matters may be important, the Throne Speech debate provides members with ample and perhaps more appropriate opportunity to talk about these issues during the course of Throne Speech.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) should be debated today. The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided under our rules and practices. The subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. However, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. Although this is an issue that many members may have a concern about, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today.

Additionally, I would like to note that there are other avenues for members to raise this issue, which include the Throne Speech debate, questions in question period and also members' statements.

Therefore, with the greatest of respect, I must rule that this matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and precedents, and I rule the motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

\* (11:40)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, we will now deal with the Throne Speech.

### THRONE SPEECH (First Day of Debate)

**Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), 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 Third Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

#### *Motion presented.*

**Ms. Selby:** Today I am moving the motion that the Throne Speech be accepted by the Assembly. It is an honour to be the first person to speak to and to support this very important Throne Speech.

Now I know that everyone in this House is paying close attention to everything I'm saying right now and, of course, to all the words spoken in this House, not just by me. But, outside this Chamber, the general public is not always paying as close attention to what's going on in here as some of us may believe they are. I think, however, this Throne Speech, in

particular, is different. As people watch the stock market's volatility and financial situation in the United States unfold, they are paying closer attention than ever to what we are doing here in this Chamber.

We are chosen to represent the people's voice but also to show leadership and provide guidance, especially during challenging times. As government, we must be able to respond to change whether that change is evolving issues that become increasingly important such as the environment, or changes such as the economic crisis currently unfolding around the world.

Responsible governments must also play a somewhat clairvoyant role; always preparing for that which cannot be known. It's a lesson that many of us probably heard from the time we got our first allowances as children; put some of it away for a rainy day, you never know what's around the corner.

When I speak with women, particularly moms, we often come around to the discussion of how to find balance. It's this delicate task that governments must also master. Our government recognizes the importance of balanced budgets and has been deficit-free for the past nine budgets.

I already spoke to the need to put a little away for a rainy day, but it's also important to spend wisely. Smart expenditures boost an economy while other investments such as health care, education and social support systems can make a remarkable difference in the lives of individual people and can sometimes be a saviour for families facing hard times.

No one can be truly sure of what's to come in our economic future, but we can be grateful that Manitoba is standing on stronger ground than many of our neighbours. We cannot ignore that we live in a global market, but Manitoba's expected growth rate for 2009 is 1.6 percent. That's ahead of the projected 0.7 percent for the rest of Canada as a whole.

Balanced and responsible fiscal policies, since we've been in government, are that strong ground that we stand on. Manitoba has reduced our net-to-debt GDP ratio by about one-third and it's been noted in six credit upgrades. Without being able to predict the future but knowing that time can bring change, we've nearly quadrupled the value of the rainy day fund. We've done this while paying down our debt to the tune of \$110 million just this year.

While I said that Manitoba stands on strong ground, perhaps it would be more accurate to say

that we are supported by our strong work force and smart spending—investing in people and infrastructure.

Manitoba has made steady gains over the past nine years which lends us a resilient base in this ever-evolving economic situation. While it's true that Manitoba has much to be proud of and is well positioned to weather this economic storm, there will be people and families in Manitoba who are worried for their own future.

My thoughts go out to my friends and former colleagues who've already faced many layoffs in their newsrooms and who are preparing for future cutbacks. I know there are people in other industries worried about the stability of their future income.

My constituency of Southdale is often looked upon with envy. We are a thriving and rapidly growing community. Many of us are enjoying a comfortable or even affluent lifestyle, but I have no doubt there are people in Southdale with the same concerns heard all over the globe, worried about their jobs, their future and how their businesses will weather the storm.

I hope they can find reassurance in the Throne Speech knowing that this government will be keeping tabs on the housing market and introducing legislation to strengthen the regulation of the mortgage broker industry. We only have to look to the south in the United States and the massive foreclosures to see why it's so important for the Throne Speech to announce a consumer finances education program. It's easy to get lost in the language of financial planning, but it's empowering to understand your money and how to best protect, grow and have it working for you.

It can also be kind of confusing to hear governments talk of cutting taxes, especially to businesses, at times when money is an issue. But I'm proud that this government keeps its promises by keeping our commitments on tax cuts.

As the holiday season approaches, families in Southdale may be wondering is it time to cut back on their holiday spending. Families, like governments, do fiscal planning and budget based on projected earnings and expected tax relief. I believe we're doing the right thing by carrying on with expected tax relief, and families, such as those in Southdale, can count on those tax breaks we promised them.

Of course, we don't live in a bubble, and you don't have to go far from Southdale to see that not

everyone is enjoying the same comforts as most of us do, but we are making headway into poverty reduction. We've reduced the child poverty rate by more than one-third. Through our Rewarding Work program, more parents are able to train and enter the work force. But it's tough to find a job or even go to school without the proper housing. Everyone should have a safe, warm place to call home. I fully support the Throne Speech plan to upgrade housing, including making older homes more energy and water efficient. This benefits the environment and makes housing more affordable.

Politicians make promises. I guess it's kind of a job requirement around here, but it can also be a deal breaker, that is, if you don't follow through with those promises. I made a promise to my constituents to make more licensed day-care spaces available to families in Southdale. Manitoba has one of the best child-care systems in Canada. In Family Choices, the five-year plan announced last April, will ensure that our child-care centres maintain that high level of care. I know many of my constituents were paying close attention to the Throne Speech and will be happy to hear our government will be investing in more funded child-care spaces. More spaces, though, means that more trained staff will be needed to answer that. We're embarking on a new recruitment and retention drive for child-care workers. More child-care spaces is a promise I made to the people of Southdale, and I'm proud to be part of a government that values its word.

Through my work as an MLA I often get to visit children in the community. Whether it's reading in schools or visiting local day cares or attending holiday concerts, it is always a pleasure to see the children challenging themselves, trying new things and, of course, hearing them laugh and make new friends. But we know that not all our children in our communities are living such carefree lives. It is heartbreaking to imagine the unthinkable situations that some children must face. I believe improving children's lives and improving our child welfare system is a priority for Manitobans, and I believe it's also a priority for every one of us in this Chamber. That's why we're implementing broad changes as recommended by three independent reviews. To ensure that no child falls through the crack, we're introducing a computerized case management system.

Education and economy go hand in hand. Education is also an essential tool for fighting poverty, preventing crime, keeping kids out of gangs,



growing our economy. Learning a new skill, preparing for the work force, challenging yourself and succeeding are keys to personal success. Smart spending. What defines that better than investing in education?

\* (11:50)

June is a busy time in Southdale with all the graduations taking place, and it's exciting to watch all the young people embark on their new and exciting stage in their lives. I love hearing about the diversity of their plans upon graduating. The students themselves are a very diverse group. Some are planning to attend university or college; others have already begun their technical or trades training. It's really encouraging to see more and more of these young people choosing to live and work in Manitoba.

Everyone in Manitoba should have access to quality education and the opportunity to attend post-secondary school. That's why we continue to invest in campuses not just in Winnipeg, but across the province. This will be seen in new buildings for the University College of the North and a new residence for the U of M.

For my constituents who are more likely to study a little closer to home, we're investing in a heavy-equipment training facility at Red River College and a trades and technology centre at Assiniboine Community College.

Getting an education is a valuable thing. Applying that education to meaningful work is even more rewarding. We're supporting students to get on-the-job experience through training programs and aiming for 4,000 new spaces over the next four years. With an expanded range of trades, including our apprenticeship program, more students and more businesses will benefit.

Southdale is a great place to raise a family. My children and I can walk to three different playground structures from our home. We're within walking from our community centre, grocery stores and, I think, about three lakes surrounded by beautiful mature trees. We're also within walking to school but, I'll admit it, we don't walk to school as often as we should.

Southdale is the kind of community where people watch out for each other and notice if anyone unfamiliar is hanging around. It's a safe neighbourhood, with children playing in the front yard and people slowing down for kids on bikes. Keeping our community safe and maintaining our

lifestyle is important for the people of Southdale and we're working to ensure that level of safety.

The number of vehicle thefts in Winnipeg has gone down significantly, and the Throne Speech promises more police and prosecutors and an expanded immobilizer program. We also need to be responsive to problems as they occur, which is why the Throne Speech promises to limit access to animal repellents which, unfortunately, have been used against people of late.

I think part of what makes my neighbourhood so special is we share the street with young families, families with teenagers, and seniors as well. Everyone is watching out for each other and I know how much I appreciate the retired folks on my street who are keeping an eye on things while those of us are at work. It is also important that our seniors feel safe in their homes, and that's why we're stepping up the SafetyAid program so that seniors in Southdale and around the province can make their homes more secure.

Teenagers get an unfair bad rap sometimes. Southdale has a number of walking paths or shortcuts through the neighbourhood. I was walking my dog the other day when I passed first one teenager and then another. Both made a point of smiling and saying hi, even stopping to pet the dog. I was really impressed with these young people, but the remarkable part of this story is that neither of them were on their cellphones.

Now teenagers may be particularly attached to their cellphones, but they're not the only ones who can't stop talking and texting. I've had to make a rule with myself that there will be no BlackBerrys near the table when we're eating dinner. It is because of this behaviour that I'm glad that Manitoba is joining other places around the country in preventing people from driving while talking on their hand-held cellphones or text messaging. Our roads will be safer and our lives may be a little less hectic because of it.

My grandma used to say nothing else matters if you don't have your health. If you're healthy, it's easy to take our health-care system for granted, maybe even complain about it from time to time, but it's a different story when you're facing illness. Getting the care you need and not being bumped by someone who can pay more becomes pretty important.

Our health-care professionals work hard and face difficult situations, but they never have to decide who to help based on who can afford to pay. Our

health-care providers do more than just heal our illnesses. They provide comfort outside of a medical textbook. I admire their expertise and I am grateful for their kindness.

It is one of my deepest beliefs that our health-care system remain accessible to everyone, and I'm proud of our government for upholding those beliefs by promising legislation banning health-care premiums. I am grateful for those who've ensured that tray fees on publicly insured services will be eliminated in 2009.

I've already spoken of my admiration for our health-care professionals. It's remarkable to see the progress in our medical profession. People are living, thriving, despite diseases that meant certain death only a couple of decades ago. Manitoba will continue investing in specialized equipment which means not only better patient care, but helps attract and retain our medical specialists.

I see families all over Southdale making healthy choices. Eating right is an important part of any disease-prevention plan, but families need to know they can trust the food that they serve, and grocery stores want to know that the food on their shelves is safe. That's why our Province is introducing a new food safety act so that you'll know the food products sold in Manitoba and those products exported are good for your family.

Staying healthy also means reducing stress. I know many families in Southdale choose camping or visiting the cottage as a way to unwind. Upgrades to provincial parks mentioned in the Throne Speech will improve the quality of that down time. One of the things that makes Winnipeg so unique is our backyard. It doesn't take long to leave the city and find yourself in a secluded forest area unchanged by humans. This accessibility is unheard of in Canada's major cities and I'm glad we're protecting this lifestyle by banning new logging in provincial parks and phasing out existing logging. Restoring and protecting our wetlands will not only add to the natural beauty of our province, but help us reach our environmental goals as well.

If you live with children or young adults in your home, no doubt you've been lectured on being more green. Now I think I do pretty well, but there's always a little voice from the back seat, reminding me not to idle. This, of course, comes at every red light I'm stopped at, but it's right that our children remind us how important it is to take care of the

environment because, after all, they're the ones who are going to inherit it one day.

I've heard the collective voices of children lately and we've all been hearing them, asking us to do something about plastic bags. They spoke and we listened. That's why the Throne Speech included a ban from distributing plastic bags that don't conform to composting or recycling standards.

Now, my children are a little bit too young to fix on a career plan, but many young people will turn their passion for their environment into a career path, and they'll be eager to learn more about the Richardson College for the Environment at the U of W. Environment and economy can no longer be separate ideas. I'm proud that Manitoba is recognized as a leader in this area.

I mentioned earlier plans to protect wetlands. We know how important wetlands are to filter out excessive nutrients and it's nature's way to help preserve and clean up our lakes. Manitoba has already committed to Kyoto, but it's more important that we help industry, such as our agriculture industry, meet these requirements. You don't see many farms driving through my constituency, but we all benefit from locally grown food.

Manitoba's not the only place working to be more responsible to the environment. More and more places are moving to clean-energy sources. Manitoba Hydro, our responsible and renewable resource, is ready to meet North America's electrical energy needs and help other jurisdictions reduce their greenhouse gases.

While we're helping other areas clean up the air, we'll also ensure the air is clean in a smaller environment—your vehicle. The Throne Speech promises to protect children by banning smoking in cars where children are present.

Stimulating our economy will keep Manitoba ahead of the storm. Building infrastructure is a key component to the plan. The Throne Speech announced a \$4.7-billion plan for capital projects. We'll see new medical facilities, upgrades to public housing, better highways and modern sewage facilities. People will find employment through our capital plans for health care, education, highways and water management.

The global market is growing and Manitoba is preparing to meet those needs with a major inland port. CentrePort Canada will mean businesses around the world will know the importance of our centrally

located province, and the re-introduction of the tax increment financing legislation will stimulate more urban renewal projects.

While we're supporting business, we also have to support our workers. We'll do that by amending The Workers Compensation Act to further enhance coverage offered to firefighters. Our firefighters are committed to their jobs and bravely face dangerous situations for the safeties of others. We will repay their courage by adding to the list of presumptive diseases under the WCB act.

\* (12:00)

We also recognize the dangers faced by our police officers who, too, put their lives at risk for our safety. The police act will be modernized to better protect those officers.

Manitobans are looking to us in this Throne Speech for reassurance. Steady as she goes. Predictability isn't a flashy word and it won't sell any gossip rags, but it's exactly the kind of leadership people look for in uncertain times. People need to know they can count on their government to keep its commitments, and I'm proud to say we have.

I'm also proud to hold up our record as proof that we listen to the people of Manitoba and always keep in mind their needs and their dreams for what this province can be. Prairie spirit means we help each other. We lend a hand to those who can't then help themselves and we give back to our community.

We can't know what we may face in the future, but when we work together—and I have seen it done many times—this province gets things done.

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise after my colleague from Southdale in response to the Speech from the Throne, and it's always been said that she's a hard act to follow, so I'll do my best.

It's important that we recognize the responsible and balanced approach that this government is taking in a difficult time. There is a saying that the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour, and I think this government demonstrates, after nine years of building on strengths, that in the face of tough economic times that's what one must continue to do because eventually we will come out and we will come out ahead stronger and better than ever before. In Kirkfield Park we know this because we are a community of working families, ranging from those with young children to our vibrant seniors

population. We are also a community very much aware of the impact that the global and national economy plays in our daily economic lives. What the people of Kirkfield Park appreciate about this government's economic approach is the responsible and well-paced direction that was set during strong economic times to provide a steady foundation so as to buffer us in harder economic times should they arise.

As we all know, various economic forces have caused a recent downturn in economies around the world. Many places are now feeling the negative aspect of boom-bust cycles. While some looked at such economies envious of their boom times, it is important to note, in building a more well-paced and stable economy here in Manitoba, that our growth will remain stronger than most other jurisdictions and, as a result, we may not have to weather the economic storm to the same degree due to the fiscal responsibility and strong long-term planning exercised in the past by this government.

In addition, the Speech from the Throne demonstrates the commitment to not run and pull the plug on those investments in our future, our people and our economy, but rather to stay the course, balancing prudent financial management with continuing to invest in infrastructure, education, health care and economic growth and development, reassuring our citizens that we can continue to build a stable economy and ensuring a degree of financial stability not easily found elsewhere at this time. This reassurance is exactly what we all need at this time. There are too many uncertainties, and economists themselves are struggling to predict the duration and magnitude of this downturn. In such uncertain times we need to continue to build on our strengths rather than stall in the face of crisis. To stall would thereby undermine the growth and development of the past nine years and would not only undermine the confidence of Manitobans but ultimately cause us to fall prey to the same economic problems as those jurisdictions who are not as prudent as this government has been for nearly a decade.

Mr. Speaker, over the course of the past month, I have heard from hundreds of constituents in Kirkfield Park about their concerns, first for the American economy and the global economy and now the Canadian economy. While we don't know what will happen, Manitoba is fortunate to build on the tremendous success of nine years of balanced and responsible management of our provincial economy, nine years of balanced budgets, nine years of paying

down our debt and nine years of economic growth that has outpaced the Canadian average. We have a strength to build on.

With this track record, and maintaining such a solid direction, I can reassure my neighbours of Kirkfield Park and all Manitobans that this Speech from the Throne charts a course which continues this steady and responsible vision for our economy. This government has avoided the boom-and-bust cycle of other provinces and has shown steady and balanced growth. While all governments are wrestling with the difficult decisions of how to respond to these difficult economic times, a key area of concern for our government is whether to retreat from our plan to provide measured small-business, corporate, and personal income tax reductions or to maintain the current stable course and proceed with our commitment on tax cuts.

I believe our government is doing the right thing by carrying on with tax relief. I know that low- and middle-income families in my constituency will be glad that the tax breaks many of them have been counting on will be delivered as promised. No matter where I go, I hear from constituents that they are grateful that the value of their largest asset, their home, has increased so dramatically and their taxes have not. I know it makes a real difference for all of us.

Many of my constituents are understandably anxious about their financial futures as global uncertainty persists. It is reassuring to be told in the Throne Speech that the government will be making pension regulations more flexible, keeping tabs on the housing market and introducing legislation to strengthen regulation of the mortgage broker industry.

With an eye on the massive foreclosures in the United States, the Throne Speech announces a consumer finances education program. This is a very wise move on the part of our government and one that should help make financial planning easier for all Manitobans. A reflection of the success of this government's responsible and balanced approach to the economy is that Manitoba's population has reached an historic high of 1.2 million in 2008. Our population is growing again after the declines in the 1990s.

Of particular importance is the fact that more young people are staying or returning to Manitoba. I hear that from parents in Kirkfield Park repeatedly, that ever increasingly their children and young adults

are looking for opportunities in Manitoba. I also see that over and over again with young couples and families moving back to Westwood and Woodhaven where they grew up because of the new opportunities. There isn't a week that doesn't go by where I don't run into someone who tells me of how they, or someone they know, came back to our neighbourhood after finding out that the grass wasn't as green in such places as Ontario, B.C. or Alberta.

After moving elsewhere for supposedly greener pastures, they found that the lifestyle they wanted, the economic security and financial security they desired, also happened to be tied to the neighbourhoods they were raised in. It turns out that, in leaving, all they had learned was you don't know what you've got till it's gone and they ended up doing what my own family did, packing up the moving van and returning home to safer communities, stronger health care and a stable economy with opportunities for the future.

As a result of this province's stable growth and opportunities, in the eight years from 1999 through July 2007, Manitoba has seen a net gain of more than 12,000 young people. By contrast, over the eight years ending in 1999 Manitoba had a net loss of more than 5,000 young people because in the 1990s more young people moved away from Manitoba than came in every year but one. I know this from personal experience because I was part of the exodus of 1995 and the return of 2001.

This return is not happening on its own. It is a reflection of the commitment and balance of this government. That is what drew me back to my home province, in my old neighbourhood, along with so many friends and colleagues. It is what makes me proud to be part of a government that is continuing to grow our economy and our future, bringing back so many like myself while also ensuring that the next generation chooses to stay here to build their futures.

This has been done through proactive and forward-thinking investments in our educational institutions. We've introduced cutting-edge programs into our colleges, targeting skills that are in demand in both private and public sectors. These include aviation maintenance, digital multimedia, medical lab sciences, business information management, technical communications, precision agriculture and 3-D animation. It must be working because Red River College proudly reports that 92 percent of its employed graduates stay in Manitoba.

\* (12:10)

Just recently, I attended a job fair and education seminar at the Health Sciences Centre for high school students interested in pursuing careers in medical and health-care related fields and was impressed by how many of them want to stay in Manitoba, both to learn and to practise in their chosen fields. Many of the students were from my community, and I'm proud to know that my son and his classmates see a future for themselves here in this province.

In addition to job opportunities and access to affordable education, our young people are looking for exciting and vibrant communities to live in. We are revitalizing neighbourhoods and our urban centres through housing, recreation and cultural projects to make them more attractive to our young people and those of us who are still young at heart.

The new MTS Centre is a perfect example of this. It was the third-busiest sports and entertainment centre in Canada last year and the 27th-busiest in the world. I can say I've loved every concert and every sports event I've ever seen there, and my son thinks we should spend far more time there. Other attractions that the province has supported include the refurbished Millennium Library, an expanded West End Cultural Centre that is still in the works and, for those of us who are parents of teens, the investments in skate parks ranging from Skatepark West in my neighbourhood, all the way to the internationally renowned Skateboard Plaza at The Forks which has been touted as one of the world's best by no less than Tony Hawk—no small feat and a small example of the diversity and investments that benefit both our children and communities but also draw international attention and visitors to our province.

Mr. Speaker, health care remains a top priority for all Manitobans, and the folks in K.P. are no different. We all want to know that we can access the care we need, when we need it, and again this Throne Speech offers the reassurance that Manitobans' health and health care is a priority, regardless of economic circumstances. This government continues to build on its record of investment and excellence in health. It was an NDP government that eliminated health-care premiums, and I'm proud to say that the Throne Speech promises us legislation banning their re-introduction.

It is an NDP government that is also continuing to re-invest in health care after the years of decline that preceded this government's coming into office. It

is important to remember that since 1999 the NDP government has expanded and modernized almost 100 health-care facilities in Manitoba. This includes the \$135-million redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre, the largest health capital project in Manitoba's history.

Building on this, the NDP is introducing a province-wide electronic health record system that gives health-care providers immediate access to patients' most up-to-date medical information. We've also installed a Gamma Knife in the Health Sciences Centre, which can remove brain tumours on an out-patient basis, again the first in Canada.

We will soon become the first in Canada to have a non-invasive cancer knife to treat cancers and tumours in the rest of the body. This is an investment that knows no dollar value by those families who have been affected by cancer. This is something that I, like so many in this Chamber, look forward to seeing and am proud to be a part of another first-in-Canada move.

State-of-the-art medical equipment not only improves patient care and the peace of mind of families who are treated, but also helps attract and retain medical specialists. Manitobans can look forward to doubling of our investment in specialized equipment over the next two years compared to the previous two years. We see these investments paying off in the 288 more doctors practising in Manitoba today than in 1999, including 105 more in rural Manitoba as well as 127 more specialists attracted by our centres of excellence. But we are not done: we've committed to hire 100 more doctors over this mandate. In August we welcomed the biggest medical school class ever at 110 students, which included 26 rural students, the largest number on record. Along with larger classes and higher retention rates, we are running a successful program to help foreign-trained doctors get the needed accreditation to practise in Manitoba.

In my neighbourhood in west Winnipeg, this commitment to health care is seen in the government moving forward with a new access centre that provides one-stop shopping for a range of health and social services to be built in St. James. I was pleased and proud to join with the residents in Westwood at the largest community consultation of its kind for the access centre, in looking at how these services will move forward in a way that meets the needs of west Winnipeg. It was gratifying to know that my friends and neighbours were so interested in helping to

shape the direction that the access centre would take, and they were pleased to know that the centre was going to be meeting their needs in a progressive manner with a range of services under one roof. They were pleased that they were being consulted and that the final product will be a responsive health and community services location designed with their needs, the needs of our community at its heart. We all look forward to the opening of the access centre.

Mr. Speaker, like so many other communities, Kirkfield Park has a growing and vibrant seniors population. I talk to seniors all the time who are mindful about their safety and security, and I was pleased to hear in the Throne Speech that the government will be stepping up its SafetyAid program that helps seniors make their homes more secure and expanding it to more rural and northern communities. It now means that not just those seniors in my communities, but their friends and family members elsewhere in the province can access this program, which gives them all a greater peace of mind. The SafetyAid program provides low-income seniors with free basic safety and fall prevention devices such as people's deadbolts and grab bars, as well as forgivable loans for minor home security improvements. These kinds of improvements and programs are vital for people who live in apartment blocks like the Courts of St. James, which, while not a seniors home, is a home to a large number of seniors as its long-time residents.

I hear from seniors every day that their lives are improved by programs like the Aging in Place Strategy that gives them more choices in the kind of care they receive while continuing to live in the community.

I share with pride the fact that Manitoba developed the home care program and that this government has supported it with 66 percent more funding since 1999. This commitment supports seniors and their families and Manitoba home care has been recognized as the best in Canada.

Another place where Manitoba shows leadership is in Pharmacare, with the addition of almost 2,000 new drugs to Pharmacare, including new palliative drugs and a new drug for Alzheimer's patients.

I am proud to say that we are strengthening geriatric assessment teams to help seniors obtain home care and other services more quickly, which provides both peace of mind and much needed quality care as urgently as it is needed.

Also, there is new funding for the support services for seniors program which assists seniors with transportation, yard work, grocery shopping, and safety checks.

As well, there will be new Handi-Transit service vehicles for 65 municipalities across the province.

So, along with all of these wonderful developments, we are moving forward now with the expansion of our home care program that will again ensure 2,000 more people can live independently in their own homes, which I know will keep many of my neighbours, my senior neighbours, happy in Kirkfield Park.

But again, in Kirkfield Park there are a lot of seniors like my mother who live independently and are not yet needing these kinds of programs, but, they too, are benefiting from this government's balanced approach. They are seeing tax savings on pensions by allowing spouses to split their income for tax purposes as of 2007. There is also a special tax relief for seniors in the form of more generous tax credits: a 57 percent increase in the value of basic tax credit, a 43 percent increase in the value of the age tax credit, and a 35 percent increase in the value of the pension income tax credit, as well as a 28 percent increase in the maximum education tax credit for seniors. All very important to seniors living in Kirkfield Park.

Again, to further build on something that is already so exemplary, we have a comprehensive modernization of pension legislation allowing seniors to unlock 50 percent of their pension funds or to phase in to their retirement. All of this is now further enhanced with a new fully refundable caregiver tax credit of up to \$1,020 that is intended to help seniors remain independent as long as possible.

As I talk with my friends and neighbours in Kirkfield Park, I know that they will be grateful, as I am, that this government is continuing its balanced approach. They are glad that we are continuing to work for seniors, continuing to provide opportunities for our youth, continuing to make health care a priority, and continuing to be responsible shepherds of the economy.

I know that in uncertain times we all have all come to count on the steady and responsible leadership of this Premier (Mr. Doer) and of this government.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the approach that has been outlined in the Throne Speech demonstrates this government's ongoing commitment to building and strengthening our economy with a long-term vision that will carry us through the tough economic times that we face, and I believe that we will get through those times successfully by continuing to invest in our children, our families, our health, and our economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (12:20)

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I move, seconded by the honourable

Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), that debate be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, is there leave of the House to call it 12:30?

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

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 21, 2008

## CONTENTS

<b>Speaker's Statement</b>		Critical Incident Investigations	
Hickes	12	Driedger; Oswald	21
<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>		Phoenix Sinclair Case Review	
<b>Petitions</b>		Mitchelson; Mackintosh	21
Recovery Strategy—Manitoba Farmers		Northern Manitoba Children	
Briese	13	Gerrard; Mackintosh	22
Education Funding		Gerrard; Doer	22
Borotsik	13	Gerrard; Robinson	23
Community Police Offices		<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Lamoureux	14	Holodomor Awareness Week	
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		Derkach	23
Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement: 2007-2008 Annual Progress Report		Manitoba Deaf Association 100th Anniversary	
Swan	14	Howard	23
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Brandon 2010 Memorial Cup	
Throne Speech		Borotsik	24
McFadyen; Doer	14	Conquer the Globe: StairClimb for Clean Air	
Borotsik; Selinger	19	Saran	24
Pension Regulations		Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre Incorporated	
McFadyen; Doer	16	Hawranik	25
Balanced Budget		<b>Matter of Urgent Public Importance</b>	
Borotsik; Selinger	20	Gerrard	25
Economic Downturn		Mitchelson	27
Borotsik; Selinger	20	Chomiak	27
Bailey Esliger Critical Incident Investigation		<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
Driedger; Oswald	21	<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Re-Use of Blood-Sampling Needle		<b>Throne Speech</b>	
Driedger; Oswald	21	(First Day of Debate)	
		Selby	29
		Blady	33



The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>**