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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
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FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
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GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
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<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 24, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Animal Care Amendment Act

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that The Animal Care Act, as amended, will now be introduced.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance, that Bill 2, The Animal Care Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, this bill amends The Animal Care Act that strengthens the ability of veterinarians to report suspected cases of animal neglect and abuse to a director. It deals with how unfit animals are transported to slaughter facilities, and it requires further regulations to strengthen how we will deal with pets and other animals that have been neglected or abused.

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

Bill 3—The Forest Amendment Act

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan), that Bill 3, The Forest Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les forêts, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Struthers: This act makes possible the removal of logging in 79 of 80 parks in Manitoba, also makes some changes to a market-based system for stumpage fees in Manitoba which are supported by the industry. So I highly recommend it to this House.

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

Bill 200—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 200, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sièges d'appoint), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the mandatory use of booster seats of the appropriate age children in Manitoba. It follows laws passed in many other provinces, and it provides for better safety for children in Manitoba.

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

Bill 203—The Jordan's Principle Implementation Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 203, The Jordan's Principle Implementation Act; Loi sur la mise en œuvre du principe de Jordan, be now read a first time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this act provides for the implementation of Jordan's Principle, the principle that children be considered first and that jurisdictional arguments between governments or between departments be considered afterwards. Thank you.

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

Bill 205—The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 205, The Milk Prices Review Amendment Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in essence, this bill states that if government is in a position in which it

can set a standard price of a bottle of beer, then why don't we do the same thing and allow for one price for a container of milk. So, whether it's in Churchill, Manitoba, or the city of Winnipeg, that it's once price making it, therefore, more affordable for those that are in need.

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

Bill 201—The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act (Protecting Children from Second-Hand Smoke in Motor Vehicles)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 201, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable Member for River Heights, that Bill 201, The Non-Smokers Health Protection Amendment Act (Protecting Children from Second-Hand Smoke in Motor Vehicles), be now read a first time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, this bill would enable the government of the day, if passed, to allow us to have a new law in the province of Manitoba that would subject someone to a fine if they're in fact smoking in a vehicle with a child in the said vehicle. Thank you.

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

* (13:40)

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Dorothy Gower, Eldith Hildebrand, Fran Einarson and many, many others.

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

Education Funding

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, 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 petition is signed by R. Ashdown, J. Bell, M. Ashdown and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Nominee Program—90 Day Guarantee

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first priority in processing nominee certificates.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications cause additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 90 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

This is signed by R. Neufeld, M. Garcia, R. Ananan and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today from Brazil, the Secretary of Economic Development and International Affairs, Mr. Márcio Biolchi and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Agribusiness, Mr. Gilmar Rodrigues, also the President of the Federation of Agriculture of the Rio Grande do Sul state Farsul and representing Sebrae, Mr. Carlos Sperotto.

Also in the public gallery we have with us today Kristine Janz, councillor for the R.M. of Argyle, who is the guest of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal Infrastructure Needs Government Co-operation

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): After decades of neglect and as we move into a period of economic uncertainty, municipal leaders who have been elected by their constituents to serve on their behalf, often with little thanks, are today asking for a share of the revenue

that has been flowing into the provincial government to meet their local municipal infrastructure needs.

We know, Mr. Speaker, they're working hard throughout Manitoba to rebuild their communities and that their share of the overall take flowing to government has been declining over the last number of years.

Now, we agree with the position of the Premier and the government that now is not the time to raise taxes on the people of Manitoba, but I will ask the Premier if he'll leave behind the attitude of confrontation that he's taken with municipalities, work with them and move forward on ensuring that they have the revenue to move forward on rebuilding their communities, building their infrastructure and securing a genuine partnership as we move through these difficult economic times.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Last year, there was a national report completed on the state of municipalities and their relationship between provincial governments. Manitoba has the highest unconditional granting level of any jurisdiction in Canada, any province in Canada, sometimes two and three times greater than provinces to the west of us and provinces to the east of us.

We also have uploaded—from the 1990s, we've uploaded many services. In some provinces welfare is taken care of totally by the municipalities. In fact, a Conservative government in Ontario downloaded welfare, downloaded child care, downloaded many other programs. We have uploaded that to a one-tier welfare system in Manitoba, so municipalities, if there is an economic challenge in Canada, will be somewhat protected. The increase has been significant, more than the GDP, in terms of municipal funding.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the petition just five minutes ago from members opposite talked about completely taking off of all property tax any education costs. Last year, the member opposite had an \$800-million tax reduction which was reckless. He then added six months later a \$400-million tax proposal. They have one position on education, for schools funding, totally contrary to what they did in government.

We will continue to increase funding to municipalities. We have every year. We have also eliminated one of two taxes on homeowners and farm owners by eliminating the ESL. There were two taxes when we came into office that were bequeathed

to us by the Tories on homeowners for education. We've eliminated one complete tax on homeowners, again to try to provide some relief for taxpayers on the one hand and investments in infrastructure with municipalities.

Let me repeat: The highest percentage of unconditional grants on a per capita basis, according to an independent report commissioned by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, is in Manitoba. We will continue to work with municipalities, but we don't start from a point with the—we're the only province in Canada that shares income tax and corporate tax. That's why we have the largest unconditional grant in Canada, and we'll continue to work constructively with them.

Mr. McFadyen: That historical diatribe is so filled with errors, Mr. Speaker. The fact is the welfare transfer of responsibility also came with a \$1.1-million bill that the Province started sending to municipalities in exchange for undertaking the welfare services, and the response is riddled with other errors, all of which is not particularly relevant when we consider where we stand today and where we need to be going into the future.

The fact is the share of revenues being collected by municipalities is 8 cents and shrinking on the dollar. The share of revenue flowing to the provincial government, the money has been flowing in like Niagara Falls. There is a small trickle of that money that's making its way through to municipalities. That trickle has gotten marginally larger under this government but nothing close to the Niagara Falls-like flow of money coming from Ottawa to this government.

Instead of pointing fingers, Mr. Speaker, at municipalities, why not sit down with them and work out a better deal with growth revenues, unconditional grants as a share of the existing PST to both protect taxpayers and allow local governments to get on with rebuilding their communities.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I already said that they do get growth revenues. It's the only province in Canada that shares income tax and corporate taxes with municipalities, the only province in Canada.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba—the unconditional grant in Manitoba is 14 percent. It's 2.7 percent in Ontario, 2 percent in B.C., 0.3 percent in Alberta and 6 percent in Saskatchewan. This is in a report that was conducted not by the provincial

government but a report conducted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

They also raise issues of administrative costs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, where we're on the other side of the equation in terms of comparative costs with other provinces in Canada. Of course, the municipalities of Manitoba have that report. They're certainly welcome to make it public. We would welcome that report being made public to the people of Manitoba, to the people of this province.

I would also point out that we did increase our road budget. For example, in the city of Winnipeg it was under \$5 million when we came into office; it's over \$30 million now. That's a five-time increase in road provisions.

We have maintained and enhanced the income tax transfer. We've negotiated with the federal government for the share of gas taxes. We've got The Gas Tax Accountability Act now where all the dollars are identified. We have uploaded more costs to the provincial government and off of municipalities.

* (13:50)

We used to have a municipal welfare system in Manitoba. We now have a welfare system completely paid for by the provincial government—*[interjection]* Well, the members would know that the pension plan in the cities and the provinces are different, obviously, again another cost comparison. Our salaries are lower than the City of Winnipeg and actually our pension plan is not as generous as the City of Winnipeg.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we transfer income tax and corporate taxes. No other province does that. We are very involved in infrastructure. Not counted in the numbers the member opposite mentioned is the floodway which is being paid 50 percent by the federal government, 50 percent by the provincial government; flood protection in southern Manitoba over \$250 million.

Many proposals in infrastructure are paid for directly by the provincial government. We have pledged one-third of the full capital cost of the sewer and waste water all across Manitoba, and for us, Mr. Speaker, we've had billions of dollars transferred to municipalities and we still have water that's not treated. It's not treated and we have raw sewage, and so we believe in maintaining the unconditional grant to municipalities but also targeting money for sewage treatment, for waste-water investments and

very important flood protection programs and for raw sewage in Manitoba.

That is also very important, to have targeted objectives in place so that we can make sure that the dollars are not going only to salaries but are going to needed infrastructure, roads, sewage treatment, sewage-water treatment and projects that are very important for the future of the citizens of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: It's unfortunate that he feels that municipal leaders can't be trusted to spend their budgets and make the right decisions. I think that response is a reflection of an attitude of arrogance that has crept into this government, that only they know how to spend money.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that history that the Premier has just laid out contains lots of information. We're aware of the revenue-sharing program that was introduced by the prior Progressive Conservative government with municipalities. But rather than looking to the past, let's take a look at where we need to go from today and into the future, which is what the municipal leaders of Manitoba are gathering for today and over the next few days in Winnipeg, not just to examine the past as the Premier is obsessed with doing but to look to the future.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, if he's worried about where he's going to find the money to help support municipal infrastructure projects and if he's so convinced that he knows how to spend it better than they do, why not just cancel the waste of \$640-million-plus on the west-side power transmission corridor and put that money into building communities in partnership with Manitoba municipalities.

With the simple act of cancelling that massively wasteful project, he could increase grants to municipalities by 50 percent over six years. Why not get his own house in order and then sit down at the table as a partner to allow our municipal leaders to work with their constituents to begin the process of rebuilding their communities.

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the mathematics that the member opposite is using is the reason why we never built any dams in Manitoba, because they never talk about the billions of dollars in revenue that's going to come about because of the transmission.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Schreyer corporate and individual income tax provision has been

introduced and kept in Manitoba. If you're talking about co-trusting municipalities, why do we have the highest unconditional grant in Canada? That is obviously a sign of trusting municipalities. When it's 14 percent in Manitoba and only 0.3 percent in Alberta or 2.7 in Ontario or 2 percent in B.C., I guess we're seven times more trusting than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also have built upon that to have our roads program increased by five times. Now, we will sit down with municipalities during this convention. We sat down with them before the convention. We'll sit down with them after. We'll make sure that we continue to enhance the grants. I believe the grants to the City of Winnipeg have gone up over 40 percent in the last four years in terms of actual real investments, but that doesn't even take into consideration projects like the floodway, which also protects the citizens of the city of Winnipeg, which is 50 percent paid for by the provincial government with the federal government.

We also are looking forward to massive increases in infrastructure. We're discussing that now with the federal government. Everybody agrees that we need new infusion of taxes. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the municipal taxes and school board taxes in the 1990s—and you still have some former Cabinet ministers as part of the 1990s—you want to talk about the Progressive Conservative record, according to Stats Canada, your taxes went up 57 percent under the Conservative regime. That was the highest amount of any government in Canada, and in the last 10 years, there's actually been a decrease in municipal taxes, counting school boards, with the increased investment in infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, we're not perfect, but we give the most in Canada on that regard.

City of Thompson Tax Increases

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the City of Thompson has approved four new municipal taxes. The only person standing between them imposing those taxes on residents and small businesses is the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) and, coincidentally, the MLA for Thompson. During this dramatic economic downturn gripping North America, the minister has said that now is not the time for new taxes.

Will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs confirm whether he is going to approve these new

taxes for Thompson, taxes that will be a direct hit on residents and small businesses in that city?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the member indicated that it was only the provincial government that's standing in the way of this municipality increasing these taxes. Then it wasn't clear after that whether she thought that was a bad thing or a good thing. Perhaps she could clarify in the next round.

Thompson also gets the benefit—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: The City of Thompson also benefits from the sharing of personal income tax revenues, corporate income tax revenues, VLT revenues and gas tax. We have the broadest base of revenue sharing of any province in the country, with the largest amount of unconditional grants to municipalities, and the City of Thompson benefits from all of that. In addition, they have Neighbourhoods Alive! and many other practical investments that improve their community.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, doesn't the minister think that if he approves the Thompson 2 percent hotel tax, the 2 percent restaurant tax, the 2 percent liquor tax and the 0.5 percent land transfer tax, that he'll be opening the floodgates for other municipalities who are feeling the crunch of this province's infrastructure deficit?

Who's he standing up for? Is he going to stand up for small businesses and residents in this province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the lowest rate of taxation for small businesses in Canada at 2 percent. That means that this provincial government is solidly supporting small business in this province with the taxation rates that we make available to them.

In addition, we have made very significant investments in the city of Thompson on very key facilities in that community that they know that they need and they want, including University College of the North. There have been significant investments there, significant investments in other social and health facilities, as well as revenue sharing.

I know that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Mr. Ashton) has seized of the request from the community of Thompson. I know that he will

deal with it in such a way that the city of Thompson will be well positioned to move forward.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, we just want a simple answer, a yes or no answer. So will the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs just peel back all this rhetoric and just give the House a straight answer, and the people of Thompson? Will he sign off on the new taxes or not?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it is the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs—and ministers of Intergovernmental Affairs actually like to meet with the other level of government before they make announcements. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will be meeting very soon, perhaps as early as today with the mayor of Thompson. After he's had that meeting with the mayor of Thompson, I'm sure that they will jointly be able to talk to the public about what the plans are on moving forward for the city of Thompson.

* (14:00)

Building Canada Fund Implementation

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech indicated the need to move infrastructure funding forward to stimulate the economy and to help our communities, yet if this government's past actions are any indication, we'll be waiting a long time to see that money flow. A case in point: an entire whole construction season was lost thanks to the government's delays in signing the Building Canada Fund.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier waste a whole construction season supposedly negotiating the Building Canada Fund and still end up with the same funding allocations that were in place in the beginning?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, there has been no money allocated in any province from the infrastructure fund, an item that came up at the First Ministers' meeting. There's been no agreement on the strategic infrastructure from the federal government.

We were able to negotiate some, I guess you could call it compromise on the subtraction of the floodway money so that municipalities outside of Winnipeg wouldn't be as severely prejudiced as they might have otherwise been with the proposal. We did get money for Highway 75. We have money for

Asia-Pacific, for the inland port, and we think those are all very positive, along with the floodway.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns raised at the First Ministers' meeting was the whole issue of infrastructure for the whole country.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have talked about the importance of getting infrastructure dollars flowing quickly. Before any funding can flow from the Building Canada Fund to the Manitoba municipalities and Northern Affairs communities, a second agreement called the Communities Component must be negotiated and signed.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Why is this agreement not signed? Will the municipalities have to wait another year to receive critical infrastructure funding?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Every time we've come to this Chamber with a budget that increases our infrastructure dollars, members opposite vote against it, yet we hear every day about a highway, a bridge, a road of some sort that each individual member opposite, Mr. Speaker, wants to have improved.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan in place and we've put billions of dollars towards that plan. We're certainly looking at ways to roll out that money which we have included in our overall plan. Every year at this time, we have budgeted for infrastructure projects, and we're also looking at tendering out many of those projects for next year and we'll continue to do so.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba municipalities and Northern Affairs communities need a clear indication when the Communities Component of the Building Canada Fund will be signed. The fact of the matter is the longer you delay a project the more it's likely to cost. To maximize the benefits of Manitoba's share of the Building Canada Fund, we need to get the infrastructure projects moving in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: How long is it going to take to get this important agreement signed and get the needed infrastructure dollars flowing? What is the time line?

Mr. Lemieux: To the best of my knowledge, no other province in Canada with regard to what the member is referring to has signed anything.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of provinces that have signed months ago on the Building Canada Fund and framework agreement have not received a single penny as yet. But having said that, as was announced in the Throne Speech, we have put forward \$4.7 billion with regard to the next four years on health care, on education, on transportation, roads and water treatment.

Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of our record in the past. We'll continue to build it. We're certainly not perfect, but we have a plan in place and we plan on putting it forward. We know that we've worked over the last number of years with regard to many, many projects with the municipalities, and many of them have worked closely with us on prioritizing those kinds of projects that we're working on.

Dr. Larry Reynolds
Minister's Knowledge of Termination

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): A Winnipeg doctor says he is out of a job because he was too outspoken. Dr. Larry Reynolds was recruited here seven years ago to head up the University of Manitoba's Department of Family Medicine and he was also the medical director at the WRHA.

This is Family Doctor Week in Canada, but this doctor received a letter this week, a letter which told him that he was fired. He thinks it is because he criticized how the WRHA handled some issues.

Now, there is no way that a doctor in this position would be fired without the okay from the Minister of Health. Can the Minister of Health tell us if she approved his firing?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): You know, Mr. Speaker, from time to time members opposite accuse—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Oswald: Members opposite from time to time accuse us of speaking too frequently of the past, but I would suggest that this member is clearly dwelling in the past and the culture of disdain and negativity that they had when they dealt with doctors in Manitoba.

I can assure the people of this province and the members of this House that when it comes to issues of personnel and regional health authorities, those are matters that are dealt with in that manner. It is

our responsibility as a government to provide opportunities for more individuals to be trained and for more individuals to be hired.

This particular matter is between the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the individual doctor, and the member is indeed putting misinformation about the status of this individual on this record.

Mrs. Driedger: I would indicate to the minister that the information I'm putting forward comes straight from Dr. Reynolds in an interview he has done. Also, this minister cannot take credit for all the hirings of doctors if she doesn't take responsibility also for the firings of doctors.

Mr. Speaker, James Turk, the executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers said that this firing makes Manitoba look bad. He said Dr. Reynolds is one of the best-known professors of family medicine in Canada, probably the most experienced teacher and most experienced researcher in the Department of Family Medicine. He also said that this firing, and I quote: will have a negative impact on the ability of the university in the region to be able to attract first-rate academic physicians in the future and will have a negative impact on health care.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health why doctors in this province are not allowed to have a voice to speak up against the problems in health care.

Ms. Oswald: Let's be absolutely clear, as once again the member is putting information on the record that is just untrue.

The doctor in question, of course, is absolutely invited and encouraged by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to continue being a doctor in the city and in the province, to continue providing very good work. It is the purview of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to renew or to not renew contracts in specific capacities. This individual is still a doctor in Manitoba, will continue to be a doctor in Manitoba.

In discussions with the region, I can provide assurances to the House that this is not a matter of squelching academic freedom or speaking out. Indeed, the culture that is created in Manitoba now is to increase doctor and nurses' input, not to fire a thousand of them and cut spaces in medical school.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the information that I am putting on the record—and I would assert today that it is the Minister of Health that is putting

forward misinformation. All of this comes from the mouth of Dr. Larry Reynolds himself and in the case of the executive director for the university, James Turk.

Mr. Speaker, nurses in Manitoba are afraid to speak out because of problems in health care. ER doctors, when they were speaking out about their concerns about patient safety because of the shortage of ER doctors, they told me they were threatened with job loss. *[interjection]* They did, and now a doctor who is a leader in family medicine has been fired for speaking out. All of this promotes a culture of fear and intimidation in Manitoba.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: Why is she muzzling the health-care professionals in this province when they speak up about patient safety and patient care?

*(14:10)

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, the member is just wrong, absolutely wrong. I listen to the radio too, but in addition to that, I do some homework. I don't just make stuff up, as is apparently the case with the member opposite.

What I can say to you, Mr. Speaker, is the most important lesson that we've learned in the post-Justice Sinclair era from the pediatric baby deaths of the 1990s, we know that particular efforts should be made to determine how to prevent errors by discovering where the flaws lie in the system that contribute to errors being made. Paul Thomas says if the attitude persists that error is unacceptable and that the acknowledgement of mistakes is an admission of incompetence, the opportunity to learn from negative or even disappointing results will be lost. Ours is a culture of openness, not sweeping errors under the rugs like under their watch.

Phoenix Sinclair Case Review Status of Report

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, the Child Advocate's office was to, over a year ago, receive a full status report on the 32 recommendations that were presented as a result of Phoenix Sinclair's death.

Mr. Speaker, the minister now has had the weekend since I asked the question on Friday to find that information. Will he today table the detailed report that was sent to the Children's Advocate's office over a year ago?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, the member I think knows full well that the Ombudsman, who has been receiving reports and, in fact, tabled a report with the public just a—was it just a few months ago, on the status of the implementation of recommendations is one. I understand the Children's Advocate is doing likewise.

I can also assure the members that there have been ongoing discussions, communications between the Child Protection branch, the child welfare authorities and those two independent offices to ensure that they know the status of the Changes for Children agenda.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, in a recent meeting with the Children's Advocate, she indicated that she has not received the full status report on the recommendations, and she indicated that the reports that she does receive and review are a conglomeration of individual reports organized by theme, and it's very difficult to keep track of individual case recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us today what the status of recommendation S7 is, that all workers acting in all front-line positions in Manitoba's child welfare agencies be provided with essential core training in abuse, assessments, risk assessment, counselling, breaking through resistance and relationship building with difficult clients? What is the status of this recommendation that was supposed to be submitted over a year ago?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, I, as well, meet regularly with the Children's Advocate, and we can certainly put on the agenda the format of the reporting that is done to our office. But I can assure members that indeed there is reporting. It's very important that the Advocate know the status of the implementation of recommendations, and if that can be improved I certainly, more than most anyone, is very keen to see some enhancement of that reporting mechanism.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, but it's over two years ago that the recommendations were made, and these recommendations can't help Phoenix Sinclair but they should be implemented in order to ensure that no other child ends up like Phoenix Sinclair.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister today table the detailed report that was supposed to go to the

Children's Advocate over a year ago on the status of the recommendations?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, first of all, I think the record should be clarified. Clearly there was a report to all the public on the status of recommendations in the external reports under Changes for Children. That was provided to all Manitobans, and we tabled a copy in this House, and that was over a year ago.

Number 2, there are ongoing communications and reports being provided to not only the Children's Advocate but to the Ombudsman. But it sounds like the Advocate may want a different format, in which case we can attend to that. I can assure the House that that reporting is taking place.

I can also assure the House, Mr. Speaker, that, in terms of progress on the recommendations, the majority of those are in progress or completed. We'll continue to work on those recommendations, as we will for all of the recommendations. I think there are about 300 under the Changes for Children agenda.

Wind Energy

Financial Capacity of Babcock & Brown

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, just reading the government press release this morning on the St. Joseph wind farm, it is encouraging that the government is at least talking about wind energy here in Manitoba.

We do know that Manitoba companies, such as Sequoia Energy, are being forced to develop wind energy south of the border outside of Manitoba and there are a lot of details lacking in this particular announcement. But when the government did consider the 84 proposals that came forward, we're wondering about the criteria in the selection that was done.

The question would be to the minister responsible: How important is the financial capacity of the companies wanting to do business here in Manitoba? How important is that ranking?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro evaluates the proposals and they pick the one that they think is going to provide the most economic source of wind power in Manitoba.

They have talked to the company and the company has assured them that the North American operation of Babcock & Brown has been profitable. It has generated capital which is available to the

parent company which, as the member knows, has gone through some struggles recently in the stock market, and they have successfully brought on 600 megawatts of wind power last year. They plan to do at least as much this year.

They have been a positive contributor towards this development of clean energy in North America, and they have gotten the project in Manitoba based on their track record of successfully developing these projects.

Mr. Cullen: Certainly the business community has some concerns with Babcock & Brown as well, and I will table for the minister just some documents that were circulated today from the *Business Spectator*. I'll quote from that particular news release, and it says here: "Babcock & Brown Ltd. could be on the brink of receivership, with the investment firm facing increasing pressure from its bankers to restructure its debt."

So the question to the minister is: What due diligence did his department do in terms of Babcock & Brown in this development in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Manitoba Hydro is the purchaser of the power, and as was indicated at the press conference today, Manitoba Hydro has no risk in this proposal, because the entire responsibility for financing and building this project rests with the private proponent of the project, Babcock & Brown.

So there is no risk to Manitoba Hydro ratepayers, which includes all of us, in this project. There is no risk to Manitoba Hydro. There is no risk to the Manitoba ratepayers, and the company has assured us that they are able to mount and do this project based on their track record of doing it many more times in North America.

As recently as last year they brought 600 megawatts on-stream. This project is 300 megawatts and they expressed a high degree of confidence today, in the press conference, in their ability to deliver this project.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the details of this, in fact there are no details in this press release that was put out this morning. It's more talk about wind farms. There's not even a signed purchase agreement in place.

Now, we know, Babcock & Brown, two directors actually resigned within the last week from that particular company.

So the question is: What due diligence is this government doing on behalf of Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the due diligence with respect to any purchase of power by Manitoba Hydro is done by themselves. They bear no risk. It's entirely on the shoulders of the private company to deliver this project. They have raised \$5 billion for energy projects. They have raised \$3 billion for—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members are asking questions and the member is trying to respond. Let's have a little decorum here.

Mr. Selinger: They indicated when they were asked the question this morning that they have multiple turbine suppliers, so that they are very confident they will be able to have the turbines needed which has been the bottleneck in the supply chain. They believe that they are making a positive—they know they're making a positive capital contribution to the parent company. They've just announced a wind farm in Texas, and this is part of a larger \$1-billion company effort to develop 550 megawatts in Texas, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

So the reality is Manitoba Hydro has picked a proponent that has offered the best arrangement with the best supply of wind turbines, and they, the private company, are bearing all the risk.

* (14:20)

Dr. Larry Reynolds Government Response to Termination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier knows that Dr. Larry Reynolds, an internationally renowned and tenured family physician who served for a while as head of the Department of Family Medicine for the University of Manitoba and for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority—he's been unceremoniously dismissed by both the WRHA and the university because he dared to speak out publicly against the policies of this government for improved training and working conditions of family physicians.

I ask the Premier, through you, Mr. Speaker: Is the Premier running a banana republic? What action is the Premier going to take to address this important situation?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind members, when asking a question, it's a question and two

supplementary questions, not tie in two questions at the same time.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member opposite for his contribution to decorum in this House with his rudeness in his question.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the government of Manitoba has never, ever interfered with the hiring or comments made by any prof at the University of Manitoba. I would point out that the head of political science for the University of Winnipeg ran for the Liberal Party in Osborne. He's a well-known pundit before, during and after that time. There are other people that have been quite critical, in the universities, of the government, some complimentary.

That's freedom of speech. We support that, and I really object to the tone and substance of the member opposite's question.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it is a sad reality that all too many people in this province have been oppressed by the bullying and harassment that's coming from this government when people speak out. When I woke up this morning, I wondered if I'd woken up in Zimbabwe under President Mugabe. The bullying and harassment has got to stop. We're going to stand up for the people in this province who want to speak out against injustice.

I ask the Premier: When we bring in the strongest possible anti-bullying and harassment legislation, will the Premier support us?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find the comments made by the member opposite to be bullying and rude, and maybe he could start with himself in the policies he's articulating.

Manitoba Lotteries Scratch-and-Win Tickets

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, every week tens of thousands of Manitobans go to the lottery outlets and they purchase tickets in anticipation that they have the opportunity to be able to win the top prize. Unfortunately, that is quite often not the case because the top prize has already been won, yet they're still purchasing tickets in anticipation that they have a chance to win that top prize.

The Premier of this province, the government of the day is in a position in which they can stop that from happening. I'm asking for the Premier to do the right thing and make a commitment to Manitobans that are purchasing these tickets that, in fact, the top ticket has been won, that, in fact, the status quo practice will not continue, effective immediately.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I thank the Member for Inkster for the question and indeed this is an issue that has arisen. I presume he's been watching CBC.

Indeed, there is a lottery—the scratch-and-win tickets are actually very popular. Tens of thousands of Manitobans buy them each week, and Manitoba is one of the three provinces which is involved in the Western Canadian Lotteries Corporation. Indeed, that corporation will be meeting in the next couple of weeks, and we have asked the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation to take that up with our counterparts in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In truth, the grand prizes only represent about 5 percent to 7 percent of all the prize money available out there. We're very pleased that tens of thousands of Manitobans enjoy playing scratch-and-win games. It's a positive thing, and we know that Manitoba Lotteries Corporation does great things for the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Child Day

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge a very important day. This past Thursday, November 20, was Canada's National Child Day. In 1993, the federal government enacted legislation titled The Child Day Act in recognition of the passing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. Since then we have set aside this day to acknowledge our international commitment to promoting and protecting the well-being of children.

Children represent an indispensable component of our communities. They breathe hope and laughter into our world and remind us that joy is often found in unexpected moments. They also remind us that we have a responsibility to future generations. We must ensure that children grow up in a safe, stimulating and compassionate environment. It is our

responsibility to provide the necessities of life for them with love and encouragement.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

As such, our government is committed to promoting health and education as a vital way for families to protect and to provide for their little ones. We remain committed to investment in the Children's Hospital, protecting children from second-hand smoke, expanding child care options and continuing with strategies to reduce child poverty in Manitoba.

As an educator, I had the privilege of working with children and I know the power of education and the unparalleled opportunity it provides. To see young minds explore the world around them is an inspiration for us all.

Our society cannot afford to overlook the needs of children. They are our hope for our future and we must continue to treat them as a worthy investment. In the words of author O.A. Battista, what's done to children, they will do to society.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I ask the House to support our children and recognize National Child Day this year in Manitoba. Thank you.

Family Doctor Week

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It's my pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the celebration of Family Doctor Week in Canada. This is a special time to recognize the importance of family physicians in Manitoba and in Canada, and to reflect upon the importance of this profession to every single one of us. Every day family physicians diagnose and treat illness and injury, promote disease prevention and good health, co-ordinate care and advocate on behalf of their patients.

Family Doctor Week is an opportunity to recognize these and other significant contributions that family physicians make to society in their delivery of health care. Family physicians not only provide primary medical care, however, but also secondary and tertiary care in many communities. Their office is only one place where they practice their skills. They also work from hospitals, nursing homes, their patients' homes and other community facilities.

Celebratory events for Family Doctor Week will include the College of Family Physicians of Canada's annual family medicine forum. This year the forum is being held in Toronto at the Sheraton Centre and will host thousands of attendees and exhibitors.

Family physicians are professionals, teachers, mentors, caregivers, counsellors and more. Canadians across this country owe a debt of gratitude for the care that they provide. I am pleased to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all family physicians in this province and throughout the country. The men and women who have been called to this profession are an integral part of the fabric of our society.

I ask all members of this House to join with me in thanking our family doctors and in supporting Family Doctor Week in Canada. Thank you.

Medal of Remembrance Recipients

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): It is an honour to rise today to recognize the tribute paid to our local veterans and their role in the liberation of the Netherlands in the Second World War many years ago.

This past week, 14 veterans were awarded the Medal of Remembrance at Deer Lodge Centre. These local heroes participated in the battles of World War II that ultimately liberated the Netherlands from German occupation, further spearheading the Allied victory in Europe.

Three years ago the Dutch invited Canadian soldiers to return to their country and celebrate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands. These Canadians toured major battle sites and military graveyards and participated in a ceremony where the Dutch honoured their Canadian liberators with Medals of Remembrance. Thank you Canada is engraved on the front of the medals.

* (14:30)

However, 14 veterans from Winnipeg were unable to attend the event due to health issues and travel limitations. Now, three years later, their service has been properly acknowledged. I was deeply honoured to oversee the event where Hans Hasenack, honorary consul for the Netherlands, presented a Medal of Remembrance to 11 Second World War veterans and three family representatives of late veterans deserving the honour.

I was equally moved by the story of bravery, heroism and sacrifice told by these veterans, as well as the tale of the Canadian liberation of the Dutch as told by my colleague, the MLA for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), who experienced the event as a small boy.

My own childhood holds very special memories of Holland. As the daughter in a military family, we were the first of the Canadian families sent to the Netherlands—to Germany less than 10 years after the Second World War ended. In visiting Holland, I will never forget the sincere warmth and appreciation the Dutch people have for Canadians.

I must also acknowledge Donna George for the initiative she has taken to ensure the veterans received proper tribute. Her efforts, along with all the staff, volunteers and administration at Deer Lodge Centre, speak to the commitment and respect they hold for the veterans there. I ask the House to join me in acknowledging the veterans at Deer Lodge Centre. We must honour these Canadian heroes for their sacrifices have liberated many and allowed us to live among nations of peace. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

David Glenn Friesen

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate David Glenn Friesen on receiving Manitoba's highest honour. Mr. Friesen, along with 11 other men and women, were awarded the Order of Manitoba this past summer. They will join the 109 other Manitobans who have received this award since its creation in 1999.

The Order of Manitoba is given to individuals who have displayed excellence in their field and made significant contributions to the social, economic and cultural life of Manitoba. David Glenn Friesen was awarded the Order of Manitoba for his leadership in business and his unending support for community life and higher education in Manitoba.

Mr. Friesen is a former president and CEO and the current chair of the board of Friesens Corporation, which has become Canada's largest independent book manufacturer. Friesens Corporation has been in operation in Altona since 1907. In 2002, David Glenn Friesen was named Altona's citizen of the year. He also served on the Rhineland School Division board, the Chamber of Commerce, along with countless other local organizations in Altona.

Mr. Friesen has also chaired the most successful fundraising history for the University of Manitoba during their recent capital campaign entitled, Building on Strength, which raised \$250 million. Friesen has served on a number of boards, including the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Fort Whyte

Centre for Environmental Education and the Business Council of Manitoba. In the past, Friesen has been honoured as the printer of the year and was inducted into Manitoba Manufacturers Hall of Fame.

On behalf of my constituents, I'd like to congratulate David Glenn Friesen on his great achievements, receiving the Order of Manitoba, a tremendous accomplishment in which Mr. Friesen and his family should take great pride. The award has been well earned and much deserved. Thank you.

Holodomor Commemorative Memorial Service

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 75th anniversary of Holodomor and in recognition of Ukrainian Famine Awareness Week.

In June this House passed Bill 217 marking the fourth Saturday in November for each year as Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day.

The 1929 dictator Joseph Stalin instituted a policy of forced collectivization, retaliation against Ukrainian nationalism through the imposition of grain quotas, effectively denying farmers of the Ukraine their harvest. The result was famine in the breadbasket of Europe. From 1932 to 1933, all grain was confiscated. Any person caught taking even a handful of grain or suspected of holding onto any foodstuffs was deported or executed. This was the Holodomor, murder by starvation, the genocide of millions of men, women and children.

On Sunday, November 16, a ceremony was held at the Legislature in remembrance of the 75th anniversary of Holodomor. Hundreds of people attended the service, including 25 survivors of this famine and their families. Songs were performed by the O. Koshetz Choir, First Mennonite Choir and the Hoosli Ukrainian Male Chorus.

Mr. Speaker, as a multicultural province, Manitoba is home to many different stories, some of them tragic. Manitobans of Ukrainian as well as Mennonite descent have families touched by the events of Holodomor, and it is extremely important that this particular story never be forgotten.

But this story is also one of hope. Seventy-five years ago, millions of Ukrainians lost their livelihoods, their freedom, and their loved ones. Over the years, many of these people came to settle here in Manitoba in the hope of starting a better future for themselves and their families. As a result, our province is home to a strong and vibrant

Ukrainian community, one that teaches us the importance of respect for human life, the strength in the face of tragedy.

With the passage of Bill 217, we pledge to never forget this genocide and to remember that we, as Manitobans, must stand up for the principles of human rights and respect for human dignity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, just on House business.

Mr. Speaker: House business?

Mr. Hawranik: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) certainly is scheduled next to speak in reply to the Speech from the Throne, and, traditionally, he is the first member of the opposition to speak. I know that he is currently being interviewed in a scrum just outside the Chamber, so I'd ask the leave of the House for us to recess for a five-minute period in order to allow the Leader of the Official Opposition to come back and deliver his reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House to recess for five minutes? *[Agreed]*

We will recess for five minutes.

The House recessed at 2:36 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:42 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As previously agreed, the five-minute recess is completed, and we will now go to orders of the day.

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) 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 this Third Session of the

Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and address the Speech from the Throne that was presented by His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in this Chamber last Thursday and to propose a series of amendments to that motion, which I will do so at the end of my remarks today.

Before getting into the substance of the speech, though, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank and acknowledge His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and his staff as well as yourself and the table officers, Clerks and pages, as well as the staff in translation, Hansard, and elsewhere within the Legislative Assembly support group that do so much to assist all of us as elected members to do our jobs here each and every day when this House is in session.

I would also, again, just like to acknowledge the passing of the former Member for The Pas, Oscar Lathlin, who, I know, Mr. Speaker, is missed deeply by his family members and his friends, many of those colleagues who had the opportunity to serve with him over the years that he represented the people of The Pas constituency, having been elected by them five times to come here and advocate on their behalf. Certainly, we who served opposite him weathered our share of criticism, but we welcomed it and that's a healthy part of this process in this House. He certainly will be missed.

I would also like to just extend congratulations to the former Member for Elmwood who's been elected to the federal Parliament since we last sat in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, in a closely contested and hard-fought election in the federal constituency of Elmwood-Transcona. Certainly, as members make that decision to move on to serve in other roles, we always wish them well. Even if we don't agree necessarily with all of the policies and ideas they advance, we do wish them well as they undertake these new challenges, and I want to extend my good wishes to Mr. Maloway as he goes to serve on behalf of the people of Elmwood and Transcona in the federal Parliament.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of others who came forward and stood for election in this most recent federal election campaign, some who were elected for the first time and, in particular, Candice

Hoepfner, Shelly Glover and Niki Ashton, all of whom were elected as new members of Parliament this time around.

Congratulations to all of those who were re-elected in this election campaign, who have served our province very well over the years and I know will continue to do so in a variety of capacities in the federal Parliament.

I'd also extend my congratulations and good wishes to Prime Minister Harper and his Cabinet as they face the significant challenges that are confronting them today and will continue to confront them in the months and years to come as we enter into a global period of economic downturn, significant re-alignment of the world economy and major challenges associated with that in terms of the security of pensions, the security of jobs, the ability of governments to meet the needs and expectations of their citizens and the various other socio-economic and political issues that will arise as they meet those challenges.

We certainly respect the leadership the Prime Minister has shown in his dealings on the international stage with the G-20, at APEC most recently and in other places and the non-partisan way in which he has approached the challenge of leading this great country of Canada through the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we also will take time in the course of our comments on the debate in the Speech from the Throne to acknowledge the elements of the Speech from the Throne that we agree with, which is not something that is routinely a focus for opposition members, but it does happen from time to time.

We certainly know in this era of uncertainty and stress that Manitobans are looking to all of us to be constructive in our comments, to acknowledge where things are going well, to encourage and support the government in areas where we feel they're on the right track and certainly to encourage them to change course in areas where we believe they're off-track, all of which is with a view toward a better future for our province and, of course, meeting the immediate fears and anxieties of Manitobans as we look at the economic circumstances that we face today.

I want to just acknowledge the role the Premier's played in a variety of forums both within the province, within the country of Canada and internationally as a voice for Manitoba and as a person who represents our province with great

dignity and in a very articulate way. While we may disagree with his directions and some of the policy decisions and occasionally with priorities and tactics, we certainly respect the role that he plays in advancing the interests of the province of Manitoba outside of our borders.

We know that what happens beyond our borders is incredibly important to the day-to-day lives of everyday Manitobans in ways that we don't always appreciate. It's not always on the top of mind of every Manitoba citizen the reality that so much of our economic activity is a function of our ability to export to other provinces, our ability to import goods and ideas and, increasingly, people to build the economy of the future and that we are incredibly dependent on and living in an interdependent world when it comes to the economic realities.

Some will say that this is a cause for concern. There will be a temptation in some places to resort to protectionism, to try to throw up walls and turn away from this interdependence that has been created over the last two decades in particular. We would argue that this is the time to resist that kind of thinking, that with the interlocking economy, certainly when there are downs in some places that will have an impact on others, but it also means that we share in the wealth and the opportunities that arise as economies grow internationally.

Perhaps just as importantly, Mr. Speaker, we know that, where there is a mutual dependency, there is a lower likelihood of countries coming into conflict with one another in other ways. We know that if we are in a situation where the fortunes of China have an impact on our own fortunes, as the United States' economy slides, that that's going to have an impact on us, that these are things that we know we must help to address globally in order to ensure that our common future is not compromised.

*(14:50)

Similarly, we know from experience that as economies in other places grow, we stand to share in the benefit of that growth. We've certainly seen that in Manitoba over the past nine or 10 years. We've had our share of growth internally. We've also benefited from the growth around us which has opened up new markets and certainly created a financial framework within our country that has led to the increased ability of the federal government to support Manitoba over the last eight or nine years.

In recognizing these basic facts about the international economy and the interlinking nature of societies, we know that the ability to express our will and to stand up for our own province outside of our borders is more important today than it has been at any time in history. So we thank, acknowledge and encourage the government as they protect Manitoba's interests and advocate on our behalf in a variety of ways outside of the borders of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, there is much in the Throne Speech to agree with. We will acknowledge that there are individual initiatives in this speech which are good ones. I think, in particular, about the steps taken to protect children from second-hand smoke. I think also about efforts to make improvements to infrastructure and move forward on a number of projects in different places around the province. In particular, the desire to create better linkages between remote communities along the east side of our province and the city of Winnipeg and the other communities throughout Manitoba in order to reduce the cost of food and provide for better access to health and other services for the people of that part of our province.

We also will acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that there are initiatives in this speech which take steps to protect our natural environment and the heritage and the legacy that will be left to succeeding generations.

We've certainly had questions about some of the specifics but let there be no doubt that we support the goals and congratulate the government on putting forward these goals. We will certainly, in the weeks and months ahead, be looking forward to working with the government to offer our own suggestions but, in the end, to support the achievement of various goals that will protect children from second-hand smoke, protect our natural environment and do other things to support our business community as it attempts to navigate through the difficult time ahead.

Notwithstanding the various items within the speech that we support, we had some disappointments. Of course, I'll use this opportunity to express some disappointment about certain things that were missing from this speech that we believe could have made for a stronger, more forward-looking speech and ultimately, a better and stronger province for the next generation.

One of the fundamental issues that didn't get the emphasis it deserved in this speech was the basic reality that the province, like every nation and every

civilization in history, will rise or fall based on what happens with its economy. It will rise and fall on the strength or the weakness of our provincial economy. That ultimately, everything we do in our province is a function of the ability to raise the money and achieve the level of wealth required to unite our province, offer safe communities, effective health care, first-class education systems, leading-edge environmental protection, healthy families and communities, and safety-net programs that protect our seniors, the poor and the most vulnerable members of our community. This was an important and significant weakness of the speech. There was insufficient evidence of a plan to build the economic engine of our province to ensure that we'll have the wealth to meet all those other needs and to support all of those other goals.

There's also within the speech, we believe, a failure to acknowledge and take into account that there have been missed opportunities and failures over the last nine years that have put our province in a weaker position than we would have been otherwise. Had it not been for those missed opportunities and some of those failures, our province would be in a stronger position than it is today to weather what may be coming down the road.

Out of those concerns, in particular, we've seen a lot of day-to-day management by the government, but on the big strategic issues that matter to the future of Manitoba and to the next generations, we've seen a lack of action, a lack of energy and a lack of vision on the part of the government.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, we would want the government to revisit some decisions that have been made that are not so far down the road that they can't be reversed in order to clearly send a signal that the priorities of the government are aligned with the priorities of Manitobans.

We would've wanted to see the government acknowledge its error in routing the next major hydro transmission line down the longer, less environmentally friendly west side of Manitoba. To throw a minimum of \$640 million, which are the Finance Minister's own numbers, away on this project, \$535 taken out of the pockets of every man, woman and child in Manitoba, in order to build the line that is longer, less reliable, less environmentally friendly and more wasteful than the east side option, Mr. Speaker, which is supported by a vast majority

of the Aboriginal communities that live on the east side of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we also would call on the government to repeal its misguided decision to take a million dollars out of the pockets of Manitobans, over four years under its vote tax plan, to take that money from the pockets of Manitobans and put it into the pockets of the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, right out of the pockets of Manitobans and into the pockets of the governing party.

There were ways to address the issue of small parties, Mr. Speaker, and their representation that could've avoided the spectacle of a governing party of Manitoba taking a million dollars from taxpayers at a time when they can least afford it.

So we call on them to acknowledge that error and repeal that provision of Bill 37.

Mr. Speaker, these are but two examples of decisions that can still be reversed to demonstrate clearly to Manitobans that the government is on their side, that its priorities are the same as theirs, and that they're not here to be self-serving, but they're here to be in the service of the people who put them into power.

Mr. Speaker, more broadly, we have had, over the last nine years and in particular over the period of time since the 9/11 terror attacks, an opportunity in an environment of rapidly rising revenues to the provincial government to build the economy of the future, to put money away, to aggressively pay down debt and to prepare our province for any contingency that could arise including the predicted economic downturn that we are in today.

As a result of the government's failure to apply these record revenues over the last nine years to more aggressively pay down debt, our total debt, Mr. Speaker, has gone up, when it should've gone down as it has in other provinces, and that total debt today, including Crown corporations, is now approaching \$20 billion or \$16,600 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba.

So, if you look at it, we have \$535 coming out of every pocket in Manitoba for the ill-conceived, wasteful power line decision. We've now got a burden of \$16,600 on every single Manitoban man, woman and child as a result of this government's failure to more aggressively pay down debt when times were good.

Mr. Speaker, we also have seen, under this government, a failure to fix our financial roof when the sun was shining and to put more money away into our province's savings account, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which today stands at only \$670 million available for general purposes, which is a mere \$559 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba.

By contrast, Mr. Speaker, and this is a number the government has been touting a lot in public and it sounds like a big number until you realize that Saskatchewan, our next-door neighbour, has almost \$2 billion in its rainy day account, and it's paid its debt down rather than letting it rise down to now under \$5 billion in general purpose debt, less than half the amount of taxpayer-supported debt of the Province of Manitoba. Less than half the debt. Three times the amount of money in the savings account in Saskatchewan meaning that the people of Saskatchewan have six times the financial protection of the average citizen in the province of Manitoba as a result of the failure to plan and the failure to prepare for what we're heading into today.

*(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, as a result of all of this, as a result of these failures and missed opportunities, the total debt of Manitoba is now 30 times higher than the amount sitting in the savings account—30 times the debt that we have sitting in the savings account as we face what many are now saying will be the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Mr. Speaker, the government is saying that everything is going to be fine, that there's nothing to worry about, that there is nothing that is required in terms of a rethinking of our position. We would say that—well, we would certainly not counsel panic and we would certainly not counsel signals that would be negative for our economy. We would say it is time for the government to face reality, to come clean with Manitobans and to explain clearly how it is that we're going to get from where we stand today to where we want to be some three or four years from now as we were predicted to be emerging from the current downturn.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other issue that we face as a province today in addition to new debt is new dependency that's been brought to us by the New Democrats, and that new dependency is something that could have been avoided had the government taken the last nine years to invest in the economic engine of our province, to take some of the bounty

flowing from Ottawa and invest it in making a more competitive tax regime, in investing in the basic infrastructure of our province and ensuring that our education system was second to none. Instead, we have *Maclean's* rankings which continue to show Manitoba universities falling at the back of the pack. We have an ongoing problem with infrastructure compared to other provinces. We have a current payroll tax that is out of line and a signal that we are a province that punishes those who create jobs rather than supporting and rewarding companies who want to create jobs and invest here in Manitoba.

Now, fortunately we have loyal, long-time Manitoba companies and business people who've made the decision to stay, in some cases to grow and to expand their reach into the world over those years in spite of the fact that they didn't have the level of energetic and aggressive reform that could have taken place over the last nine years had the government been prepared to do what was needed to build our province's economic engine.

As a result of that, our dependency on transfer payments from Ottawa has grown from 28 percent of our revenue in 1999 to 37 percent of our income today. More than one in three dollars flowing into the general revenues of the Province of Manitoba now comes through a combination of equalization and transfer payments. It is a record level of dependency, Mr. Speaker, that has created an unacceptable level of risk and vulnerability to Manitobans as we look at what's happening to those provinces who historically have been there to support Manitoba through equalization payments. In particular, as we see what's happening in Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland, the provinces that have sent cheques our way, we know that we can't continue to depend on the good will and the financial performance of those other provinces as they face their own economic challenges and we, as a consequence, become more and more vulnerable in terms of our revenue to changes that are taking place in those other provinces.

So, as a result of all of this, Mr. Speaker, the cumulative effect of nine years of drift and results that would range from poor at the worst to mediocre at best, Manitoba enters into this new and uncertain phase in our history with a balanced and diverse economy, many loyal businesses who have done well and are prepared to continue to do well, but businesses and investors who are burdened by provincial finances that are limited by new debt and record dependency on Ottawa. This is a burden that

need not have been there had this government been prepared to fix the roof while the sun was shining over the last nine years.

Mr. Speaker, against this backdrop the government introduced a Throne Speech on Thursday that contained a lot of new spending, much of it disconnected re-announcements of old promises that they have to date failed to keep, and that speech set out some initiatives that, as I have said, we support and agree with.

However, Mr. Speaker, the speech failed to demonstrate how it is, at some stage down the road after we get through the current economic challenges, that we as a province are going to pay for all these new spending announcements. What is the economic vision? Where's the engine that's going to generate the wealth to pay for all of the items that have been itemized in this warmed-over buffet of items contained within the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter this new phase of uncertainty, Manitobans were looking for a sense of vision and plans that would help achieve that vision for the economy of the future, that would build on traditional areas of strength such as agriculture, which is a sector that we know this government doesn't particularly appreciate and which has been punished by various means over the years by this government, food sciences, aerospace, mining, another sector which is burdened by the policies of this government, transportation and other traditional sectors of the economy, but also a vision and some boldness to set out the possibilities that will exist as the world economy goes through a fundamental period of transformation, to attempt and to have the courage to envision new opportunities in manufacturing, clean-energy research and development, and modern transportation built on clean electricity, all of which could flourish around a new state-of-the-art inland port, an inland port which has been tepidly endorsed and reluctantly advanced by this government, even as other provinces have moved full speed ahead to establish themselves as the place for the newest inland port in western Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans expected and deserved a speech that would strongly address their current fears and anxieties about the security of their pensions. In this post-Crocus environment when the security of their pensions is again in question and the security of the jobs of those who are not yet retired are at some potential risk in the context of this global

downturn, instead of a plan that would strongly address those fears and anxieties, what they got were vaguely worded and unconvincing assurances that everything is going to be just fine, provided nobody asks too many questions.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne made reference to deregulating pension regulations in the province of Manitoba in order to do certain things. Now we support the goals that are contained within the Speech from the Throne to deal with the pension issue in a way that doesn't cause otherwise-healthy companies to go out of business as a result of problems with their current balance sheet because of the economic downturn and the decline in values.

We also don't want to see current pensioners negatively impacted as a result of what is happening. What we do fear is that the government has failed to learn the lessons of Crocus which is that, rather than confronting a problem head-on and being open and transparent about the current state of our finances, the government decides instead to amend regulations to allow them to continue to cover up systemic problems that will, at some point, result in catastrophic financial and economic outcomes at some point down the road.

It's important as we meet the current challenges that we don't sacrifice the next generation of Manitobans and don't unnecessarily burden future governments, whatever their political stripe, with financial messes that could have been foreseen today and that could have been headed off if the government had the courage to be honest and open and transparent in terms of the current state of these accounts and had the courage to lay out a plan and a strategy for dealing with those issues.

We are concerned that that line in the Speech from the Throne is a signal that the government is aware of circumstances where companies and organizations may be technically insolvent today, but they are not prepared in a macro sense to lay out the extent of the issues and the strategy for navigating those challenges as we go ahead. It seems instead that the strategy is keep a lid on it, cover it up, tell everybody that everything is fine, just as they did in the lead-up to the Crocus collapse, and then hope that they're long gone before the problem comes to the surface and blows up in the faces of the next generation and those governments who are going to be required to deal with those issues.

It is not good enough to cross your fingers and hope the markets recover. These are factors that we

don't have control over. It's important that the government be transparent about the current state of pensions in the province and be prepared to address in a constructive and proactive way the implications of those disclosures in a way that doesn't pit the needs of the current generation against the needs and the requirements of generations to come.

As politically tempting as that would be for any government, to want to keep a lid on current problems and have them blow up at some point down the road, we would hope the government would have courage to do the opposite, acknowledge the challenges and lay out a strategy for dealing with them.

* (15:10)

So we are very concerned about the implications, Mr. Speaker, of those changes to pension regulations in Manitoba, which may make the pension situation more opaque than it should be otherwise. We want it to be clear and transparent so that Manitobans have a true picture of where we stand today and can begin to plan accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, there have been experts that have weighed in on this fundamentally important issue. When you consider the financial implications, which would be in the billions of dollars of some of these circumstances, we believe it's important to heed the warnings and take the advice of experts, including experts such as the former federal banking regulator, Nick Le Pan, who made comments in front of the Economic Club of Toronto last week.

He said in those comments that it was important that the rules that are currently in place that allow for transparency on a quarterly basis be left in place. He said, and I quote: "Suspension of the rules is likely to lead to even more opacity and might further undercut confidence." They also said that the techniques that are being used are allowing investors and retirees and others to have the same access to information as those who are managing funds and managing companies. He asked the question: Why shouldn't shareholders and others have access to the same information as the insiders?

Mr. Speaker, that is a point that we cannot disagree with, and we worry that the deregulation of pensions which is being proposed by the government is along the lines of the decisions that were made by the past American administration which decided that instead of dealing with the problem that was emerging and that many were aware of within the

credit markets, they would turn a blind eye and hope those involved would be able to work their way out of it without the public being aware of the problems that they were heading into. That is the wrong approach. We need to learn the lessons of history and not repeat it here in Manitoba.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, we cannot support changes to the pension regulations that are going to decrease the amount of transparency for Manitobans, but we will support changes that keep companies moving and that protect retirees. We need to do so in a balanced way and we await the details of those proposals and we await some transparency on the part of government before we offer further detailed comment on those issues.

I was somewhat taken aback that the Premier (Mr. Doer) would go back and recycle the lines in question period that he used on Friday morning, recycled the lines that he used when members on this side of the House started asking questions about Crocus. He said on Friday it was the most reckless set of questions he'd ever heard from an opposition member in all of his time. It was almost word for word what he said when members started asking questions about Crocus some years ago, and look where we ended up as a result of that, Mr. Speaker. So we will not back off from asking those questions, and we will not be bullied or intimidated by those sorts of responses into leaving this issue alone.

Mr. Speaker, the speech raises significant red flags, contains individual initiatives that we can support, but it fails on the test of laying out a vision for how we meet the current challenges and emerge in the future as a stronger and better province.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans expected and deserved a speech that would paint a picture of the economy of 2012 and beyond and an energetic plan to get us to the new Manitoba, but instead received a reheated serving of old and as yet unfulfilled promises.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition put forward a plan with clear priorities and a commitment to better results, and instead, what we got in the speech was a spending list with no sense as to whether the spending promises which the government is advertising as a bridge over troubled economic waters is a bridge to somewhere or a bridge to nowhere. This speech would suggest that the bridge that's being offered with all this new infrastructure spending is a bridge to nowhere, and what we want is

new spending that will be a bridge to a better Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we asked for, and were disappointed to not see in the speech, a vision for growth that would ensure that current spending would be paid for by new growth as opposed to what the government is offering which appears to be more debt, lower savings, and diminished hope for the next generation of Manitobans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the speech contains many positive steps that are completely unrelated to the economy. These are some commendable goals that we share. However, the failure to address the overarching issue of our time, which is our economic security, means that we will support many of the specific initiatives in the speech while we will not endorse the speech itself.

The ongoing failure on the part of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the government, as well as his ministers, to accept responsibility for systemic failures and broken promises in health care, child and family services, public safety and the economy, leaves Manitobans with little confidence that the newest round of promises and announcements will be achieved with any better results than the broken promises and failure to deliver on past promises made. We think, for example, the past promise to end hallway medicine, to fix Child and Family Services. We remember the announcement at Maple Leaf Distillers about how this was going to create jobs for Manitobans. The Ainsworth Lumber announcement that was rolled out—and we have a bad feeling that today's announcement will meet the same fate as the Ainsworth announcement which, some months later, with barely a mention, was withdrawn and crated.

So we are concerned that the speech failed to paint a picture of a better future based on the shared commitment and energy of our diverse population of First Nations and Métis people and the succeeding ways of immigrants who built our province together. The speech failed to address the specific issues and concerns of new immigrants as well as our First Nations and Métis people who may be more vulnerable to an economic downturn than many others in our community. They and all Manitobans have been let down by a government who has again announced hundreds of millions of new spending in order to get short-term headlines rather than to summon our people to a higher purpose, a stronger province and a more hopeful future.

For all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets:

- (a) That the government's Throne Speech fails to acknowledge that provinces, nations and civilizations rise and fall on the strength or weakness of their economies; and
 - (b) That the speech fails to recognize that a strong economy is a prerequisite for a united province that offers safe communities, effective health care, first-class education systems, leading-edge environmental protection, healthy families and communities and the safety-net programs that protect our seniors, the poor and the vulnerable; and
 - (c) That the speech fails to take into account that for the past nine years, and particularly since the brief downturn that followed the 9/11 terror attacks, the government has failed to do enough to build Manitoba's economy and protect its finances; and
 - (d) Out of those failures and missed opportunities, include the catastrophically wasteful directive to Manitoba Hydro to waste a minimum of \$640 million, or \$535 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba, on the longer, less reliable, less green, west-side transmission corridor, and the self-serving Bill 37 vote tax, which will take \$1 million from taxpayers over four years and put it in the pocket of the New Democratic Party; and
 - (e) That, as a result of the government's failure to apply the record revenue increases that it's enjoyed over the past nine years to more aggressively pay down debt, Manitoba's total debt has gone up when it should have gone down, and our total debt, including Crown corporations, is now approaching \$20 billion, or \$16,600 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba; and
 - (f) That, as a further consequence of the government's failure to fix our financial roof while the sun was shining, the fiscal stabilization fund, our savings account, has only \$670,215,000 available for general purposes, which is a mere \$559 for every man, woman and child in Manitoba. By contrast, Saskatchewan now has almost \$2 billion in deposits, triple the protection that is available to Manitobans; and
 - (g) That, as a result of the government's failures and missed opportunities, the total debt is now 30 times higher than the balance in our savings account; and
 - (h) That, as a result of the government's failure to build our economic engine during good times, Manitoba now relies on transfer and equalization to the tune of 37 percent of our income, which has increased from the 1999 level of dependency of 28 percent. This has created an unacceptable level of risk and vulnerability for Manitoba's finances, as the sources of those transfers, provinces like Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario and Newfoundland, experience their own economic challenges; and
 - (i) That, as a result of the cumulative effect of nine years of failure, drift and poor-to-mediocre results, Manitoba enters this new and uncertain phase in our history with a balanced and diverse economy that is burdened by provincial finances that are limited by new debt and new dependency; and
- * (15:20)
- (j) That Manitobans expected and deserve a Throne Speech that would set out a vision for the economy of the future, building on traditional areas of strength such as agriculture, food sciences, aerospace, mining and transportation, and also daring to envision new opportunities in manufacturing, clean-energy research development and modern transportation built on clean electricity, all of which could flourish around a new state-of-the-art inland port which has been tepidly endorsed and reluctantly advanced by the government; and
 - (k) That Manitobans expected and deserve a speech that strongly addressed their current fears and anxieties about the security of their pensions in this post-Crocus environment and the security of their jobs in the context of a global downturn, but instead received vague and unconvincing assurances that everything will be fine; and
 - (l) That Manitobans expected and deserved a speech that painted a clear picture of the economy of 2012 and beyond and an energetic plan to get us to the new Manitoba, but instead received a reheated serving of old and as yet unfulfilled promises; and
 - (m) That the official opposition asked for a plan with clear priorities and a commitment to better results, but instead received a spending list with no sense as to whether the spending promises, advertised as a bridge over troubled economic waters, was a bridge to somewhere or a bridge to nowhere; and

(n) The speech failed to set out a vision for growth that would ensure that current spending would be paid for by new growth as opposed to what the government is offering, which is more debt, lower savings and diminished hope; and

(o) The speech contains many positive steps unrelated to the economy, such as protecting children from second-hand smoke and more promises related to the environment, which are commendable goals that are shared by the official opposition. However, the failure to address the overarching issue of our time, our economic security, means that the official opposition will support many of the specific initiatives in the speech, while not endorsing the speech itself; and

(p) The ongoing failure on the part of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and government ministers to accept responsibility for systemic failures and broken promises in health care, Child and Family Services, public safety and the economy leaves Manitobans with little confidence that the newest round of promises and announcements will be fulfilled with any better results than promises of the past such as hallway medicine, fixing Child and Family Services, the collapsed Maple Leaf Distillers and Ainsworth Lumber deals and the others in the growing litany of failures; and

(q) The speech failed to paint a picture of a better future based on the shared commitment and energy of our diverse population of First Nations, Métis peoples and the succeeding waves of immigrants who have built our province together. Furthermore, the speech failed to address—[*interjection*]

Mr. Speaker, Howard Dean and the screamers opposite will get their chance when their time comes.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When moving an amendment, it has to be read word for word. When you add something to it, it could cause the amendment to be out of order. So I would be very, very careful here because it's supposed to be just read word for word.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw the comments about Howard Dean and the screamers opposite having their chance to speak shortly.

Returning to where I left off.

Furthermore, the speech failed to address the specific issues and concerns of new immigrants as well as our First Nations and Métis people. They and all Manitobans have been let down by a government

who has again announced hundreds of millions in new spending in order to get short-term headlines, rather than summon our people to a higher purpose, a stronger province and a more hopeful future.

AND AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler),

THAT the motion be amended by—dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The amendment is in order. We will have the next speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak against the amendment to the motion to the Speech from the Throne.

I would be remiss if I did not begin by paying tribute to my late colleague, Oscar Lathlin. We were born just a few days apart in the same year, 1947, and we were both elected on September 11, 1990, and so we were colleagues for 18 years.

Oscar was one of those people who was very proud to be a First Nations and very proud to be a northerner. I was invited to join him on three occasions in northern Manitoba. The first time, when I was in opposition, he gave me a tour of Opaskwayak Cree Nation. It was very interesting and very educational for me, because it's a very progressive community and he pointed out things that were initiatives that he started when he was chief there.

The second time, when he was the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I accompanied him on a tour that included Dauphin, Swan River, The Pas and Thompson, and spent two or three days together, which was very educational and enlightening for me because we went to his offices in those communities. We went to friendship centres, and I had a chance to observe him interacting with his staff and realized what respect they had for him as their minister.

I remember also, I believe it was after the 1993 Tory budget when all of the funding to every friendship centre in Manitoba was eliminated, I believe 14 friendship centres, and we visited friendship centres and I remember our leader saying that when we formed government we would renew funding to friendship centres. Indeed, when we got elected as government in 1999, that was one of the first things we did, I believe in our first budget, was to restore the funding to all those friendship centres.

So it was with shock and sadness that I and my colleagues heard of the death of Oscar Lathlin. Many of us were privileged to go to The Pas and to attend the funeral service for him which was a very moving occasion. There were very moving and appropriate speeches made paying tribute to him. Of course, we will get to say more in the condolences debate.

So this Throne Speech comes at an interesting time for anyone who's in government in North America or almost any country around the world, and puts interesting challenges in front of governments, but I think we are well positioned to face any downturn in the economy. For example, our projected growth rate for 2009 is 1.6 percent ahead of the 0.7 percent rate projected for Canada as a whole. Because of our balanced and responsible fiscal policies over the last nine years, we have a measure of security in the current economic upheavals. We've reduced our net debt-to-GDP ratio by roughly one-third. We've earned six credit upgrades and produced a succession of balanced budgets while lowering taxes and nearly quadrupling the value of the rainy day fund.

I believe that 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, and we are going to protect the assets of Manitobans. People are anxious—and that's understandable—but we are going to make pension regulations more flexible. We're going to keep tabs on the housing market and introduce legislation to strengthen regulation of the mortgage broker industry.

I think this is rather interesting because in the last session we listened to opposition members debate. I believe it was a resolution, and I don't remember the topic, but they were saying deregulate, deregulate, which is just the opposite of what everybody in the world is saying now. People are saying the problems that we're in now was because

of deregulation in the United States. So they want to go down that route. We say no, we need to regulate in the public interest and to protect people's investments and protect people's assets. This is important that governments do that and not follow the George Bush example and all the trouble that that got him into.

I should look up that speech and see what members opposite said about deregulation, but certainly they're not reading the financial pages of a newspaper or they would know better than to talk about deregulation in today's economy.

We've watched foreclosures in the United States, and so in the Throne Speech there was an announcement about a consumer finances education program. I would have to say when I was in high school, probably the best course that I took was a course in consumer finance education. It happened to be called business practice, and one of the things that we studied was household budgeting.

I remember our teacher, who was a very good teacher, one of the things that he got us to do as students was to figure out the principal interest and taxes on a mortgage. We would be given a particular amount of a mortgage and we'd have to figure out the monthly payments over a 20-year mortgage or a 15-year mortgage, and by doing that it made us realize how much you pay in interest. In fact, at the beginning, of course, you're paying more on interest than the principal and—

An Honourable Member: How long is the mortgage on Manitobans going to last, Doug?

* (15:30)

Mr. Martindale: Well, I'll get to that in a minute. So, when I became a homeowner and had a mortgage, we were able to pay them off—two mortgages in very—well not, I wouldn't say quickly, but we paid them off far sooner than they were originally taken out for, and, of course, we saved a lot of money. That was a very smart thing to do.

Recently, I happened to be at a banquet. I was sitting beside a former executive of MTS. We got talking about investments. I mentioned to him that when I was given, and all of us were given RSPs by the provincial government that, as members of the Legislature, some people invested in mutual funds and they lost a lot of money. Some people invested in the stock market and they lost a lot of money. I put mine into a very conservative investment: I put all of my money into GICs. What happened to my money

between 1995 and 2004, I made money and other people lost money. So this former CEO from MTS shook my hand to congratulate me on my conservative investment policy, which is what I called it. A lot of people, hopefully, have learned a lot of lessons about investing in very risky things like sub-prime mortgages which are causing so many problems.

Now, there are some things that we are doing which I think are very helpful and are going to be helpful going forward, which are going to create jobs, such as investing in infrastructure. We are going to speed up some of those projects. We're going to invest more money in infrastructure. Some of that money is going into my constituency and it's making a difference. For example, we spent over a million dollars at Gilbert Park which is Manitoba Housing Authority public housing. It is making a big difference. One of the reasons why we needed to do that was that Manitoba Housing was unfunded by members opposite when they were in government. I believe the annual budget for maintenance and repairs for Manitoba Housing was about \$12 million a year, and in fact what they needed was about \$25 million a year. Which is what we call the infrastructure deficit.

We saw the same thing in education where the former government did not spend enough money in renovating and improving schools so there was a huge infrastructure deficit. Now we're taking care of some of those deficits and creating jobs and actually saving money. For example, there's a program called BUILD. They have an office on Dufferin Avenue in the North End. They began working in the Centennial neighbourhood. They hired people who are on social assistance. They trained them to do insulation and other things to upgrade these homes and to conserve energy, replacing toilets, putting in low-flow showerheads. Now they're expanding to other neighbourhoods in Winnipeg. We're hoping that they're going to go to Gilbert Park. The staffperson told us that if they insulated the basements and if they changed the toilets to use less water and changed the showerheads, they could save Manitoba Housing \$200,000 a year in utility bills. Now doesn't that seem like a good idea? Take people off social assistance, give them some skills, give them a job so they earn income, save Manitoba Housing money, save the tenants money. Now what's happening is these people are getting jobs elsewhere in the private sector because they have some skills; they can go work for construction companies. So it's

a win for the taxpayers; it's a win for the individuals. *[interjection]*

Well, the members opposite seem to be opposed to saving money which seems rather strange to me, but we are going to invest in infrastructure, create jobs and save money all at the same time. The construction industry will benefit from our commitment to develop multi-year capital plans for health care, education, highways and water management. As the Throne Speech points out, these investments will also give the economy a boost at a crucial time.

Another investment is CentrePort Canada which is a co-operative effort of three levels of government. Then there's the tri-level Winnipeg Partnership Agreement that has been a huge success. We're going to undertake to work with Ottawa and the city to renew the agreement. It also includes a commitment to re-introduce the tax increment financing legislation as it will stimulate many urban renewal projects.

The speech notes the synergy that is being developed among the floodway expansion project, the construction of an east-side, all-weather road, and future Hydro projects. This is a true, made-in-Manitoba advance that will advance the interests of not just northern and Aboriginal Manitobans, but all Manitobans.

One of the important things about building a transmission route down the west side of the province is that we hope that the boreal forest on the east side will be made a UNESCO Heritage project. Recently, I visited a UNESCO Heritage project that is in the community of Lunenburg in Nova Scotia, and all the houses there—and the old town of Lunenburg where some of the houses are 200 years old—are a UNESCO Heritage site. The amount of income that this generates for the town of Lunenburg is unbelievable because they get tourists there from all over the world and, not only do they visit the *Bluenose II* and the Maritime museum, but they shop in the stores and the boutiques and they eat in the restaurants. Having a UNESCO Heritage site is a great boon to the community of Lunenburg.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was having trouble concentrating there.

So, I think that there are many advantages to making the boreal forest of Manitoba a UNESCO World Heritage site, not only preserving the boreal

forest, but providing opportunities for ecotourism and having people from all over the world visit just like people from all over the world come to Churchill to see polar bears, which is something that my wife and I did in July of this year, and we weren't expecting to see polar bears. We came to see beluga whales and we saw lots of beluga whales, but we were very fortunate because we also saw three polar bears, and I would recommend that to anyone. In fact, we took the train all the way to Churchill and all the way back which is a pretty long trip; 1,700 kilometres, very slow, two days and two nights there and two days and two nights back. But we had a very enjoyable visit to Churchill. Of course, when you go to Churchill, you need to ask people if they know the Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature because anyone who's the same generation as him, they all know our esteemed Speaker.

Now, there are some things that we've been making headway on that I would like to report on briefly, and one of those is in poverty reduction. We've reduced the child poverty rate by over one-third and one factor behind this success has been the provision of more training and education opportunities enabling parents to participate fully in the work force. I find it encouraging that even more of the opportunities are going to be provided under our Rewarding Work program.

We can't fight poverty without dealing with housing issues, and so I laud the Throne Speech's undertaking to upgrade existing public housing units. I've been talking about how that's happening in Gilbert Park, but it's going to happen in many other places as well, and older homes are going to be made more affordable by energy and water efficiency retrofits which I've already mentioned.

Manitobans enjoy one of the best child-care systems in the country, yet as my constituents rightly point out, we need to increase our system's capacity. So it is welcome news in the Throne Speech that the government will be investing still more in funded child-care spaces and embarking on a new recruitment and retention drive for child-care workers.

Improving our child welfare system is a priority for Manitobans, and so we are implementing broad changes recommended by three independent reviews and introducing a computerized case management system which will help ensure that no child falls through the cracks.

It was an NDP government that eliminated health-care premiums, and I am proud to say that the Throne Speech promises us legislation banning their reintroduction.

State-of-the-art medical equipment not only improves patient care, but helps attract and retain medical specialists. Manitoba can look forward to a doubling of our investment in specialized equipment over the next two years compared to the previous two years.

On the environment, our government has made sustainable development a lynch pin of our economy. The Throne Speech makes reference to our leadership role in this area. Its economic significance was outlined just a few days ago in the federal Throne Speech which said that Ottawa would require that 90 percent of the country's electricity should come from non-emitting sources by 2020.

You know, it's interesting to have been around through sort of cycles, economic cycles, and what kinds of messages different governments give. So, for example, we've had balanced budgets for nine years in a row and now that has become the norm, and yet, you know, the federal government who prided themselves on having balanced budgets and then a surplus, all of a sudden they give away the store and now they've changed their message, and they've got their spin doctors, their ministers and their Prime Minister out saying, well, a deficit would be okay. I think the business community is probably going to support them in that just because they support the Conservative government, and, yet in this Chamber I don't think that's acceptable anymore. But it's going to be very interesting to see who gets the blame and what they attribute to the causes.

* (15:40)

Right now, they're just talking about declining revenue, but what about the fact that they gave away the store in the last federal budget—something like \$50 billion in tax cuts, most of which went to the business community? Of course, now they would say, well, that's a good thing because it stimulates the economy, but I think they'll also wear it because they are the ones that are going into deficit for the first time since, I believe, about 1996—[interjection]—well, I would have to say that, up until now, we've been going in the right direction because our debt-to-GDP has been going down, and the portion of our budget going to debt servicing has been going down. So we're certainly going in the right direction.

Many of my constituents are deeply concerned about the environment, have raised the issue of logging regulations in our province with me. I share their concerns, and so I am pleased with the Throne Speech assurances that the government is introducing a ban on new logging ventures in provincial parks and phasing out of existing operations.

So, in conclusion, I will be voting against the amendment that we are debating now and voting for the motion regarding the Throne Speech. I believe this government is doing a good job. A balanced government—we're going to continue to be that way. We're going to continue to introduce progressive legislation and progressive budgets and do the right thing for Manitobans, especially for my constituents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): First off, I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the table staff for bringing us back into session and keeping us on line. We have a very short time line this time in order to debate the Throne Speech. I understand our time's been 15 to 20 minutes, so I'll try and get through the message that I've got ready to put on the record here within those time lines to allow other people to speak.

First of all, I want to congratulate the new members of Parliament that have been elected federally and also congratulate Steven Fletcher to the Cabinet federally. He certainly brings one more minister from Manitoba to the table, who, I think, did a great job representing those voices here in Manitoba. So certainly my congratulations to him.

Also the recent election of Shelley Glover to Parliament as well—I know she'll do a great job. She's a great advocate and one that we think is going to make Manitoba's voice heard in a substantial way in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

Also I want to thank the people of Lakeside. This is my seventh response to the Throne Speech in this House, and certainly I take that responsibility very seriously and one that I don't take for granted. It's certainly one that I do appreciate having that opportunity in this part of my lifetime to share with the people of Lakeside and bring their views to the Assembly here in the province of Manitoba.

Also, our leader talked about some of the things that were actually good in the Throne Speech. One was the CentrePort that affects my particular part of the region; specifically, it's one that we have been

calling for for a number of months and in the past year to move forward on. Certainly, I want to give the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) credit in allowing the R.M. of Rosser to be at the table, at least on the first board and the second board, one that I took very seriously. I'm glad that the minister allowed us to bring forward an amendment, that actually he brought forward in regard to allowing Rosser to move forward.

We do have other concerns within respect of Rosser and that 20,000 acres has been allocated to that CentrePort. We know there's going to be substantial growth. There'll be growth throughout Manitoba, in particular to the north of the city, which will have a significant impact on my particular riding and those communities surrounding those within the capital region, especially within Stonewall, Rosser, Grosse Isle, Warren, Stony Mountain and other great communities that I represent.

So we're looking forward to the growth and, of course, the challenges that come with that and certainly hope that we on this side of the House will do everything we can in order to ensure that CentrePort does move forward in a timely manner. Also those agreements that need be put in place through the City of Winnipeg and with the capital region, in particular the R.M. of Rosser, to ensure that that 60 percent of the tax base does remain in Rosser and continues to grow.

Also, whenever we look at the Throne Speech, one of the things I was very concerned about was that of personal care homes, especially within my particular constituency. Teulon personal care home has been on the wish list. In fact, it's been approved once back in the early or late 1990s. Unfortunately, we had a change in government; it wasn't able to move forward. We do have a commitment from the government that they're certainly looking at it. I know that we are underbedded in our particular area and not one municipality has been opposed to it. It's been the number one request from the IRHA in my area for increasing personal care home beds in my particular area, one that we take very seriously and we're going to continue to lobby on behalf of those seniors that had to be relocated outside of their area, in fact, outside of their home. In fact, most of them have moved either to Selkirk or to Winnipeg because of lack of beds in our particular area. So, one that we take very, very seriously and hope that we see a growth in personal care homes in our constituency of Lakeside.

It's not only just Teulon; it's Stonewall, it's St. Laurent, it's Woodlands, it's Lundar, those places where the people have been raised and contributed to society within their own region, so certainly deserve to be left within their community and have those services given to them, of which they worked so hard to get.

I want now to, because of the time frame that we are under here, just talk a little about the Throne Speech before I get into my critic role and the response through agriculture. What we have seen from the Throne Speech is typical. It's a lot of re-announcements of re-announcements that have been announced before. Certainly no vision, no leadership. What this government has become is a ban government; I don't believe we need to ban everything that comes our way. There's a lot of common sense out there, a lot of people that realize what we can do if we're given the opportunity. We don't need to have government regulate us into a way of which we can't use our common sense. In fact, when you look at the banning situation, what ban does this send out to the business community?

We look at Bill 17, the message was sent out there. Now the banning of forestry within the provincial park. We're going to have a strong look at the legislation there. We know that the pine beetle in B.C. is certainly a significant issue where they had to go in and cut forest down and we know that there's times that management has to take place for fire hazards as well. So we know that we need the leadership. We know we need common sense. We could have done that through a moratorium rather than through a ban to allow the government to make those decisions that are important to them without having to put a ban in place in those provincial parks.

We are in tough economic times. What the people from Manitoba expect us to do as MLAs is to hold the government accountable, to make sure that our voice is heard, to make sure the government's voice is heard. What is important, that we as elected officials, that we all do our jobs, important that we each and every member of this Assembly do that. I know that the government needs us in opposition to make sure that the opposition does their job in holding the government accountable. So, certainly, we'll be doing that and through some of our suggestions here in our Throne Speech as we move forward.

On Highway 6 in the Throne Speech, there was, I hope, good news for Highway 6. I know I have a

letter here from Dianne Forbister from the Lundar area and she goes on to write me that I have a complaint that many share and that's with Highway 6 conditions.

I know there's been a number of accidents there on No. 6 Highway. We have a number of very deadly curves, some that's been surveyed and surveyed and surveyed and it's time for action on Highway 6. It's not just from the Perimeter on up to Thompson, it's each and every part of that road that needs to be addressed. I know that it's very important because of the doubles that's been pulling on Highway 6 that's also very important in order to ensure that safety's there for those people travelling and moving goods and services from Winnipeg to the north in a way that's also going to be able to allow those commuters to go back and forth from Winnipeg to their various communities of which is so important to them.

So, I know that there have been a number of announcements in regard to No. 6 and it's time for action. Certainly hope that the government does move forward on those in a very timely manner because I think it's important that we move on without surveying anymore, in fact, get on the real action that we need to be doing.

*(15:50)

In regard to the economic times, what we've seen is a lack of plan from this government and how they're going to weather the economic storm. The government should spend wisely, reduce debt, depend on *[inaudible]* which is now facing economic uncertainty, which will cost jobs and devalue pensions, and the only person is the Premier (Mr. Doer) himself.

In fact, in regard to the debt, Saskatchewan and B.C. have focussed on debt repayment while delivering personal tax relief. Saskatchewan raised its basic personal exemption by nearly \$5,000 while at the same time lowering its debt by some 40 percent this year alone. Manitoba's the last have-not province within the western part of Canada where we rely on transfer payments, which has gone up from 113 percent since 1999, which has more than doubled from \$1.6 billion to \$3.6 billion here in 2008, which is 37 percent of all the revenues which come from handouts, up from 28 percent in 1999.

The Premier hasn't planned for Manitoba to stand on its own two feet, hasn't shown the leadership that we need here in the province of

Manitoba to become a self-reliant province. All signs were pointing to the financial crisis, and the Premier was the only one that should have been tightening his belt. You can't blame the others for the crisis if he failed to place the plan for tough times when times were good.

Our leader had talked about fixing the roof whenever the days were shiny, and certainly we need to make sure that whatever we needed to do during those times was pay down that debt. In fact, when we look at times to cut, we can look at the Bipole III which we're looking at with regard to the pole going on the west side of the province instead of the east. Also, the \$60 million that was spent in regard to the master labour agreement with \$60 million going into union dues.

Mr. Speaker, also since the last announcement last month, every dollar that's been announced adds up to \$225 million in September alone. Also, when we look to what we're supposed to be doing in regard to showing leadership as far as Conservation's concerned, such as recycling, in Conservation, we saw nothing in regard to that. Also, protecting the environment in regard to those recycled—an issue that should have been coming forward. Instead, what they did, they came in with one ban after another through Conservation rather than encouraging people to invest. There's certainly nothing there in order to help us move forward.

In regard to the education side of things, I certainly want to congratulate the minister today on his announcement about using those empty classrooms. I think that was a move that was needed. I think it was very important, as an administrator or a past administrator of a school division, know how important those classrooms are to us and to be used in a way that's going to be significant.

So it's not all about negativity. We do believe there are some good things coming out as well, but what I also am concerned about is education. There was no mention of any schools within the Winkler, La Broquerie, Fort Whyte area. I was very fortunate to have an announcement this summer through St. Laurent, with a new French school being built there, which is significant, and I know there are other parts of the province that are waiting for those schools. Something that we want to do is also improve the graduation rates, and certainly need to do everything we can to ensure that that graduation rate in fact does go up.

In regard to Family Services and Housing, we have seen a decline in the front-line workers. They're doing the best they can with resources they have. It's a job that's not a high-paying job, a job that has to be relied on through their heart, through their souls, and those that believe in helping those in need. So we know we need to encourage more people to get involved in the Family Services sector.

When it comes to Health and Healthy Living, I know the speech was mostly full of re-announcements. Capital commitments, I know that we on this side of the House know there are 20 emergency room closures or partly closed, and when we need to look at our doctor situation within rural Manitoba, and also, I was a member of that group this summer, one I didn't enjoy very much. I know we don't have those facilities in rural Manitoba in order to address a number of our health issues that are important to us here in rural Manitoba, and we need to be addressing those in a way that's going to have a long-lasting effect, in fact, to train and look after and retain those doctors for a number of those constituencies, those in rural Manitoba.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Justice: There was very little mention again as far as crime prevention and improving safety. We look forward to seeing the new police act, also references in regard to the police college, something that the government has been reluctant to commit to. So we certainly would like to see that move forward.

Again, I talked earlier in regard to my own constituency in regard to seniors. We need to have a commitment to increasing Pharmacare deductibles so that those seniors that have fixed incomes, especially now in those tough economic times, that they'll be able to live the quality of lives that they worked so hard to get at. Also, safety-aid program expansion was promised last year and promised again. We need those to be fulfilled, Madam Acting Speaker. We don't need re-announcements of re-announcements.

In regard to the water stewardship, we also want to just comment shortly on that. That has to do a lot in regard to our area, in fact, all of the province of Manitoba and to improve Lake Winnipeg. I know that the federal government has made significant contributions there. The minister has announced a number of initiatives and also promised to improve wetlands, which is honourable. However, the government needs to repeat those processes and make sure that we do, in fact, have those initiatives in place to clean up not only Lake Winnipeg but all

our lakes and streams within the province of Manitoba.

Now I'd like to get into the ag issues. I know that I've talked briefly about some of the issues in regard to my constituency and the overall thrust of how it's going to impact some of the constituents in my area. I do want to start off by a letter that I received from Larry and Lynn Henry in regard to the target advance program that was announced last week. I'll read this out, Madam Acting Speaker, again from Larry and Lynn Henry.

As I read about the targets advance payment I have looked forward to the possibility of a payout. I called the local Ag office in Ste. Rose and was given a toll-free number to call. This payout advance, advance payout, if you're going to be eligible for AgriStability payment—approximately 850 eligible producers who have access to more than \$7 million in funding. The average advance would be in the range of \$8,400, directly taken from the press release. I'm finding this announcement extremely frustrating and it is advising the public and the producers I receive a large amount of money.

However, we have been trying to advise our elected officials that a majority of cattle producers do not have anything but negative margin, and as a result, there are no payouts. Please ask yourself the question. How many a cattle producer have a payout with a cattle industry from a state that has been in since BSE in 2003? I have truly been trying to follow what your department has been asking of producers to be eligible in AgriStability and how this is going. I've encouraged other producers to do the same. My husband and I went to our accountant and were advised on their predictions. We would not be entitled to payout as we have a negative margin again. So, to date, AgriStability programs do not meet the needs of us or many other cattle-producing neighbours. I have a large accounting firm that have many cattle producers, and they provide services. They do expect will have a positive *[inaudible]* with a response of less 5 percent.

Now, honestly, can you tell me the AgriStability program is providing assistance to the cattle producers? I have attached the outcomes collected from a meeting held on September 11 in the Westlake Community Centre. Two hundred and forty individuals gathered and hopefully believe there's some hope for our livelihoods in response to the message told that I truly believe ranchers gathered.

There was a huge sense of disaster hanging over them.

I'm not going to go into the rest of the letter. It's fairly lengthy, but what they're saying, Madam Acting Speaker, is that the program is certainly not working. We know that we have asked for the Department of Agriculture and also that of Intergovernmental Affairs to declare this a disaster area. They are saying that none of this is going to be coming out to the producers in a way that's going to be meaningful and sustainable for those producers. I'm sure that Larry and Lynn have done their homework through working with the government. This sends out a very negative signal to those producers that have been hanging on in a very way, which is they rely on this for their only source of income. When they are supposed to have the safety net programs in place, we certainly need to ensure that they are going to be in place.

* (16:00)

In fact, last week's *Co-operator* the headline was "Cattle producers earn less than their ancestors," going back to 1936 and '42, on the same base of inputs and then from 1989 as well. A number of those producers aren't even making the same amount of money that they were making then. So it's very unfortunate whenever we're in a movement of five very tough years—in a way that's going to be a way of life and not be able to sustain that way of life through no fault of their own. In fact, this is when we need to rely on government to have those programs in place that are so important to us.

I note not only the MCPA, the Keystone Ag Producers, the National Farmers Union, all have been calling on governments to ensure that in fact those programs are in place, that our meat producers will be protected.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Also I wanted to talk about the global market in regard to country-of-origin labelling, one of which I know that we've been calling the government for a number of weeks, in fact months. I've written letters in the last several months, reminding the minister that once this comes into effect—in fact, it's been proven over and over again. We've seen a number of packing plants within the United States refusing our cattle, refusing our pork and, as a result of that, we've seen a significant downturn in all our marketplace. In fact, a number of producers and those feedlots and barns that are relying on the pork industry and the

cattle industry to supply those number of cattle and pork products to the United States have seen a downturn.

I know that, in fact, Manitoba Pork is estimating that 2008 will be cut by some 2,000 head by 2009. In fact, a number of barns will be vacant as a result of that. The economic impact that we're going to be having here in the province of Manitoba will have significant impact on all of us here in Manitoba and rural Manitoba, plus the city of Winnipeg will feel that economic impact.

Also the Department of Agriculture has a responsibility to work with our federal counterparts and challenge the legislation that's been brought forward by the U.S. government in regard to COOL and certainly need to have us as opposition work with government in order to face this significant downturn that's so important to us on this side of the House, in fact all the province of Manitoba.

The risk management program that I talked about earlier, as it unfolds, we realize that there are concerns about the responsiveness and the viability of these programs in order to ensure that those programs are in place for our producers. In fact, when we look at the grain sector as well, we know there are a number of producers that are starting to rebound as a result of some of the contracts they were able to sign and lock some of those prices in with the various buyers and contractors of grain, as they were able to do that before the prices of fertilizer and also some of those high input costs were able to get to the point where they're just no longer competitive.

If you base what they're on now, the prices that are out there, when you look at \$3.50-cent corn, the other factors are out—the downturn of the market. There's certainly not a very good outlook for us, even in the grain sector. We know back in 2003, when we passed legislation about this time of year, calling on the Province of Manitoba to pass legislation to expand the ethanol business, in fact we thought that was a great move at the time. There was supposed to be significant dollars flow to those producers, flow to the Province of Manitoba. In fact, we only have one ethanol plant right now and that's in Minnedosa as a result of the Mohawk industry, the Mohawk people that made that actually become a reality, and not from legislation or through government initiatives.

What we also have to look at is to make sure that we're still viable whenever we look at this overall agriculture turn, when we look back to the risk

management that's in place, the input costs that's in place, the number of initiatives that have been brought forward, followed by the government provincially and federally. We have to make sure that they're sustainable and also that they're going to be here in the long term.

I know I've already gone five minutes longer but I do want to talk about the response in regard to third party, in regard to the post-session scrums. In fact, KAP and the MCPA indicated concerns about the lack of attention on agriculture, particularly given challenges facing the livestock sector due to the issues like COOL.

Keystone Ag Producers, KAP, also looks forward to working with the provincial government on food safety to ensure continued consumer confidence with the Canadian agricultural producers, saying KAP vice-president Robert McLean would encourage the government to move forward and ensure producers don't bear unfair costs relating to carrying out food safety initiatives. Also, KAP is encouraged to see the province's priority on science innovation projects and looks forward to seeing agriculture research again targeted. That's in the press release of November 21, right after the Throne Speech.

With that, I know there's a number of colleagues that will pick up where I left off. But certainly know that this is a time of uncertainty; a time that we need to look to leadership from all of us in this House in order to do what's best for the province of Manitoba.

I will be supporting the amendments brought forward by our leader. Certainly, we on this side of the House take our job very seriously and encourage the government to listen to our debate that's so important on this very important issue in these times of economic uncertainty.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It's my pleasure to rise to add comments to the Speech from the Throne and also to indicate at the very start that I do not support the amendments that were brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) with respect to amending the Speech from the Throne.

I think that the Speech from the Throne that our government has introduced just last Thursday leads us on a path towards greater opportunities for all Manitobans. I think we're on the right course as we have been for now some nine years in the province of Manitoba. That will be attested to by the fact that

Manitobans continue to support the position that our government has taken with respect to the direction that we want to pursue in Manitoba and have supported us in subsequent elections.

I note in comments that were made by my colleague, the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), when he made reference to a colleague that had served many, many years in this Legislature, Oscar Lathlin, who unfortunately passed away just recently. I must say that I was very honoured to have had the opportunity to have known Oscar and to have worked with him for over 18 years, not only in this Manitoba Legislature but also as we travelled to the various communities throughout northern Manitoba.

I must say quite clearly, that I knew no greater defender of the north than Oscar Lathlin. He took every opportunity in his time as MLA to encourage his colleagues in this Manitoba Legislature to travel to the north and to meet with residents of northern Manitoba. To go into the community homes and to visit with people. To see the culture and the way of life. To experience firsthand the conditions, the living conditions and standards in which so many people of our province live.

I know Oscar spent a great deal of his time as minister working on issues trying to help people of northern Manitoba. I can say that I am proud to have had—not only knowing Oscar, but to have had the opportunity to work with him during those years.

I will have more comments as we proceed through the condolence motions. I would like to add further comments about what Oscar meant to me and to the people of my community in the role that he played both as an MLA in this Legislature, and as a citizen and resident of the province of Manitoba. Because Oscar had been for some time a resident of the community of Transcona and of course, he has lasting friendships from people that still live in my community, we'll add more comment about that and Oscar's life and the way he interacted with people of this Legislature and this province during the condolence motion.

There are a number of issues that I want to speak about. Some that affect the province of Manitoba and also narrowing the focus a little bit to speak about issues that are affecting more directly, the people of my community.

I think programs and services that we will and should perhaps look at as a provincial government—

perhaps in partnership with other levels of government—to providing services and infrastructure for the people in the community that I represent, that's the community of Transcona.

* (16:10)

Now folks I know have made comments here that have been mentioned in the Throne Speech about the credit crisis that is originating in the United States. One cannot help but to be overwhelmed by the ongoing bad news that seems to roll out every single day from the different media services, whether they be the *Business News Network* or the various media outlets in Canada and the United States as they talk about the circumstances of the economic situation in the United States. Of course, Mr. Acting Speaker, there will be no jurisdictions, I believe, in this world, since we are so tightly intertwined now economically with so many different countries of the world. What happens in one will obviously impact on the various economies in other countries around the world, and we expect that in this province we will not be immune to those economic woes that are happening south of the border and that we will likely see some impact of those circumstances spreading their way across Canada. If one listens to the media just recently, here in Canada, I believe the federal government is also now talking that Canada may already be in a recession.

Manitoba, I'm a bit more optimistic and hopeful for because Manitoba historically has been in a position where we have had a very stable economy. We have much diversification in our businesses and throughout the different parts of our economy in the province of Manitoba, whether it be agriculture or whether it be our business, our manufacturing or other parts of our economy, Mr. Acting Speaker. Manitoba is well diversified and I think we are well positioned to weather any economic storm that may be headed our way. I know that our government is taking the steps necessary to ensure that we are prepared for whatever comes our way and I know and I give the Premier (Mr. Doer) full credit for his comments and his work working with the federal Prime Minister to try and put in place the plans with respect to infrastructure renewal.

I know that we have taken steps in this province. You just only have to look very close around the city of Winnipeg here with respect to the greater Winnipeg floodway that is nearing completion. That floodway, of course, travelled in its route around the east end of the community of Transcona, and over

the course of the last year and a half or so we have witnessed the heavy construction equipment expanding the floodway and they're moving towards the completion phase at the Lockport gates. So we'll be happy to see that project completed, hopefully before we move towards the spring melt and whatever will happen, of course, is beyond our control with respect to the weather-related situation. But we do know that our floodway work is nearing completion and we anticipate that it will—*[interjection]*—and right now we're in a position with respect to the floodway, flood mitigation, we're at the one-in-500-year flood-level stage protection for the city of Winnipeg residents, and of course moving to the one-in-700-year flood event with the completion of that project. So we're well under way towards attaining our goal and I think that we have taken the steps necessary to invest in that infrastructure.

Some very wise minds in our government saw that as a need and our government worked on that to involve the federal government, of course, who came to the table as a partner in that process. I do hope, with respect to the other infrastructure funding requirements, that we're able to move forward with those. I know our government has invested and is embarked on parts of our investments over which we have full control with respect to Hydro infrastructure. We're investing in a new hydro-electric dam up north, which creates literally thousands of jobs in the province of Manitoba and then there's the spinoff industry jobs that are associated with that type of construction, and I do know, talking with folks at Hydro and listening to them in committee of this Legislature just this past spring and early summer, Hydro folks were talking about the next steps with respect to hydro-electric development with respect to, not only the Wuskwatim dam, but also the Conawapa Dam and other dam projects, hydro-electric dam projects.

I was happy to note today that our government has announced a new wind energy electric project. We've announced an additional 300 megawatt—no, 400-megawatt project for the province of Manitoba and that will proceed no doubt in 2009, the 400-megawatt project, and that will add to the 99 megawatts of wind-generated electricity we have in this province and I believe will make us perhaps the largest wind generation capacity of any of the Canadian provinces. Of course, there are other announcements to be made, no doubt, in the future with respect to the generation of wind energy and how it will add to the security of electricity supply,

not only for the people of this province, but it will also allow us to export our water-generated electricity to jurisdictions south of the border, some of which we've already signed contracts with.

Now, our Manitoba economy, of course, is based in part on the work that we do as a government and the decisions that we make with respect to investments. Our government has invested into waste-water treatment plants for the city of Winnipeg and we've taken steps to invest in other projects to protect our water supply in the province. I think these are worthy projects to make investments, but we have also—if you look at the projections for the Manitoba economy as a whole, while there has been a slight downturn in the Canadian projection with respect to the economy, Manitoba's growth is still projected to be 1.6 percent compared to the Canadian average as a whole as 0.7 percent.

So we recognize that Manitoba is in a stable position at least to this point in time and I know our government is proud of having had nine consecutive balanced budgets in the province of Manitoba here, and, of course, we'll continue to go forward in planning for our future budget. It will be coming in the spring.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we've reduced our small business tax rate in this province from a high and we've reduced it. I think it was around 13 percent at the time when we've reduced it down now to 2 percent as of January 1 coming and, of course, we'll reduce it to just 1 percent which I believe will be the lowest small business rate in the entire country. Oh, pardon me. Nine years ago the rate stood at 8 percent not 13, so I misspoke myself there.

With respect to the personal income taxes, our government has committed to reduce—we're reduced by cutting the rate for the lowest income tax bracket in the province and reducing the personal amount by a hundred dollars, and also increasing the threshold for the middle-income tax bracket earners in this province. That will save Manitobans many, many millions of dollars with respect to the taxes that they would pay.

We've also introduced the new caregivers tax credit that's going into effect January the 1st, providing up to \$1,020 a year for those who look after loved ones, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I think that's a worthy goal for any government and any society to want to care for its least fortunate citizens. Our government recognizes there are family members in this province that provide that care and

we have recognized that contribution and we provided that deduction for them.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we also have, with respect to the expanding skills base of our Manitoba economy, we want to create new opportunities for our youth and increasing our long-term competitive advantage. I do know that we've talked about the historical expansion of the skills and apprenticeship training with our target of 4,000 new placements in four years. I want to thank both our Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) and our minister responsible for post-secondary education for the work that they have done with respect to the opportunities in apprenticeship—with respect to the apprenticeship training in this province. I know two of my sons are enrolled in apprenticeship training in this province and find it a very rewarding opportunity.

Also, I neglected to indicate the minister responsible for apprenticeship training for the—*[interjection]* I know he waves over there. I neglected and I apologize for neglecting to mention his role in apprenticeship training because I think there's lots of credit to go around. There are a lot of folks that are involved in improving apprenticeship training opportunities in this province. I know that there are many people in our community that have played a role in expanding those opportunities and also will encourage other young folks in our province to take that training. I know every chance I get when I encounter young people of my community, I encourage them to not only look at post-secondary education in part to university, but more importantly because most of our young folks don't go on to university, to encourage them to enrol in Red River College or other colleges—whether it be University College of the North—to receive post-secondary training because we want them to have expanded job opportunities and can usually obtain that if you have greater skill sets and knowledge, and that can be provided both by our universities and our colleges working together in our province.

* (16:20)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I know that I had the opportunity just recently to go to Red River College on behalf of the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to speak to the expansion of the paramedic training course and to see quite clearly how excited the young people were to be a part of a new opportunity to receive that expanded paramedic training and the state-of-the-art equipment that they

have at Red River College. Of course, that training is now, also, I believe, provided via video conferencing to other places in Manitoba, where young folks won't have to leave their home but can stay right in their home communities and be part of that particular training. Of course, that will save them greatly on the costs with respect to living expenses and travel, just by pure fact of remaining in their communities but also having access to that expanded level of training. These young people were quite excited to be part of that paramedic training program.

Now there are many investments that our government has made and I won't go into all of them. I know a number of them have been mentioned in the Throne Speech. I know our provincial government is still involved in the infrastructure development of our province and I've mentioned some of them here with respect to waste-water treatment and also the floodway.

We're also investing into CentrePort Canada, Manitoba's inland port. I think CentrePort is a good investment to make. I think it will expand the business opportunities that we have for the different entrepreneurs of our province but, at the same time, expanding our reach to various countries of the world, to bring them in as partners of the Province of Manitoba.

Of course, it will create, no doubt, opportunities and employment for the people of Manitoba; we want to see that occur. I think that 20,000-acre inland port area that's been designated is a worthy opportunity to be engaged in and, if I was to say further about that, I would say as an encouragement by way of the different transportation companies of our province that they should look and work very seriously toward the development of this CentrePort Canada. That includes the rail lines—the CN Rail, as well CP Rail and the different railways that service the province of Manitoba need to look at how they can work in partnership with the Province of Manitoba in providing access to that park.

In the first steps to make CentrePort viable, our government has announced that, beginning July 1, we will reduce the aviation fuel tax for cargo flights from 3.2 cents per litre down to 1.5 cents per litre. This will be a good first step in encouraging the aircraft businesses to look at sending their flights to the province of Manitoba, into our city and to encourage those business opportunities to develop.

We've announced investments—*[interjection]*—and the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux)

reminds me that there's about a \$200,000 savings for the companies with respect to the fuel tax reduction that we've announced in the province of Manitoba. That's a significant savings; even though fuel prices have declined somewhat, that's still a significant savings for businesses and will give them the opportunity to look very seriously at being a partner in the CentrePort development.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do know that our government has, of course, having been part of the 20-20 transportation vision along with my colleagues, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen)—in past years, we consulted with folks all over the province of Manitoba. Of course, when we were consulting with folks along the east side of Lake Winnipeg, they talked very openly and clearly about the need for an all-weather road as a major project for the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Now I know there are some challenges with respect to the development of that project, but I still think that these communities want to have the opportunity to have transportation links with other parts of our province. The all-weather road, I think, as a major project to serve those remote communities will provide them with not only greater access but also, hopefully, reduce costs with respect to transportation of their goods and services, something that all Manitobans obviously could take for granted since we're connected in so many different ways.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have announced today that we have, as we've just introduced, items with respect to food. We've announced in our Throne Speech that we're going to be introducing a food safety act and that we'll be having further discussion about that and how it will protect Manitobans.

I give the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) full credit for this. The Minister of Labour was actively involved with the firefighters and still is with respect to coverage for firefighters, workers compensation coverage. I am hopeful that the Minister of Labour will continue to work with the firefighters to expand coverage for heart and lung and cancer protection for those firefighters and to make sure that, where the science can support it, we'll put in place the expansion of the regulatory list with respect to diseases that are considered as a part of the job of being a firefighter. I trust that the Minister of Labour (Ms. Allan) will be coming forward with a further announcement, and that that list will be expanded with respect to the presumptive diseases.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to turn my focus, if you will, to a few of the items that are of importance to the people of my community, the community of Transcona. Of course, I've had the honour and privilege of being the MLA for Transcona now for a little over 18 years, and you get to see a great amount of change. I'm quite proud of the fact that our provincial government has made investments into northeast Winnipeg and, in particular, into two particular services in my community.

The first one we made an investment into was the Access Transcona, our health and family services centre that has now been open for a couple of years. Of course, the people of my community take every opportunity to make use of that service and, of course, as would be the case in most of those circumstances, folks would like to see an expansion of the existing services that are in that facility and also continue to raise with me areas in which we can expand the services with respect to Access Transcona.

The second major investment we have made in the community, in partnership with the City of Winnipeg and the federal government, was with respect to the Transcona Buhler Recreation Park 150-acre recreation complex that is comprised of some nine baseball diamonds and four full-size soccer fields. There are a number of other sports: BMX bike racing, ultimate Frisbee, tag football, ice skating and tobogganing in the winter, cross-country skiing. There are so many different opportunities for this particular new recreation park that has put my community on the recreation map of Canada.

If you listen to the manager of the park, Mr. Steve Mymko, who, along with Pat Done, who had been one of our civil servants in the Community Places program—unfortunately, Pat passed away earlier this year, but it was Pat's vision along with Steve Mymko that brought this project to completion, and we give them full credit and marks for the work they have done on behalf of the people of this province. We are quite proud to have that park fully functional now. Of course, we had a national women's fastball tournament there this summer which was a great success. There will be other opportunities for folks to use that facility in the coming years, and we're quite proud of that as a part of our community.

To move to the next stages now, there need to be other services that are made available to the people

of my community and to northeast Winnipeg. The first one that I'll mention, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a personal care home. I know Park Manor Personal Care Home in my community has serviced my community since the very early 1960s and has been a backbone of the service for our seniors in our community with respect to housing arrangements for those that are no longer able to live on their own in their own housing accommodations. Park Manor Personal Care Home has approached myself and others in our community, and no doubt members of our long-term care authority as part of the Department of Housing with respect to the development of Park Manor Personal Care Home expansion. They would like to construct a new personal care home in the community of Transcona, and they want to have a new housing facility, and then they want to convert the existing Park Manor Personal Care Home into an affordable supportive housing facility.

With respect to the affordable supportive we have a project that is in the planning stages. I'm not sure if it will proceed or not, but we also need to have affordable supportive housing in the community of Transcona as the intermediate step between independent living accommodations, whether it be Transcona Place, St. Michael's Villa, Columbus Villa or East Park Lodge, which are the four seniors independent housing units in my community. We also need to have affordable housing in my community, and that is something that is needed along with the personal care home setting because we have quite an extensive waiting list, and there needs to be some work with respect to the development of this next project.

I know that we may have to be looking at the economic circumstances of this province. We may have to think outside of the box with respect to how we fund these projects, and I think there are many ways in which we can accomplish this. I'm not ruling out any other opportunities in addition to government support that can play a role in providing funding support for the development of these types of housing initiatives.

* (16:30)

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to the development of a wellness model, and I know I'm hopeful that our government is also interested; I know we are because we have had the minister

responsible for health and wellness as a part of our government. As a part of the 2007 election campaign, I went to the people of my community and went door-to-door, and I've talked about this publicly. I call it the Tom Nesby wellness model.

Mr. Nesby is a resident of the community of Transcona and he had approached me sometime ago and said that, why don't we have a wellness centre in northeast Winnipeg, a wellness center modelled after the Seven Oaks Wellness Centre. We have a facility in the community of Transcona with respect to the Buhler Recreation Park now being operational. The ball diamonds in the centre part of Transcona will now close in the coming year, and, of course, that land will become surplus. I thought, well, what better place than to have a wellness model situated on that particular site. It could be—pick an example here, it could be a YM-YWCA. It could be the administrative arm that would operate such a facility as was suggested by Mr. Nesby. It could incorporate not only the fitness and training and conditioning inside the facility in the cooler months of the year, it could also have a track in the land just immediately north of that. It could be tied in with the local swimming pool.

It could be tied in with the local Roland Michener Arena complex that the city wants so desperately to unload. You could convert that into an indoor soccer complex. There is no indoor soccer complex in my community, but that is a type of facility that could be used to have indoor soccer in my community. Inside of that new wellness model, it would have to be a new structure attached to these other two existing facilities. You could incorporate the Transcona Public Library, and that could be incorporated into one corner of that complex.

I know the City of Winnipeg is looking seriously at what happens to different library opportunities and facilities in the city of Winnipeg, and, of course, Transcona Public Library is a very old and, perhaps, outdated structure and is in need of some expansion. Of course, what better place to put it than a place where people would congregate in the future. I say that the new wellness centre could incorporate the library services, and, perhaps, folks would have the opportunity for a social gathering. You could have a little coffee shop in the corner of it as well. It could provide many opportunities for the people of my community, with respect to health and wellness as a preventative measure, but also give them a social gathering point in the community with respect to interaction of other residents of my community.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the one last point that I want to make mention of is with respect to the Disraeli Bridge. I know that the former Member for Elmwood, who is now the Member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona, my MP—I'm quite happy that my colleague, Jim Maloway, has been elected as the MP for Elmwood-Transcona. Of course, Jim and I have talked many times about the Disraeli Bridge, and, of course, Jim has been quite instrumental and still continues to this day to advertise publicly with respect to the bridge and the potential impact of the bridge closure on the people of northeast Winnipeg. Now everyone knows I'm sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there are some 42,000 vehicles a day that currently use the Disraeli Bridge. I can only wonder what happens if the Disraeli Bridge is closed as the people of northeast Winnipeg try to make their way into the centre of the city of Winnipeg.

How many of those vehicles are going to be diverted onto the Louise Bridge, which is a very early 1900s bridge, and that some of those vehicles may also be diverted onto both the Redwood and Provencher Bridges. The Provencher Bridge, obviously being the newest one, but that's a quite further distance for people to travel from the Elmwood and Rossmere and River East areas, but it will, no doubt, push a lot of the traffic off the Disraeli, a good portion of those 42,000 vehicles a year, onto the Louise Bridge, and, of course, we'll give pause to the people that are going to be tied up for the 18 months that the Disraeli Bridge is closed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think there's a role here for the City of Winnipeg to play, and I have to say on the record that I support the position that my MP has taken with respect to the expansion of the Disraeli Bridge. It's no sense planning for the current, we need to plan for the future. I think his plan to add an addition of two lanes before the existing structure is closed down for repair and rejuvenation, that we need to have the new two lanes installed and in place so that we don't create those bottlenecks for the people of northeast Winnipeg, and that we will have in place. I know the City of Winnipeg, they have a P3 that they've announced that's in there. I don't know why they haven't come to the other levels of government with respect to the plan that's in place. I can only surmise what their reasons are. I won't speculate at this time, but I do say that it is not necessary to close that bridge down for the 18 months and that we should be constructing the additional two lanes with respect to the Disraeli Bridge. I ask the city government to make sure that

the citizens of northeast Winnipeg are not inconvenienced by the plan that they have in place and take the steps necessary to mitigate that effect.

I've added a lot of comments. I know there's much more that I could talk about that we have as a government with respect to our plans in the Throne Speech. I have to say this is a very good Throne Speech, and one in which I will be supporting.

With respect to the amendments brought forward by the member, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), I will not be supporting that amendment to this Throne Speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to add my comments on this Throne Speech here today. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise to speak against the Throne Speech today in the House. As has been said, there are a number of points, a few points, in this Throne Speech, as there is in each Throne Speech, that are bearable. My point today is to make the case that this government has not been responsible in its approach to dealing with the economy of Manitoba during good times and is now, when it's facing a crisis in so many areas, not equipped to deal with, and not equipping Manitobans to deal with, and not putting Manitobans in a good place to deal with, the economic downturn that is taking place across North America and, indeed, much of the world. I have some quotes from a number of persons later that will outline that concern as well.

I just want to say before I go any further, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I, too, want to offer my condolences to the family of the Member for The Pas who has passed away during this session of this Legislature, and was proud to be part of the commemorating ceremony that was provided in the House last week and a pleasure to meet more of his family, Mr. Lathlin's family, and as well as offer my personal condolences from myself and my constituents to many of his colleagues on the government side of the House.

I also want to congratulate Mr. Maloway who, as Member for Elmwood, who is now the member in Parliament, we've had a couple of good opportunities to joust in the Legislature in regard to policy differences, I would say, and I would dare say that he'll continue to do that job, as the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) just pointed out, in Parliament.

So I commend him for that as well, in a hard-fought race, and that we look forward to the opportunity of by-election whenever that occurs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to say a welcome in the new Throne Speech, I guess, in the session, to all of the pages, the Clerks, the staff at the Legislature, all of the Sergeant-at-Arms' and the Lieutenant-Governor's staff as well, and all the security people in the building as well that perhaps sometimes we take for granted on the security side. They do a great service and role for us in this facility as well, and all Manitobans.

The main concern that I have—I want to talk today, of course, about my constituency and some of the concerns there in agriculture and health mainly, although the oil industry is or was doing well, I guess, until the price of oil was cut by about a third from where it was last spring, but there is, I want to say, still work going on in those areas.

However, my critic responsibilities in infrastructure and transportation also lead me to want to bring some concern forward in regard to the Throne Speech that was put forward last Thursday morning and also to say, because of those reasons, I will certainly be supportive of our leader's amendments that were just put forward as amendments to the Throne Speech. I am looking forward to the government acknowledging, as well as we have the good points in their Throne Speech, that there are good points in the amendments and that perhaps they should accept those as well.

* (16:40)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I guess one of the first things that I want to say though, is that this Throne Speech, just off the top, really, I've never seen perhaps a government that you could label so much as a ban government in my life. Given what happened in the last session with the moratorium on hogs in Bill 17, given what has happened in this particular Throne Speech in a number of areas of concern, it's very, very obvious that the government hasn't learned from the lesson that they had and went through in the House last summer, that they are being very, very critical of industries in this province that support our gross domestic product, and provincially as well, but even more so, I think, the jobs of the people who work in those sectors. I find it completely disconcerting that they would just willy-nilly throw those away without, you know, perhaps, even costing taxpayers' direct funds and buyouts in other areas. You know, they didn't do that

in the hog industry where they put all of the onus on the industry itself, and the farmers in that area, to pay for all of those costs in regard to the changes that have brought about by having a moratorium on half of the province for expanding or building new facilities.

I just want to say as well that we are now faced—and I know that, as a result of the ban, Karl Kynoch, the pork producers' president, said, subsequent to the Speech from the Throne, the weanling industry in Manitoba is on its knees. It's been very, very nearly cut in half in the exports to the U.S. and some of that comes about because of the country-of-origin labelling, COOL legislation that is there from the agriculture side that's impacting all of the livestock sectors, not just the hog industry. Certainly, when I attended the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association annual meeting down in district 1 in Tilston, earlier this fall, I was very, very well aware, and reconfirmed, I guess, at that meeting, that the farmers in Manitoba who are in the export cattle business are very, very concerned, whether it's slaughter cows or finished animals, that there really is only one slaughter plant in the whole U.S. now with the country-of-origin labelling that's come in that will take those particular sectors of livestock in the beef side and perhaps, I believe that I may be corrected there, I believe it's two; there was one at Greeley, Colorado, but it's not taking them anymore. There's one in Idaho and one in Washington state. Those are a long way away. I think the numbers are 1,100 miles from Brandon to Idaho and that's an awful long ways for shipping fat steers and culled cows or cows in the industry. So, I have great concern that the government is leading the agricultural industry as well as other industries down the wrong road at a time of crisis in the financial markets and in job impacts.

For so long we've heard that anybody that wanted to work in the province would have an opportunity to do that because there was great employment and there still are, I think, great opportunities for employment. Don't get me wrong; there are great opportunities in this province, but we need to have a government that is very well aware of what it takes to make those opportunities happen and to encourage them to happen. I know from being at the mining industry meetings last week, that many in the mining industry are very, very concerned about the junior exploration that's going on in that industry, and trying to make it a better industry in Manitoba, and it's not happening there either. The government

is impacting the decisions of those industries to be more successful in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think the thing that really should hit home with Manitobans is the lack of an economic statement that took place in the Throne Speech and the fact that there really was no long-term plan for the province of Manitoba that will help create more jobs or stabilize our economy. I have always tried to put forward a few views around the issues of debt in the province of Manitoba and, as my colleague from Lakeside indicated, you know, our deficit has certainly increased. We're near \$20 billion as our leader, Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), pointed out earlier today, and our neighbours to the west, the Saskatchewan government, are down to \$4.2 billion now. They just paid down \$2.2 billion of that debt over the next two years and put a billion against it this last year, at a time when they've increased their rainy day fund and kept their own infrastructure at \$1-billion investment last year and another \$1.5 billion for '09, Madam Deputy Speaker. This, at a time when our government is touting a \$4-billion program over 10 years. Three of those are passed, and this is being eaten up by inflation as we go. So it certainly won't be \$4-billion worth of economic activity in the road or industry and the area of transportation from this government through its much referred to, I guess, announcement.

I would say that because of the number of these things, and a person could go on at great length about the shortfalls in the fiscal stabilization account—not really \$800 million, it's just over \$600 million—at a time when that is only three-quarters of one year's interest on the debt that Manitoba pays annually. It's very disconcerting to me to think that the government is saying: Well, we're going to be okay; we're going to get through this with less than a year in interest payments in the bank, so to speak.

I guess if I could say that one of the comments that came from David Angus that you could take as a very supportive statement from the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce in regard to this speech was that he felt that he looked forward favourably very much, if I could quote, at them not going into deficit, also not touching the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, quote unquote. He thought those were good things, and so do I, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The only problem is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has already announced that he's going to be going into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and

they've already taken \$60 million out of it. So imagine how disappointed he's going to be just a few hours after he made these comments to learn that the government has already retracted on their statement of balancing the budget.

Of course, even if they had, they've got a process in place through Bill 38, the breaking balanced budget legislation. You know, we have three Ps, private-public partnerships, that could be used in many opportunities to build our infrastructure in Manitoba, Madam Deputy Speaker. But this government has come up with the three Bs, break balanced budgets, and I think that that's a shame that the government hasn't got more foresight in regard to how it would plan for the future than having to raid Crown corporations' surpluses to do that in the long run.

I want to say how detrimental continuing to build the west-side power line down the west side of the province, nearly touching the Saskatchewan border before it comes all the way back east, at a cost of \$640 million, is such a mistake for Manitobans. This mistake would fund a tremendous amount of projects in Manitoba, never mind what it would do if those dollars were used in a fiscally responsible manner to reduce future interest payments by reducing debt and providing opportunities to have utilized the savings of interest over the last number of years, as we go forward into these tougher times.

It seems as if the Premier (Mr. Doer) is planning for a have-not province, and it seems that the smiling Doer government has brought a whole new meaning to the word "NDP," new dangerous plan. I think that that's a concern to all Manitobans that, as this new dangerous plan moves forward in Manitoba, it will not provide us with any more self-reliance. It's a situation now where they're just begging for the federal government to hand them more money to get through this fiscal downtown at a time when other provinces are actually working towards self-sufficiency and continuing to make sure that they don't go into deficits to balance their own books and move forward in their economies.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a number of areas, I think, in Manitoba that we need to—other areas that are of concern, but I'm not going to go into those right now. I just want to say as well that I think that we need more predictable plans in our infrastructure and transportation sector. The government came out with an announcement a few years ago that they're were going to have five-year

plans for those areas in this \$400-million budget year. We haven't seen that, and from what I'm told in the industry, they aren't spending those dollars on an annual basis in the sectors that we've got in Manitoba in the proportionate needs to infrastructure.

I think that's why we're seeing the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and Keystone Agricultural Producers coming out and saying that they need more infrastructure in Manitoba. We know we need more infrastructure, particularly on roads, in Manitoba to make sure that our economic activity can be generated to continue to create the wealth that would actually allow us to do this in the whole province. I've said that many times in the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, but each time a Throne Speech like this comes up, I need to make sure that the government is aware of it.

*(16:50)

I also know they are short of sewer and water in Manitoba, and this is an unfunded—this is a debt to Manitobans that's not on the books, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion in Manitoba today. In fact, actually, I think that would be just a shortfall of infrastructure in the city of Winnipeg in this region. It's more like a \$7-billion debt if you take in water and sewer and roads across the whole province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I think the government needs to have paid more attention in the good times that it's had in its sharing arrangements with the municipalities instead of now being in a position where, because of their ineptitude in the government, the municipalities are forced to come hand and foot, hand in glove to the government, and beg for an increase in PST at a time when other provinces are reducing their PST. This would make us much more uncompetitive, Mr. Speaker. I think it's something we need to look at, and the government has had the opportunity to share already in the revenues they have received on an annual basis.

I guess I want to close today by saying that there are a whole host of other areas I could speak about in regard to my constituency and its responsibilities there, but I think one of the biggest ones, Mr. Speaker, is the whole health care crisis we have in rural Manitoba, indeed, with Dr. Reynolds not being able to find a job even in his own Winnipeg Regional Health Authority after having come in and leading

that area for some time, perhaps here in the city of Winnipeg as well.

I appreciate the fact that the government came out with an announcement yesterday or today about the 130 nurses that they have gone to the Philippines to recruit, and I know my own constituents appreciate the fact that I had a recruiter connect with some of the retention people in my own area to begin that process last May. Within days, it was announced in the *Brandon Sun* that the regional health authorities would be going to the Philippines to attract more. I commend the regional health authorities for doing that. I look forward to alleviation of some of the nursing shortages we have and the resumption of full use of our personal care homes in Virden and other areas in my constituency.

I also appreciate the fact that, after my comments on the Throne Speech indicated that the government forgot health care outside of the city of Winnipeg and was suffering from dire Perimeteritis in the health care field, they also came out and announced that perhaps, unlike what they've been saying all along, we would have eight doctors available in the regional authority come February 15. Now they may have a few of them by December 15. I would encourage the government to take care of the imminent crisis in health care, particularly in the Virden and Melita areas right now. I know that Russell is short doctors as well, and a number of other areas will be very soon, within the next month, as we move toward the Christmas holiday season, and these doctors require time to be with their families as well and are taking holidays that they maybe didn't take in the summertime, Mr. Speaker.

Now that there will be an extension as well to next May to come up with 14 doctors that would be needed in the region, it looks like the regional health authority—and I give them credit for coming up with these numbers, and I certainly commend them for being able to come up with the idea—that we could have a few doctors available. I'm hoping that one of those will be in Virden by December 15.

I just want to say that I welcome Dr. Adi-Mari Schoeman from South Africa, whom I was able to meet at the airport here in Winnipeg last Tuesday, who's coming in to take locum work here until Christmas for one of the doctors that's on leave in Virden right now, and look forward to her being able to continue to facilitate the needs of the community of Virden and the surrounding area.

I want to say that the Concerned Citizens for Quality Health Care in the Virден area has formed, as a result of the meeting I had last August, subsequent to that public meeting where over 600 people came to listen to the concerns and information that might have been there around their health care needs and the crisis needs of their area. That was the intent of why I called the meeting, was to try and get as much information public as we could. These people are making a very solid attempt, I think, to gain more information and to provide all the help they can to anyone that they can assist, or that can help them come up with the needs of services, equipment and personnel, doctors and nurses alike, for the continuing re-establishment, I should say, of the emergencies health-care services, emergency-room and acute-care services for Virден as well as on a long-term basis. They don't want a short-term fix. They don't want doctors coming in for a year or two and then leaving. Of course, none of us do in our rural communities, but that seems to be a critical situation around any future signings that we may have in those areas.

I would encourage the regional health authority and the government, the minister, because I believe that she does have some say, in spite of the fact that she says she has no say, in where personnel go within the province. Within days of her making that statement, she was influencing where they go in Manitoba with the new programs that she had developed for locations of doctors in certain areas of Manitoba.

I just want to end by saying that the Concerned Citizens for Quality Health Care has asked the minister to have a meeting with her here in the city. They're coming to Winnipeg. They weren't invited to the meeting in Virден when the minister was there in the fall, subsequent to my questions in question period. I would certainly encourage her as I did in a letter in the House the other day, and in a letter to her personally, to have a meeting with them on the afternoon of the 2nd of December because they will be coming to Winnipeg to meet with her.

Mr. Speaker, I will close by just saying that I want to say that the issue of CentrePort around the transportation sector is an extremely valuable opportunity for Manitoba. We believe it is, on this side of the House. We moved the legislation through very quickly in the last fall session. It's a matter of combining, of getting the rail, the road, the air, all other sectors of transportation together in Manitoba, and providing an opportunity for them to build

around the 20,000 acres—the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) said that in the James Richardson International Airport we have here an opportunity to bring in assembly lines, to bring in container vessels, rail container units that will have many, many parts for assembly and redistribution throughout North America.

There is an opportunity for other sectors, too, that are non-traditional here, that are having trouble in other areas of Canada today, to be here. We are a natural site. We have space beside an airport. Not many airports do, not even in Canada—Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver being three. Chicago, Minneapolis don't have the same kind of open spaces to do the relocation and have a central hub of transportation and distribution as this centre does.

We want to see this go as well, and we encourage the government to come up with some very solid means, or the people on the board of directors of CentrePort, to provide a very strong means of the business plan that will make that happen. The small decrease—I shouldn't say small—somewhat, in aviation fuel for the airport is certainly to be commended. I will commend the government for doing that.

I look at other sectors, though, in regard to diesel fuel costs and that sort of thing, because they will be very integral, particularly rail, to being integral to making CentrePort happen, in my own mind. We have the roads and the infrastructure needed there as well.

When we were talking about this earlier today around the whole issue of cost to taxation that the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) was raising in his questions in question period today, I heard the member from—I don't know exactly where she's from—the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick), today, at least in the House indicating that, you know, talk to your buddies in Ottawa. My comment is, well, how much do you want cut back? You know, where do you want to go? That, to me, shows how out of touch this government is. They don't know, and they don't understand, the budgets in Manitoba or the needs.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I'd like to end my presentation. I know that there are many others who would wish to speak on this Throne Speech, and I will be speaking against the speech and for the amendments. Thank you.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak and probably my 18th or 19th Speech from the Throne, but I have to begin on a sad note, of course. That is just to speak about our good friend Oscar Lathlin.

It was obviously a pleasure and an honour for me to have served with him for over 18 years. We were elected on the very same day, September 11, 1990. I remember Oscar had a mug in his office—and I'm paraphrasing it—but it goes: When white man

enters camp, keep ears open and mouth shut. That was, I think, a piece of advice that he offered up to the Leader of the Opposition, but we know Oscar was a very quiet man but also a very powerful leader.

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 24, 2008

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