

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 228—The Grandparents' Day Act

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 228, The Grandparents' Day Act, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to introduce this bill in partnership with our colleague from Inkster. This bill is intended to formally acknowledge the priceless and essential contributions grandparents make in supporting and caring for their families and communities by designating a special grandparents' day in the province of Manitoba on the first Sunday after Labour Day.

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

Bill 217—The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that Bill 217, The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: Very pleased to bring forward Bill 217 in regard to the hunting, fishing, heritage act. It brings in line with the other provinces. B.C., Alberta, Ontario have already brought this legislation forward, and certainly timely, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 206—The Diabetes Reporting Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 206, The Diabetes Reporting Act; Loi sur la déclaration obligatoire du diabète, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the monthly reporting of new cases of diabetes. As members know, we have an epidemic of diabetes in this province, and this is the first step in treating this as an epidemic, as we would other diseases.

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

Bill 207—The Right to Timely Access to Quality Health Care Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 207, The Right to Timely Access to Quality Health Care Act; Loi sur le droit à l'accès à des soins de santé de qualité dans des délais raisonnables, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this act provides for a legal right for Manitobans to have quick access to care when needed. As the Speaker may know, we were criticized heavily in the 2008 Consumer Index for not having adequate patient rights in Manitoba. This bill addresses that matter.

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

Bill 209—The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Reporting Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that The Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Reporting Act; Loi sur la déclaration obligatoire de l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides the mandatory reporting of FASD with reports to RHAs and other bodies who would have an important role in preventing FASD.

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

Bill 211—The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 211, The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services de santé et la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides for the fundamental principle of accountability to be used in the delivery of health-care services in Manitoba and rates this principle of accountability equal with the other five major principles which are part of our Canada Health Act.

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

Bill 210—The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the Member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable Member for River Heights, that Bill 210, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention), be now read a first time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the essence of this bill would ensure to make it mandatory to put warning labels on alcoholic beverages that clearly demonstrate the consequences of drinking while you're pregnant. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

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 John Hildebrand, William Froese, David Wiens 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.

* (13:40)

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 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.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by P.K. Cumming, Ken Sparks, Bruce Clevett and many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I'm pleased to table the following 2007-2008 Annual Progress Report of the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Programs.

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 His Excellency Dave Wilkins, U.S. Ambassador to Canada and also Mary Speer, U.S.A. Consul.

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

Also in the public gallery we have from Laidlaw School 22 grade 6 students under the direction of Christie Sanders. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economic Downturn Impact on Mining Industry

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thanks to balanced budgets and the good fortune of global growth and a generous benefactor in the federal government, this NDP government has had nine years to prepare the province for the economic downturn that we now face, nine years to build up the economy of the province and ensure that jobs would not be put at risk in the event of a predictable downturn in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Finance Minister's own budget, the mining sector is the second largest primary industry in Manitoba employing some 6,400 people and is the lifeblood, as we all know, of northern Manitoba's economy. Thousands of families depend on a healthy mining sector to put a roof over their heads.

I'd like to ask the Premier if he would rate the performance of his government versus other

provinces in Canada when it comes to preparing Manitoba for the current downturn and its impact on the mining sector.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've had excellent performance across our diversified economy. We've had very, very positive results in the mining sector that go up and down in terms of performance, based on commodity markets. We've had increased employment since we came into office in terms of the mining sector in this province. We are moving ahead on a number of different exploration projects, unprecedented amount of exploration going on.

I would say that there are some challenges dealing with some smelters here in Manitoba in terms of the new national standards of smelters in the country. There are some challenges that have been exceeded actually, Mr. Speaker, in terms of different environmental standards from the CO₂ emission standards of the past. We are also, though, in discussions with the mining industry at this point on treaty land entitlement.

So I know that we were ranked very high dealing with exploration in the past. I know there's a bit of concern about resolving treaty land entitlements and section 35 consultations. We are working it out with the mining industry, but we have been very high in rankings.

We've been low, Mr. Speaker, but I would say that there is one challenge to the Province right now, and that is resolving some of the outstanding treaty land entitlements to give more predictability on exploration. I would say that that is a challenge that we're trying to manage with Aboriginal communities in Manitoba and the mining industry. I would admit that it hasn't been resolved yet and that that presents a challenge to us.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier is right on one point. They do have a very high ranking for mining. In fact, they're tenth out of 10, Mr. Speaker, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers' report that was just released in the pre-budget submission made just a few days ago to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger).

In that pre-budget submission by the Mining Association, which represents all of the mining industry in Manitoba, it says, and I quote: Over the last 10 years, Manitoba has slipped to be the least competitive mining jurisdiction in Canada in terms of income and mining tax provisions.

Exploration in mining today for a variety of reasons is in serious trouble. Mr. Speaker, we have the worst environment in Canada according to PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Mining Association. I want to ask the Premier: With the tens of billions of dollars that have flown to Manitoba thanks to the generosity of the federal government over the last nine years, why didn't he do more to prepare the mining industry for this inevitable downturn, and why has he put 6,400 Manitoba jobs at greater risk than otherwise would have been the case because of his policies and his failure to position Manitoba for a downturn that everybody could have predicted?

Mr. Doer: I believe the mining industry valuation in terms of minerals has tripled in value since 2003.

Mr. Speaker, I also know that in the past there have been other ratings. In fact, the Fraser Institute had us I think second one year. It had us first one year. It had us fifth this year. There are different ratings by different independent bodies.

But I would say, Mr. Speaker, that we are trying to manage land-use policies in Manitoba. There are people in the mining industry that believe that all land should be available as it is for mining. There are people that believe that all land in Manitoba should be totally set aside and no mining expansion go ahead. There are people dealing with Aboriginal land claims, and we're trying to get land-use policies for mining, for forestry, for Aboriginal people, that give certainty.

In this time of discussions, we could get a No. 1 ranking by just saying that mining will trump all other land use: forestry land use, parkland use, Aboriginal treaty land entitlement, section 35 of the Constitution. We could get that, Mr. Speaker, but that would not be in the best long-term interests of Manitobans. So we are trying to get areas that have a treaty land entitlement that have mineral deposits—we're trying to make sure that the royalty and the economic potential of those mineral deposits are shared with people that actually live in the area, quite different from the past when only people in other places would benefit.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've been rated one; we've been rated two; we've been rated five; we've been rated something else, but—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It's not going to help to try and out shout someone that has the floor. Let's have some decorum in here, please.

Has the honourable First Minister concluded your comment?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I haven't, no.

Mr. Speaker: You haven't?

Mr. Doer: No.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, continue on.

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, we've been ranked in so many different places on mining, and one of the reasons why we're very careful about the third-party rankings, there are lots of people working for mining companies. We respect that advice, but it's really important to get predictability and certainty.

Now, I would point out exploration policies that we brought in place have resulted in new finds of gold in the Bissett area. We've resulted in new findings of zinc, a green belt area of zinc adjacent to the Flin Flon area. We know we have challenges on copper smelters. Members opposite have raised questions on the copper smelter in the Flin Flon area, but we believe we can manage all of those issues together on a go-forward basis.

We think we have very positive policies on exploration, and that's why the mining industry is producing three times more activity today than just in 2003.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the reference to the Fraser Institute after 15 years of trashing that organization I find interesting from the Premier on the credibility of the Fraser Institute. The fact is the rating comes from PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The comments are made by the Mining Association of Manitoba who are directly involved in mining and exploration, and they say that Manitoba has slipped to be the least competitive mining jurisdiction in Canada. In backing up that position, Mr. Speaker, they put in numbers which are hard to refute: the mining tax rate in Ontario, 10 percent; the mining tax rate in Manitoba, almost double that, 18 percent, plus a payroll tax, plus corporate taxes for large corporations on top of that and a red-tape environment that has brought the issuance of permits to a grinding halt so that those permits are not

moving ahead. The fact is they have created the least competitive environment in Canada.

There's good advice here from the Mining Association which we'd encourage them to take. I want to ask the Premier: In the economic environment that we're in today—he's already punishing agriculture and undermining Manitoba Hydro—why has he added mining to his economic hit list?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, we do believe it's important to get predictability for mining companies and for the public for the areas of mining. We believe there are areas that we have to have certainty for for Aboriginal people and treaty land entitlements, and, yes, we could solve this issue very easily. We could just say mining trumps every other activity in Manitoba for purposes of land use. That would be an easy policy to go from No. 10 to No. 1.

We know there's a concern on Aboriginal consultations on section 35 of the Constitution, but we would rather do it before a mine proceeds, Mr. Speaker, rather than have it held up in court after the fact, plus the fact that we believe it's an obligation of all of us to act within the Constitution of Canada. We think that's very important.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, for example, the sales tax rebate for mining companies for electricity is extremely positive. We have low electricity rates. The member opposite mentioned corporate tax rates. It's 14 percent in Ontario. It's going down to 12 percent in Manitoba. The exploration policy is the best in Canada for purposes of incentive, but we don't apologize for trying to make sure that all stakeholders are working together for predictability of mining, forestry, environment, parks, endangered species and Aboriginal people. We don't apologize for having land-use policies that may take us a little longer to get in place but will be much more sustainable for both mining and Aboriginal people where they reside in Manitoba.

Wind Energy

Financial Capacity of Babcock & Brown

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, there continues to be very much uncertainty in the wind energy industry here in Manitoba, and the government's news release of yesterday simply muddies the water. There was nothing new in that press release. All the press release said is that Hydro and this government are continuing negotiations with a company that is on the brink of receivership. These

negotiations have been under way for at least eight months.

Of 84 submissions and proposals received, is this the best this government could do?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I think when Manitoba Hydro accepts a project for 300 megawatts from one of the proponents that bid on it, which will be the largest wind power project in Canada, it's maybe not the best we can do, but it's certainly better than anywhere else in Canada is doing at the moment. It's the largest project in Canada.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Turtle Mountain Sustainable Ventures group in southwestern Manitoba have been pursuing wind energy development for seven years in Manitoba. They have partnered with Sequoia Energy, a Manitoba company, to research and investigate opportunities in southern Manitoba. Sequoia put forth several of the 84 proposals to this government over two years ago. Sequoia has a proven track record and they are developers of Manitoba's only wind farm.

This government has driven a Manitoba company out of the province, as they intend to set up a wind farm just a few miles south of the border and sell direct to our Manitoba Hydro customers.

Why would this government not select a Manitoba company with a proven track record over an Australian company with suspect financial capacity?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, just a couple of points. It's quite amazing to me that the members opposite, the members of the Conservative Party, are now against open tendering and free markets. That's quite remarkable.

Secondly, the proposals were ranked by Manitoba Hydro and they selected the proposal that they thought would give them the most economic source of wind power to complement Manitoba Hydro electricity, Mr. Speaker. We know Manitoba Hydro electricity is among the lowest-cost electricity in North America. So to compete with a base source of energy which is the lowest cost and among the cleanest in North America, you have to have a very strong proposal.

All the proposals had merit, but the one that was the most meritorious was selected.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister's right. Ever since the discussions on wind energy took place, companies, communities, proponents, Manitobans have been looking for an open and transparent process to evaluate the options. This government has not allowed that to happen, as it has happened in other jurisdictions.

Now, as the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, is he prepared to call a committee meeting with Manitoba Hydro so that we can clear the air on future wind developments here in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we've had many meetings of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities in Manitoba, and Crown Corporations. We're happy to have further meetings in the future. I think that the member will discover that Manitoba Hydro received proposals from 84 proponents, and they selected the one that they believed was the most economic.

Each proposal has different strengths and weaknesses. Hydro, as a Crown corporation with its own senior management, its own board of directors and governance model, made a decision based on what they thought would be the most competitive product and the company with a track record of having delivered on those projects in North America.

I'd be happy to have that discussion with him in any of the many fora that we have in Manitoba, the Legislature, standing committees, scrums or any other forum you wish to have.

Country-of-Origin Labelling Government Strategy

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The Throne Speech was totally silent on one of the greatest of challenges facing our livestock sector, country-of-origin labelling. For quite some time, the Progressive Conservative caucus has been asking the government to take a leadership role on this very important issue, which is costing the livestock industry millions of dollars and creating great uncertainty. Sadly, we have seen nothing but rhetoric from this government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture finally table today her government's action plan to deal with this very significant issue?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I thank the member opposite for raising what is a very important issue, Mr. Speaker.

I want to assure the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that we are taking this issue very seriously. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has met with the representatives in Washington. I recently had a meeting with the federal minister, Mr. Gerry Ritz, to ask him to move forward on a trade challenge. We feel that under the NAFTA agreements that we have in place that there should not be this kind of barrier put in place for trade to flow.

We are working with the federal government. We do have representation in Washington trying to move this forward, Mr. Speaker. It must be resolved.

Mr. Eichler: This is exactly what we were afraid of. This government's wait-and-see attitude has left our producers to fend for themselves. Last week, the Saskatchewan government announced a one-year deferral of principal payments owing on short-term cattle and hog loan programs that recognize the financial pressures facing our producers in the wake of trade issues like country-of-origin labelling.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to taking a leadership role, work with stakeholders and the federal government to deal with this protectionist measure? Where is this government's plan?

* (14:00)

Ms. Wowchuk: I don't know if the member opposite heard my first answer, but I did say to him we are taking this issue very seriously. I have written to the federal minister. I've met with the federal minister and asked him to take a leadership role. The member surely must understand that the issue of trade is a federal responsibility, and we have committed to work with him. We also, as Manitobans, have staff and legal people that are working for us on this issue.

We are working very closely with the industry, whether it be the pork industry or the beef industry or others that are affected by country-of-origin label. I would ask the member to show his co-operation as well and not say that talking to the federal minister isn't worth very much.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, it's very simple. All she has to do is table her plan. We've been writing letters for the last two months, three months, in the past year to this minister, to the federal government calling for an action plan, so shame on this minister for that issue. The livestock producers have been calling on this minister. In fact, yesterday, the Manitoba pork producers estimate there are some two million pork weanlings that will not be shipped

to the United States as a result of country-of-origin labelling.

Since this government has demonstrated no ability to lead our livestock producers through this latest trade issue, will the Minister of Agriculture now call the Ag Committee immediately to meet with producers to help the plan of action, get the action going, plus look after our producers before the livestock industry is gone in this province? Shame on you.

Ms. Wowchuk: The issue of country-of-origin labelling is a very serious one. That's why we have been working with various people to increase slaughter capacity in this province, Mr. Speaker, because if we can increase slaughter capacity we are not as dependent on slaughter capacity in the United States.

But, despite that, I can assure the member opposite that this government has taken action. We are working with the federal government. We are working with the industry. In fact, if the member opposite would read some of the other news releases he would see that the industry, in fact, has said we are doing the right thing to increase slaughter capacity and that we are working with them to address this country-of-origin label challenge.

Economic Downturn Government Strategy

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): We know from past experience that the Finance Minister does not like to follow the best practices of Saskatchewan, B.C. or Alberta, but maybe just this once he can learn something. He's not going to reduce debt. He's not going to reduce taxes. But because of the serious economic downturn, will he please follow the lead of B.C., Saskatchewan and Alberta and provide Manitobans with an honest, open, transparent and accountable economic update?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I think the member missed the Throne Speech last week where in the economic update we committed to reducing small-business taxes yet again. They are already the lowest in Canada, and we committed to reducing them to 1 percent. That was a tax cut. We committed to reducing corporate taxes from 13 percent to 12 percent. That was a tax reduction. We committed to further eliminating by another one-tenth the corporate capital tax, which is another reduction in taxes.

I know the member has trouble following these speeches when they're made in the House because he's snoozing on the other side, but if he would have paid attention he would have acknowledged that we've made tax reductions.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, three days ago the Premier of British Columbia announced a 10-point action plan to help his province through these trying economic times. It contained new measures to safeguard savings, ease the tax burden, spur economic growth and rein in spending. As I mentioned, these were new initiatives, not rehashed announcements contained in a rehashed Throne Speech.

Why is the Minister of Finance reluctant to accept our current financial challenges and why is he incapable of reacting to these challenges with new initiatives?

Mr. Selinger: Every new initiative we put forward in this Legislature, the member has voted against. I don't know why he's asking. He wants more things to vote against.

Last week's Throne Speech, in addition to the tax reductions we made additional facilities available so that credit would be more available to rural entrepreneurs. We made additional facilities available for small business to have access to credit. We made additional facility available in the order of doubling from \$5 million to \$10 million the Community Enterprise Investment Tax Credit so the people can get a 30 percent rebate on investments in new businesses in Manitoba.

I think the member opposite missed that we committed to \$4.7 billion of capital investment in this province for hospitals, schools, roads, sewers and water infrastructure. I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will vote against that too.

Mr. Borotsik: The one thing the member opposite will vote against is a vote tax, something that government didn't do.

This coming Thursday, the federal Minister of Finance is going to present his economic update, and we know, Mr. Speaker, that it's going to deal with a stimulus package and it's going to deal with the reduction of equalization payments.

All western Canadian provinces have already dealt with this. They've already put an action plan together. What do we get, Mr. Speaker? Steady as

she goes. Steady as she goes is the code word for not knowing what to do.

Why does this minister and his department not have the ability to put forward a plan that will help us navigate these turbulent financial waters?

Mr. Selinger: In this fiscal year, we have the second-fastest-growing economy among all the provinces in Canada, and the member is dismissive about it. He doesn't like steady as she goes. He doesn't like having the second-fastest-growing economy in Canada.

The measures we put in place last week are intended to move Manitoba forward with five-year plans for investments in infrastructure, housing, schools and those things that will grow the capacity of Manitobans to contribute to the economy.

He also missed the investments we're making in apprenticeships. He missed the investments we're making in training opportunities for Manitoba. All of those things allow Manitobans to get the skills they need to deal with the skill shortages we have in Manitoba. The member doesn't like things in Manitoba. It's the second best in the country. What's his problem?

Brian Sinclair Death Administrative Review Findings

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Nobody wants to accept blame or place blame for the death of Brian Sinclair, a disabled man who waited in an ER waiting room for 34 hours, invisible. He needed help but he didn't get it and he died.

The WRHA has done an administrative review and they're keeping it secret, and the Minister of Health is silent about that.

Can the Minister of Health tell us: In an NDP health-care system, where does the buck stop?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): There is no doubt, I believe, for anyone in this House, indeed in our province, that the death of Brian Sinclair was a tragedy. I'm also aware that immediately after the incident this side of the House took responsibility for that issue.

We are moving forward in partnership with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority on an immediate action plan to address the specific issue that faced Mr. Sinclair that day. A critical incident review has been launched, an admin review has been launched, and the member opposite, I believe, is well

aware that the Chief Medical Examiner will be calling an inquest into the review. We believe that these bits of information must come forward so that this kind of thing never happens again in Manitoba.

Mrs. Driedger: I'll remind the Minister of Health that if some health professional hadn't come forward and leaked it to the media, nobody would have even known about this. She didn't take any initiative.

The WRHA says that the death of Brian Sinclair was caused by systemic failings. Well, who is the head of that health system? It's the Minister of Health. Systemic failings would have been exposed years ago by an external review but this government refused to do one.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if she would acknowledge today that if they had done an independent external review years ago, that maybe, maybe, Brian Sinclair might still be alive today.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, first, allow me to correct the factual errors that the member opposite is putting on the record.

First, we accept responsibility for what happened in that ER that day. Second, we have never stood and refused an external review. We have said that we will follow the process. We will follow the process of the critical incident review. We will follow the process of find and immediately fix that has come from the administrative review.

There are concerns that have been raised about the release of that full review as it relates to the inquest. I've written a letter to the Ombudsman asking for a judgment on that. If the Ombudsman suggests that the full review can come forward, then we will release it, Mr. Speaker, and if, after those processes have occurred, we believe we don't have the answers we need, we have not closed the door on an external review.

The member opposite is wrong and she continues to put false information on the record.

*(14:10)

Health-Care Critical Incidents Minister's Directives

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this government has refused to do an external review for the last five years, and if they are wiggling around a little bit about it, maybe she would want to call one today. This government loves to be around at the good news photo ops. When

there's a crisis, they're either missing in action, they're blaming somebody else, or they're hiding behind the RHAs.

The Minister of Health definitely is in charge of the health-care system, and she has in her power under legislation the ability to issue directives. I would like to ask her: In view of the ER crisis in Manitoba for the last five years in our Winnipeg ERs, has she issued a directive to the WRHA about managing this ER crisis?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing that we've learned in the post-Sinclair inquest era, from a time when medical errors were swept under the rugs and babies died, we learned from Paul Thomas and Justice Sinclair that if the attitude persists, Mr. Thomas says, 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.

The member opposite is living in the '90s with a '90s ethos of hide and cover up. We're open on this side of the House. We're going to get to the bottom of what happened in that terrible tragedy so that it will never happen again, Mr. Speaker.

Pharmacare Deductibles Impact on Seniors

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, Margaret DeTimmerman, a senior in my constituency, is on a fixed income. Now she's struggling to pay for her medications because this NDP government has more than doubled her Pharmacare deductible since 2004. In 2004, her Pharmacare deductible was \$293. It's increased every year since and this year it's \$611.

Why is this NDP government paying for its wasteful spending decisions on the backs of seniors like Mrs. DeTimmerman?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I appreciate the opportunity to respond. I believe the member opposite knows, in particular an individual case, we're very happy to work with the member to ensure that we can help individual citizens.

In broad terms, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly remind the member that the Canadian Institute for Health Information states that Manitoba has the broadest and best Pharmacare program in the nation. We know that since 1999 we've added over 2,000 drugs to the Pharmacare program and that 24,000

more families today are benefiting from the program than in 1999.

I can tell members opposite, of course, that our total investment in the Pharmacare program, once we added an additional \$3.7 million in the last budget, is \$280 million. That's a 352 percent increase from when they were—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, this minister can quote all the statistics she wants, but Mrs. DeTimmerman is just one of many thousands of Manitobans. In 2004 her deductible was \$293; in '05 it was \$321; in '06 it was \$364; in '07, \$372; and in 2008 it's jumped, a 64 percent increase, to \$611.

Can the Minister of Health explain to Mrs. DeTimmerman and perhaps many other seniors in Manitoba why her Pharmacare deductible has more than doubled since '04, increased 64 percent in the past year and why she isn't standing up for seniors in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: As I said to the member opposite, we would be very pleased to look at an individual case to see if there has been an error or a problem with the situation. We'd be very pleased to do that.

I can also go on to remind the members opposite that contrary to what we heard during debate of some months ago when members opposite were calling for us to try to match our Pharmacare system to those in the Maritimes, arguably the worst in the country, that what is important about Manitoba's Pharmacare program is that we cover 100 percent of the drug costs once the income-based deductible is covered.

We don't discriminate on age. We don't discriminate on type of disease like other jurisdictions. This is why the Canadian Institute for Health Information says that we have the best program. We're going to continue to work to build it and we'd be happy to help this individual.

Dr. Larry Reynolds Government Response to Termination

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the compliments continue to pour in for Dr. Larry Reynolds like this one: I hear more compliments about Dr. Reynolds from patients than about any doctor I've ever worked with. Yet he's being treated horribly by the health-care system which this government is responsible for. It is impossible to build excellence if you don't recognize it when you see it. It is impossible to build excellence if you

target the physicians who are excellent like Dr. Reynolds. It is true, Manitoba's health system has systemic problems. Those are the very problems which the Premier is responsible for.

I ask the Premier: How can he tolerate such awful treatment of outstanding physicians like Dr. Reynolds?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the last time the member opposite stood up on something like this, there was an independent review, and his arguments and his feigned indignation fell like a house of cards.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that this government will not tell the dean of the Faculty of Medicine whose contract to extend in a supervisory position and whose contract not to extend. We will not interfere with the academic independence of the dean of the School of Medicine. We never have and we never will. There's no justification to do it.

So I reject the member opposite's call to interfere with a medical decision made by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority by one doctor and the dean of the Faculty of Medicine. We won't interfere with academic independence. We won't do it. I don't care how hard or how loud the member opposite asks us to do it.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, if the Premier had listened then, it would have never come to this. What we're talking about is how people in our health-care system are intimidated. They're afraid to speak up because this Premier is operating a reign of terror. This is the legacy of the present Premier. This is the legacy, building a system on a reign of terror. The Premier is not putting patients or family physicians first. He's putting himself first. He's putting them last, and to cover up and hide the problems, he's instilling fear on those who want change.

The Throne Speech, which gave only 10 meagre lines to health care, gave pittance to health care and no commitment to change which is so badly needed.

How could the Premier not stand up for such an outstanding individual as Dr. Reynolds? Why is the Premier continuing this reign of terror?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I don't even know the person, and it would be totally inappropriate for the Premier of this province to tell the dean, Dean Sandham, of the medical school whose contract to extend and whose contract not to extend.

I have no difficulty with anybody. He's still, apparently, working in the health-care system. He's free to say whatever he wants—he's obviously done that—to whomever he wants. I didn't even know who he was, with the greatest of respect to the individual. I did talk to some family doctors the other day at a charity event. They did talk about the fact that they were pleased at the new contract, which I'm pleased with, was able to target money with the MMA to family doctors. I'm concerned about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government will not determine who the president of the university is. We won't determine who the deans are. We won't determine who the faculty is, and the faculty, the deans, the president have freedom of speech. They're free to speak and say whatever they want. But we won't tell a dean who to hire, whose contract to extend and whose contract not to extend. If the member opposite wants us to interfere with academic independence, I'm shocked.

* (14:20)

Economic Downturn Impact on Federal Equalization Payments

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as a druggie will get addicted to crack—and we know the devastating impact that that has—the provincial government is addicted to huge equalization payments. Because of the economic turmoil that's upon us today in Canada, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that it will have a traumatic impact on equalization payments. That means because Manitoba's so dependent on equalization payments, more than any other province in Canada virtually, the impact is going to be huge.

Can the Minister of Finance tell Manitobans today what he is anticipating is going to be happening to the equalization payments to Manitoba over the next year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba economy has been growing faster than the Canadian average for the last three years, so as long as we can generate economic growth that's better than the Canadian average, this will automatically reduce our need and our transfer payment requirements.

What will happen to the equalization payments? It's in the hands of the federal Finance Minister and his government, and he has said that he will flatten them out, in the case of Manitoba next year, and that he will put all payments for all the provinces that are

recipients of that program, he will put that on an escalator that is equivalent to what happens in the growth in the GDP for the country.

That's what he said, but that was—what he said recently is different than what he said a year ago, so we'll just have to see where it goes.

Philippines Nurse Recruitment Mission Statistics

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): I understand that Manitoba recently completed a very successful nurse recruitment initiative in the Philippines.

Can the Minister of Health please inform the House how many job offers were made and what this will mean for the participating regional health authorities?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to report to the House that the recruitment mission to the Philippines was indeed a success and that conditional job offers of employment have been made to 131 nurses, the majority of whom are expected to be successfully placed. *[interjection]* I take it the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) is interested in bringing nurses to Manitoba, but I'll continue.

I can let you know that we're continuing to build our partnership with the government of the Philippines and to fulfil our commitment of bringing 700 more nurses to Manitoba. We're currently training three times more nurses today than they did in 1999. We're on the right track. Members opposite, I regret, didn't promise to hire a single nurse.

White Horse Village Trailer Park Lack of Water Resources

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, many of the residents of the White Horse Village trailer park in Cartier, just west of Winnipeg, have been without water services all summer because of unaddressed infrastructure problems by the owner.

I first wrote to the minister on July 21, asking him to step in and help these people who are until this time still getting—they were getting their water through garden hoses strung from one trailer to the next. Well, Mr. Speaker, over four months later and those garden hoses are now frozen.

I want to ask the minister: What is his priority? Is it the priority of him and his government to take a million dollars from taxpayers, line their own political pockets with that, or is it the priority to help

the real people in Manitoba who need the most basic of life's—they need water, the most basic need for sustenance.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I thank the member once again for drawing this to our attention. The member will know that the Residential Tenancies Branch has been out working with the private owner of the private trailer park to renew her private infrastructure to provide the private services that she promised to provide to the people that live there, and the owner was having trouble actually delivering on her commitments to her trailer park tenants.

Now, as of this Monday, the private owner has decided to complete that infrastructure and fix it up. Failing that, the Residential Tenancies Branch is prepared to make arrangements to have the infrastructure improved. In the meantime, they've put an alternate source of water on-site so people do not have to use the hoses, that they can go to a water truck which is, in my view, far less—is not an ideal solution, Mr. Speaker. They have access to a water truck which we all know is a far-from-sufficient solution to the problem, and we will work until we have a solution to that problem in that trailer park.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before moving on to members' statements, I'd just like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate 11 grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Jerome Baseley. This school is located in the constituency of the Minister for Competitiveness, Training and Trade (Mr. Swan). On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you all here today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to mark November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Today, all around our world, people are speaking out against the violence that prevents women from being able to fully achieve equality, development and peace. They cry out for action, delineating the need to enshrine fundamental freedoms, calling attention to the historically unbalanced power relationship between

the sexes through which violence continually forces women into subordinate positions.

We like to think we live in a world where equality is possible for all people, yet, if we listen closely, the words spoken today demonstrate that we are failing in reaching that goal. Today's news reports draw attention to unsettling statistics put forward by the United Nations. One in three women will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. One in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape. Women aged 15 to 44 are in greater danger from rape and domestic violence than cancer, traffic accidents, war and malaria. Women make up more than 80 percent of trafficked people. Half of all women murdered are killed by either their current or former partner.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing the unalienable human rights of women and girls should be tantamount to human decency, and yet women remain vulnerable to abuse both inside and outside their homes. Some of the examples come to us from war-torn regions such as the chilling recent incident of acid thrown on 15 girls and their teachers this month in Afghanistan, or the rise of honour killings of Iraqi women by family members.

Although we can try to attribute this violence to others in a less civilized part of the world, some of the examples come to us right here at home. Here in Canada, where Stats Canada has reported 11 percent of women have been threatened by a stalker, 24 percent of Aboriginal women have suffered violence at the hands of a partner, and nearly 60,000 women seek refuge from abusive environments in women's shelters.

Regardless of country of origin or creed, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today that there was, and I quote, "one universal truth applicable to all countries, cultures, and communities. Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable." All of us, men and women, must unite by refusing to tolerate continued violence.

Oscar Lathlin Tributes

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, there have been many tributes paid to Oscar Lathlin, whose tragic passing occurred on November 2. I would like to speak about the events held to mark his passing which show the depth of respect in which he was held.

A wake was held for Oscar November 7 at the Church of the Redeemer in Big Eddy. Hundreds of people attended and many people spoke about this quiet man and his gentle humour. The next day, over 800 people packed Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in The Pas for his funeral. On Friday, November 21, a unique ceremony was held when a special sitting of this House was called to honour Oscar's memory.

The Minister of Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport (Mr. Robinson) carried in Oscar's feathered headdress and, in tribute, placed it on Oscar's desk in the Legislature. Each of the three party leaders reflected on his own memories of Minister Lathlin. As Aboriginal drummers sang, Oscar's family, members of this House and 40 members of the Cross Lake Cadet Corps made a procession into the rotunda. It was a way for us to say goodbye and to thank Oscar's family for all the sacrifices they have made, allowing Oscar time away from his home in service of this province.

I'll remember Oscar always as a quiet, effective leader, someone who was in my constituency whenever I needed him. I know how close he was to his wife, Leona, and how much he loved his children. The last conversation I had with him the day before he died was about how much he enjoyed his granddaughter's birthday party. He was in good humour that day. I will miss him. He's left a big hole in our hearts. Rest well, dear friend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Tundra Oil & Gas Regent Battery

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, earlier this fall, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of Tundra Oil & Gas's newest oil battery near Regent, Manitoba, located about 20 kilometres northeast of Deloraine.

The Regent battery, as it's known, is one of the largest, most modern and up-to-date oil batteries in Manitoba. The new \$4-million oil-processing facility will replace an older and smaller facility with four large holding tanks. Tundra's largest oil battery remains the Sinclair battery which came on-line three years ago. However, the Regent battery was able to incorporate the best aspects of the Sinclair battery and to include the latest, state-of-the-art technology as well.

More than 300 people from Deloraine and area took advantage of the opportunity to tour the oil

battery. At that time there were 12 oil wells feeding directly into the facility and 12 more were expected to be connected this fall. The site was designed for easy expansion.

The Regent battery will provide many benefits, including employment opportunities and economic development for the community as a whole. Tim Howell, Tundra's Virden-based vice-president of operations, said that the oil battery is, and I quote, a symbol of commitment for further development in the area.

I'd also like to point out that Tundra Oil & Gas has been a very thoughtful corporate citizen in Deloraine and the surrounding municipalities as they recently donated a good portion of a new fire truck to the Deloraine and R.M.s of Winchester and Brenda volunteer fire department. The truck was tested during a controlled burn and the fire department noticed that it used much less than a third of the volume of water that the old equipment used. This will be reflected in the fire department's water bills, but also in being able to sustain fire protection in cases where availability of water is an issue.

This oil battery will be a huge asset to the residents of Deloraine area. Local roads will also be retained in much better condition as oil moves through pipelines to the battery instead of by trucks. Once separated, water is recycled back into the oil field. This means fewer loads of full oil on local roads as the oil is removed to the pipelines.

And, of course, today, I would like to commend Tundra Oil & Gas for their pilot project to capture carbon dioxide and inject it under pressure into the oil field for sequestration. This pilot is the first of its kind in Manitoba, showcasing a commitment to innovation and forward thinking in the Sinclair area.

I would like to recognize Tundra Oil & Gas in their ongoing work and in support of southwestern Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Barry Fitzsimmons

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House today to recognize Barry Fitzsimmons's dedication and hard work coaching hockey in my community. On Friday, October 17, 2008, Barry Fitzsimmons was awarded the first ever Southdale Coach Recognition Award at the Southdale Community centre's annual volunteer dinner. This award is given to volunteer coaches in recognition of the positive impact of their efforts.

Barry began his coaching career in Montréal with AA and AAA programs and continued to do here in Southdale when he moved to the area in 1995. At first he coached his son's hockey team and as his son grew up and left the program, he stayed on as a non-parent coach whenever he was needed.

Barry was also instrumental in organizing four-on-four spring hockey for the first time ever in Southdale. He also had an influence on many of his former players who are now following his example by becoming coaches themselves. I have heard from many of my neighbours in the Southdale Community centre's hockey program would not have been as successful or grown as large without Barry's dedication and hard work.

I would also like to recognize that Barry had a lot of support from his wife, Linda, his daughters, Andrea and Tracy and his son, Mike during his 16 years of coaching.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate Barry Fitzsimmons for being the first ever recipient of the Southdale Coach Recognition Award. Thank you.

Air Canada Flight Attendant Base Closure

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I want to just briefly provide comment in terms of the Air Canada flight attendant base and compliment the government in the sense that they, I believe, have taken the right action by taking or putting in a claim in court to try to protect those jobs that have been transferred.

I do believe that it's very important that this Legislature not let that issue slide away. We're talking about 145 very important jobs that go even beyond the individuals that today are in those positions. It also has an impact in terms of our future positioning in terms of that hub central, if I can put it that way, in terms of the transportation industry.

We also need to be aware of Air Canada's potential threat that many already perceive is to close the pilot base. Air Canada today says that they have no intentions on doing that. I can tell you that there are pilots out there today that believe that Air Canada could do it.

So I compliment the government in terms of taking the action by making a statement in court, but I do believe that we can still do more in terms of approaching Air Canada corporate office in making sure that they follow what I believe is their legal

obligation to maintain the flight attendant air base here in Winnipeg. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Third 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 at this Second Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

And the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in the amendment thereto.

Standing in the name of the honourable Member for Selkirk, who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I just started my address yesterday and was reminding members that this would be either the 18th or 19th chance we've had to—I've had a chance to speak to the various Speech from the Thrones and they seem to be getting better and better every year.

As I said, we have to, of course, begin on a sad note and that was the regrettable and sad passing of our good friend, Oscar Lathlin. As many have mentioned, Oscar was a quiet individual, but he was also a very powerful effective leader. He had his rough exterior but, when you got to know him, he was always a very gentle man as well.

He supported me in different things. He ensured that I was a member of our government's contingent to the First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal people, also known as the Kelowna Accord. He encouraged me to attend and I was obviously very grateful for him doing that. It was a tremendous honour to be at the event and a tremendous thrill as well.

He also supported Métis economic development. He and I were working on that. I know I'll be able to continue that with the current acting minister, the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson). He supported Aboriginal Awareness Days in Selkirk where, in the past, his department provided a \$5,000

grant to help out what has turned out to be quite a very successful event.

He supported the casino endeavour in the Brokenhead First Nation, and that, as well, Mr. Speaker, has turned out to be an important economic achievement for Aboriginal people. Of course, as we know, he also supported the friendship centre. As a matter of fact, just about a month ago, I had the opportunity to represent the government at an announcement in Selkirk where our government is providing over a million dollars in capital improvements to friendship centres.

The member's legacy will live on. I know it's up to us as members to ensure that it does. We'll have the opportunity in the weeks ahead to discuss more of the impact that Oscar had upon our lives.

I'd also like to recognize Jim Maloway who decided to leave this Chamber and to seek federal office and was successful at the federal riding of Elmwood-Transcona. Jim was a good friend of mine and I'll miss him. I was trying to talk him out of running, but the opportunity was there. He's always had an interest in federal politics, so he decided to leave. I can only hope that his new whip that he has will have better luck with him than I did.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Jim was a good friend; he was a good MLA but, one thing, he was not punctual. We know that but he had a tremendous desire to serve his constituents. We know that he was very much involved recently with the pending Disraeli Bridge closure. He fought for community centres in his area. He was always interested in small business and finance issues. I know that he'll take those issues and his passion for those issues into his new job as a member of Parliament for Elmwood-Transcona.

* (14:40)

What is interesting—I need to comment on this—is that what we've witnessed over the last while is the dramatic change in public policy in this country, and that is the embrace, the absolute embrace by the federal Conservative Party of Canada of deficit spending. It's understandable in a way, I guess, because when you look at history, it is the right-wing governments that have added billions and billions of dollars to provincial and national debt in this world.

When you look at presidents of the United States, like Ronald Reagan, and historians look at Reagan now and they admire him for his—you know,

he had a wonderful attitude, but the individual added billions and billions to the U.S. debt. He cut taxes, and he was very proud of cutting taxes to the very wealthy in the United States. Remember the trickle-down economics; he was very proud of that. Well, that left a tremendous legacy of debt in the United States.

We all remember Brian Mulroney here in Canada. He racked up—every year we were spending \$40 billion I believe—\$40 billion alone just to service the debt in this country. And, of course, the biggest spender of them all—and in a few more months the world will finally be rid of this individual—and that is George W. Bush, who this year alone it is estimated will add a trillion dollars to the debt of the United States. Again, George Bush, one of his legacies will be that he did reduce taxes. Again, he was a great tax cutter. He believed in cutting taxes to the very wealthy in the United States, and that's now leaving this tremendous legacy of debt that future generations will have to deal with, and, you know, President-elect Obama will be faced with a number of challenges: two wars, an economy that seems to be, well, not seems—definitely is in trouble, and this trillion-dollar deficit.

Also, in Manitoba's situation we had, of course, Gary Filmon who ran the largest deficit up in Manitoba's history, well over \$756—I believe—million in the early '90s. It is the centre-left parties that, in fact, have reduced debt, and you never hear this from the Conservatives or the Liberal parties. But it is Bill Clinton after all—Bill Clinton inherited a deficit, and when he left office Bill Clinton—admit his shortcomings, but one thing he did do is that he did balance the budget, and he left the United States with a balanced budget. In fact, Bill Clinton, called himself a new Democrat.

Paul Martin, the federal Liberals, I give him credit, you know, he was able to—and it was tough to do definitely—but he did reduce that huge federal deficit and left the Harper government with a \$13-million surplus, and within two and a half, three years, they've already turned that into a deficit. Some analysts have projected that that deficit could be as high as \$22 billion in the next number of years, \$22 billion. What is their legacy? Well, they cut the GST a couple of points and, although that means little to us, you know, when you buy a cup of coffee or so on, but it means a tremendous amount of less revenues for the federal government.

It wasn't that long ago where Mr. Harper—I believe probably no coincidence that he was campaigning in the federal election that he said the Canadian economy will be fine. The fundamentals of the Canadian economy are good. Reminds me a bit of John McCain. Now I have a John McCain—excuse me, I have a McCain-Palin sign in my yard, excuse me, in my office, but it doesn't mean I was going to vote for him. But that is exactly what McCain said. McCain said that the fundamentals of the U.S. economy are good and solid, and it wasn't that long after that, of course, he was forced to retract that. Now we're seeing the same thing at the national level where Harper is now for the very first time—for the very first time yesterday Harper is admitting that we are into a recession. So, during the federal election campaign, he said the fundamentals of the Canadian economy are good and just within a few months later he's now admitting that we're into probably—we don't know how deep the recession, but we certainly are in a downturn in our economy.

Madam Acting Speaker, I think everybody knows we look—there's deep concern about the auto industry. In my own community, the Manitoba Rolling Mills, which is the largest private sector employer in the Selkirk area, they've seen their orders dry up, and they do a lot of their business in the United States. They provide rails for the elevator industry and for the grader blades, it's called, for heavy construction and, regrettably, they've seen their orders begin to dry up. Right now, although they're not shutting down their operation, but certainly over the next number of weeks they'll be seeing a reduction in their level of activity. So there's obviously a deep concern that we could be heading that way.

But, fortunately, the pundits still argue that our situation is good. We have a very competitive environment here in Manitoba. Our taxes are low. We've been able to reduce debt over the last while. I think it was the Conference Board of Canada says the economy here in Manitoba, strong fundamentals will keep Manitoba's economy outlook buoyant this year.

So, you know, our private capital investment is forecast to be up by 22 percent, which is No. 1 in Canada. Total capital investment in Manitoba is forecast to rise about 19 percent, again, which is No. 1, Madam Acting Speaker.

There are a number of very positive things as well that have been happening recently in my

community. I was joined recently by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) where we opened the new Tyndall Building it's called, which is a \$25-million redevelopment of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, and just last year I had the pleasure of opening the first new school in Selkirk in over 30 years. There have been significant highway upgrades in the Selkirk area: Highway 59, Highways 8 and 27 and, of course, it was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that Selkirk will be getting a new hospital. I've mentioned this before to members that our hospital, the one that we have now, is only about 27, 28 years old, but unfortunately, when it was built it was built to very substandard standards and regrettably it needs to be replaced. We could have ignored the problem as a government or we could have just shut it down, but that's not our option. That's not our position. We are going to build a brand new hospital in Selkirk, and the hospital, of course, is a regional facility. It will serve St. Andrews, St. Clements, the whole Interlake region. So it's an exciting time for our community. We know that the building of this facility will help improve the construction industry in our province, but also in the local community as well.

Madam Acting Speaker, I also, in conclusion, would just like to invite all members to attend the Safeway men's curling championship to be held next February in Selkirk. So, if members are interested in that, you can come to see me and I'll sell you a ticket. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Acting Speaker, as a country and as a province, we are facing some stormy economic skies: many of the investments in stock markets in Canada have lost much of their value; seniors dependent on income from RRSPs; small businesses depending on income from sales when people have less disposable income; and those who are employed at businesses which are facing difficult times are already facing an uncertain future. In Manitoba, we are not immune to these difficult times. I hear already there are hundreds of Manitoba companies facing bankruptcy. Many small businesses are facing very difficult circumstances. Many individual Manitobans are concerned about their own jobs.

* (14:50)

At such times as these, when the captain of the ship in Manitoba, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is staring into these stormy seas, the Throne Speech should have provided a vision of where we are going and

how we are going to come through these difficult times.

The vision of where we are going should give guidance to all in the province and help bring us together as a team in knowing we can all play a role. We should be entering the stormy seas with all systems working optimally, and the role of the captain, in making sure this happens, is vital. We should be ready with some precautionary moves to enable those who are less fortunate to live and to survive in these troubled times. We should make sure, in spite of all the difficulties we face, that our children are well cared for and that they have the opportunity for optimum development and for opportunities for themselves and their futures.

We all know that we're moving toward what is called the green economy. An economy in which the products and services for which consumers will be most keen in the future are those which are environmentally beneficial rather than products and services which are polluting. In this context we're pleased with the government's decision to follow our Liberal lead in moving to ban plastic bags and to promote bags which are recyclable. Globally, there will be expanded use in the years to come for bags which are made of agricultural products, like cornstarch and hemp, and much less use of traditional plastic bags. Moving in this direction helps the planet and it also helps Manitoba's position in the development, production and marketing of recyclable bags.

But in other areas, the direction is less clear. The Throne Speech does not set the direction, in general, toward a green economy, as it should have done. It lacks a good GPS or even a compass. No sense of where we're going. There's a scattergun type of approach.

Let's talk about where the Throne Speech talks of ending logging in provincial parks. Good objective, but one presumes that there will be a change in jobs from those in the logging industry to those in the ecotourism industry. The Speech from the Throne lacks the comprehensive effort to build the ecotourism industry in Manitoba in a way that will be sustainable. Are people to be trained or retrained for the jobs of the future? Where is the infrastructure going to be? Are we doing a good job in training for the jobs which may not be there in the future, or are we really ahead of the game in preparing for the future jobs?

There's a real lack in this Throne Speech of what the green economy will look like, where the jobs will be and how we'll get there, maintaining and expanding jobs and opportunities for Manitobans. This should have been in the Throne Speech, but it was not.

As I have said already, we should be going ahead into these stormy seas, months ahead, with all systems go. Certainly, in nine years, Gary Doer and the NDP have had more than enough time to get things working properly, all systems go. But as we've seen recently many systems in Manitoba are not go. Affordable housing is in a crisis, as was made clear at a recent forum at St. Ignatius Church. Diseases like FASD and diabetes are at epidemic proportions in our province. The incidence of diabetes is increasing every year. There are big systemic problems in our regional health authorities. There is a crisis in Child and Family Services. All these problems could and should've been sorted out before we entered this stormy weather. But they all continue to be major issues which are unresolved because of nine years of inadequate action.

Let me talk for a moment about the diabetes epidemic which is occurring in Manitoba. We all know that the epidemic is happening. The statistics show that the increase in the number of Manitobans diagnosed with diabetes is increasing every year, and yet the present government, in nine years, has done very little about it. Certainly, they haven't tackled it like an epidemic and started to turn it around so that we see the numbers decreasing. Certainly, when we're dealing with SARS or flu epidemics, or a variety of other epidemics, we would expect a major mobilization of effort in the province. When we've seen this in the past, we've been able to have a decrease in the incidence of the disease that we're concerned about, get things under control and move forward, preventing the problems.

But this is not happening in Manitoba. What's being done to date is not effective. Increasing numbers of people are diagnosed with diabetes every year. We should begin with up-to-date reporting of new cases of diabetes instead of information which is weeks, months, or years out of date. When we've asked for this it's always been years out of date.

This year we got data for 2006. When former Minister Sale was there it was about three years old and it's not good enough. We should have clear, well-organized provincial actions to address the epidemic and to turn it around. We don't. Indeed

diabetes wasn't even mentioned in the Throne Speech. To have this huge epidemic, this devastation of people, the loss of legs due to amputation, the heart disease, the chronic kidney disease, the blindness and other problems happening all over the province on a daily basis and it's not even mentioned in the Throne Speech.

The failure of the NDP government to act effectively to reduce the number of new cases of diabetes is having huge consequences when it's not even being treated as an epidemic, when there's not even a serious, really serious effective effort to reduce the number of cases in diabetes, when Manitobans are suffering such serious life-threatening problems and the government, instead of talking about preventing diabetes, is forced to reiterate again and again how it's spending huge amounts of money on new dialysis units which are necessary to treat because they have not been able to prevent type 2 diabetes which is a preventable disease.

The government sadly has done little more than twiddle their thumbs as the epidemic gets worse and worse. Shame on the government for doing so little and for not even mentioning diabetes in the Throne Speech.

Similarly, FASD was not even mentioned in the Throne Speech in spite of the need to address this critical and important issue, to ensure we have effective approaches to monitoring and reducing the number of children born each year in Manitoba. It is as if this government has given up on preventing illness in Manitoba. Well, we're never going to have a good health-care system until we can prevent problems like these. We will never have a sustainable, affordable health-care system until we start in preventing in a major way these sorts of medical issues.

It speaks, Madam Acting Speaker, to the major systemic problems in our regional health authorities. It's not only the government centrally and its effect but all over the province there are problems. The recent report of what happened to Brian Sinclair said loud and clear that there are huge systemic problems in our regional health authorities. The minister even admitted responsibility for these huge problems. I'm pleased that she did so, but there are many more. The emergency rooms in Virden closed for months and months, people lacking the basic access to an emergency room in their community or for miles and miles, not good enough what's happened, major

systemic problems in our regional health authority system.

Indeed I am hearing from many that they are so fed up with what's happening, that if the RHAs are not dramatically reformed, we are going to have a major push to get rid of the RHAs all together. It's starting. We need to reform them if we are not going to have some other change which may or may not be better.

* (15:00)

Certainly what's happening at the moment in health care is a major problem and, of course, it's particularly disturbing when we hear, as we have recently, that highly respected physician, Dr. Larry Reynolds, has been treated very badly by the health-care system that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) are responsible for.

Dr. Larry Reynolds, who's originally from Manitoba, believes in the province, went elsewhere to get further training, did some outstanding research which has been acknowledged worldwide. Interestingly enough, it is Dr. Reynolds' research which has laid the foundation for the treatment and the help of mothers who are giving babies by general practitioners and midwives, because it was Dr. Reynolds's research which showed that the care given by general family physicians and midwives, coupled together, was as good as the care—this is for low-risk births—was as good as the care as that given by specialists.

It was his research work which has laid the way for the increase in midwives and the practice of midwifery in Manitoba and many, many other places. Yet now, sadly, Dr. Reynolds is being rejected by the system which he has tried to help so much and for which he has worked so hard.

He was recruited here to much fanfare. He became head of the Department of Family Medicine at the university and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order.

Mr. Gerrard: He worked—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Order. I'd just like to remind members that we have the loges available, if they wish to have private conversations. I thank all members for taking advantage of that opportunity.

Mr. Gerrard: Dr. Reynolds, in his five years—his tenure of the Professor of Family Medicine and the head of the department—worked very hard to promote and enhance the role of family physicians in Manitoba. He worked very hard to recruit family physicians to our province. He is highly respected, highly respected by medical students, highly respected by his patients.

To have somebody write to me as they did, somebody within the health-care system, who has worked with many, many, many physicians—in this case in an emergency room—and say that of all the physicians that he has ever worked with, it was the patients who saw and were treated by Dr. Larry Reynolds, who had the most compliments, the greatest respect. He was an extraordinary physician of very, very high calibre.

Dr. Reynolds was responsible for much of the effort to try and bring more family physicians into Manitoba, to build up the position, the career and the environment for family physicians in this province, so that other family physicians would come, so that new graduates would stay.

It's incredibly sad that now government which talks about wanting to have family physicians, which is dealing in many parts of Manitoba still with problems of access to family physicians, is now turning on the very physician, Dr. Larry Reynolds, who led the charge in this province to have better conditions for family physicians and more family physicians.

One can ask: How could that be? Madam Acting Speaker, I don't know what has happened. Obviously, something very terribly has gone wrong. If this government, as the Premier (Mr. Doer) said, doesn't even know who Larry Reynolds is when he should've been—

An Honourable Member: I didn't say that, Jon.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, I will wait and see what *Hansard* says tomorrow.

An Honourable Member: No, he doesn't know the person, Jon. He doesn't go out and do surgeries either.

Mr. Gerrard: I will wait for the reading of *Hansard* and we will see exactly what it says. Thank you.

But this is a circumstance, Madam Acting Speaker, which if you're going to have a good system, you have to be ready to stand up and defend the people who have helped build the system which

you want to have helped, stand up and support a system based on family physicians and, clearly, he's not had support from this government. That may be one of the reasons why we have not done as well as we should have done in recruiting and retaining family physicians in this province and why, given what's happened, we are likely to have a lot more difficulty.

As I said earlier, let me move on, this time to the crisis in Child and Family Services. There are some 48 children who have died in care from homicide since 1997. It is tragic. I have almost daily calls with concerns. I have called, as members heard recently, for an approach which ends the culture of blaming and starts a culture of learning from success, from Aboriginal communities which have few children in care, from children raised in foster homes who've done well, from the many CFS workers and foster parents who are successful in doing an outstanding job. This government, sadly, has had its head in the sand and has yet to fully implement the changes recommended in many reviews as the government itself has acknowledged in the Throne Speech in its meagre eight lines dealing with this whole subject.

We should have had a much clearer measure to help those who will be badly affected by the economic turmoil. Seniors resource centres should have been boosted. Prevention of health problems like diabetes and FASD and, in particular, mental health issues should have been emphasized. In a recession, the people are scared about their jobs; mental health issues come to the fore. There should have been a major effort in this area, and yet there wasn't.

We have many questions: Why is diabetes not being treated like the epidemic that it is? Why, after nine years in power, is there no sign of the epidemic being halted and reversed? Where is the effort to help those with mental health issues and to prevent further mental health issues from developing?

This Throne Speech lacked in some other areas as well. It was a failure to pay enough attention to Lake Winnipeg, to the measures to keep Lake Winnipeg environmentally and economically as prominent and as important as it has been. We know that Lake Winnipeg is in difficulty, that there are huge algal blooms, and yet the government has failed to recognize this, failed to build upon this, failed to take the measures which will ensure that we turn this situation around.

There's a lack of a coherent plan in many areas, a lack of a coherent plan that deals with lots of the issues that are vital importance to Manitoba.

Therefore, I now move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT the amendment be amended by adding the following after clause (q):

But this House further regrets:

(r) that the speech does not provide a coherent plan to address the plethora of health-care problems, such as the diabetes epidemic sweeping the province, overburdened health-care professionals and lengthy wait times; and

(s) the speech does not provide a coherent plan to identify the growing number of children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and to improve the design and effectiveness of programs to prevent and treat FASD; and

(t) the speech fails to deal with the need to ensure adequate numbers of health-care professionals and adequate health care for those in rural Manitoba; and

(u) the speech fails to provide Manitoba's agricultural sector with a coherent plan to assist producers in times of financial hardship or to transition into more environmentally sustainable practices; and

(v) that the speech fails to recognize the importance of Lake Winnipeg to all Manitobans by not providing a strategy that will keep Lake Winnipeg environmentally and economically viable for generations to come; and

(w) that the speech fails to recognize the urgent need for government to invest in green energy which will promote job creation and growth in these uncertain economic times; and

(x) that the impending economic turmoil will have the greatest effect on the most vulnerable people in Manitoba, and the speech does not provide a framework as to how the government will assist those who live in poverty, are low-income earners, are seniors, children or those who have debilitating physical and mental disabilities.

* (15:10)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights and seconded—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Dispense. The motion is in order.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It is a privilege to stand today in the Manitoba Legislature and speak to the 2008-2009 Throne Speech on behalf of the citizens of Brandon East. It is also a true honour to represent the constituency of Brandon East, a constituency that has long been recognized as one of the most progressive in our province and one which has always been active in working to make my community the best it can be. I am very grateful for the support of my community and am committed to always putting the interests of Brandon first.

The Throne Speech debate provides an opportunity to both review the good work our government has done together with so many people in Brandon East to help our city prosper and to look forward into the future with our ongoing commitment as a government to continually work for the benefit of Brandon.

Health care remains the most important issue we face today. When our government was elected to office, Brandon's health-care infrastructure was mired in the 1950s, and citizens were disillusioned by more than a half-dozen broken promises to address the severe health-care infrastructure deficit over the 11-year term of Gary Filmon. Indeed, during this dark time, not a single, meaningful improvement was made to Brandon's health-care infrastructure, and some 200,000 people in western Manitoba were left with crumbling facilities.

I am proud to say that the first infrastructure investment we made upon being elected to office was a \$50-million development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre. This investment revitalized my community's crumbling health-care infrastructure, added six state-of-the-art surgical suites to the centre, created a neonatal unit for new families, and expanded tremendously the emergency room capacity available to all citizens in need. This investment was quickly followed by the complete replacement of Brandon's aging ambulance fleet, the installation of Manitoba's first magnetic resonance imaging unit outside of the city of Winnipeg, and the development of the downtown Health Access Centre. In short order, several million dollars more were allocated to the revitalization of the Westman Laboratory, reaffirming the important role this facility plays in supporting Manitoba's diagnostic services infrastructure.

In this Throne Speech, building upon earlier commitments, we are pressing ahead with the building of the \$25-million CancerCare Manitoba treatment facility in Brandon. Upon completion of this centre, some \$100 million will have been invested in Brandon's health-care infrastructure.

Although the Conservative opposition has voted against every single penny of this investment, I'm proud of our government's historic commitment to building health-care infrastructure in Brandon and pledge to continue investing in this infrastructure for as long as we hold office.

Education and providing a solid footing for the development of a high-skill, high-wage economy in Manitoba is also of the highest importance to our government. In Brandon, this has met historic and unprecedented levels of investment in our public school system, historic and unprecedented levels of investment in Brandon University, and historic and unprecedented levels of investment at Assiniboine Community College. Providing real hope and a prosperous future for young people in our region is central to this strategy.

While Brandon has seen the expansion of public school infrastructure, most notably elementary school gymnasiums and the creation of a life skills wing at Neelin High School, and while Brandon University has seen the construction of the health studies building and the Aboriginal counselling centre, it is at Assiniboine Community College that our ongoing investment in educational excellence is greatest. Building upon the development of the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts, this Throne Speech highlighted the construction of the \$45-million Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology. The Len Evans Centre, which would double the number of trade students able to undertake their education at ACC, is a direct response to industry's great need for skilled trades people and will support youth in accessing world-class educational facilities in western Manitoba. This project, the second phase of the historic development of Assiniboine Community College on Brandon's North Hill, expands upon the redevelopment of the outstanding heritage architecture of the former BMHC campus. When complete, Assiniboine Community College will have the most architecturally outstanding college campus in Canada and draw generations of young people to a future in Brandon.

In addition to our unprecedented investment in Assiniboine Community College, the 2008-2009 Throne Speech also committed to the construction of a new physical plant for Brandon University, a much-needed enhancement to that institution which will give Brandon University the capacity to expand and grow far into the future.

While health care and education are fundamental areas of importance for our government's ongoing investment in Brandon, community and road infrastructure, Madam Acting Speaker, also have our attention. Neighbourhoods Alive! continues to build our community, supporting funding of the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, the construction of affordable housing in Brandon, the development of parks and children's playgrounds in Brandon, the improvement of downtown storefronts and making possible the undertaking of special community projects. This modest \$250,000 annual commitment makes a very real difference in improving neighbourhoods in Brandon East and in improving the lives of those of us who make Brandon East our home. Our government's support for the Memorial Cup in Brandon will also place the city on the national stage in the years to come and will help to address the revitalization of the Keystone Centre.

On the road, bridge and street infrastructure front, the Throne Speech reaffirms our commitment to the further development of the Eastern Access route in Brandon. This route, which was begun during the Schreyer administration by my distinguished predecessor, Len Evans, has seen considerable investment made by successive NDP administrations and we are determined to continue supporting its development until completion.

Of course, the most prominent road infrastructure project presently under way in my community is the \$17-million twinning of the 18th Street Bridge over the Assiniboine River. During the past two construction seasons, our government has repaved 1st Street, repaved Richmond Avenue, repaved 18th Street, and with the work under way on our bridges, total investment will soon be above \$20 million in the past two years alone. This year we will continue to support the work of Renaissance Brandon in revitalizing our historic downtown.

We will also continue with our policy of targeted tax reductions for Manitobans. Indeed, our government has reduced taxes at every level—personal taxes, property taxes, business taxes and

corporate taxes—since coming into office, while at the same time tabling nine consecutive balanced budgets, providing regular increases to the minimum wage and targeting investment to the areas of most importance to Manitobans. Our funding contributions to municipalities, including direct support to fire departments, police services, transit systems and waste-water treatment plants, are unprecedented in Manitoba history.

Above all else, and what I am most proud of in the 2008-2009 Throne Speech, is our government's commitment to the environment. A number of years ago, we made the historic commitment to seek UNESCO World Heritage Site status for the east side of Lake Winnipeg, seeking to forever protect our continent's largest remaining tract of boreal forest and the spectacular ecosystem contained therein.

A couple of years ago, our government placed a moratorium on hog barn development in our province and we subsequently legislated a no-development zone in the last session. Protecting our water resources, whether through the funding of new waste-water treatment plants, or through respecting science and future development, is of vital importance to our government.

*(15:20)

Since our election, we have built Manitoba's first wind farm, expanded support for geothermal energy, provided incentives for hybrid-car purchases, expanded solar-energy uses, put a renewed focus on sustainable hydro development and begun the elimination of coal-powered plants in our province.

The 2008-2009 Throne Speech builds upon this record by protecting our forests and ending the practice of logging in provincial parks. This initiative is historic in scope and virtually unprecedented in North America.

Manitoba has been recognized by the David Suzuki Foundation as being a world leader in developing and implementing green environmental policies. We are on track to meet and even surpass our Kyoto commitments. This is a record we plan to build upon in the future, not merely by talking the talk, but by walking the walk. We are a green government in word and in deed, and all of us in the New Democratic Party of Manitoba are fully committed to building a better future for our planet.

The 2008-2009 Throne Speech is a testament to our government's commitment to Brandon and a testament to our government's commitment to

Manitoba. It is a privilege to support it wholeheartedly, Madam Acting Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Madam Acting Speaker, I get this opportunity every time we have a Throne Speech to respond to it and, I think, those of us in this Legislature should feel extremely grateful about the fact that we have been elected by our constituents to be able to respond either negatively or positively, or assess the Throne Speech from our own perspectives. I know our own perspectives sometimes differ from this side of the House to the other side of the House.

In this case it's also true but, before I start into my comments on the Throne Speech, I want to say that I represent a wonderful constituency on the west side of this province, one that is blessed with the wonderful resources of the natural beauty of Riding Mountain National Park on the north end of my constituency, running right through to Clear Lake and McCreary. Then on the south of Riding Mountain we have the beautiful rolling land which provides an excellent form of agricultural activity throughout my constituency, but even more important than the resources that we have there, Madam Acting Speaker, are the wonderful people of the constituency and I am honoured and privileged to have the privilege of serving them as their MLA.

Madam Acting Speaker, one other event that I want to highlight—and this is a time when I can truly say that this Legislature from time to time does come together in unison when we see an issue that is important to us to support. I want to thank the members of this House for supporting the Bill 217, the Holodomor memorial day act. This past week, we saw the culmination of the event with a celebration and a service—not a celebration, but a commemoration and a service at City Hall. Throughout the previous week, there were a number of events that took place which, I guess, explained to the people of our province in more detail the horrors that occurred in 1932 and 1933.

I want to thank the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who seconded the bill, and also members of this Legislature for unanimously supporting the memorial day act. Today, because of the move that was taken by Manitoba as one of the first provinces to recognize this as a genocide, the Parliament of Canada also passed a national day of commemoration, being the fourth Saturday of November.

Madam Acting Speaker, when we turn our attention to the Throne Speech that was just read by His Honour to this House last week, I have to say that I was somewhat disappointed that the Throne Speech didn't contain a vision for where this government was going in a time when the downturn of the economy was facing us quite squarely.

One needs to take account of what has happened over the course of the last number of years that this government has been in office and look at what type of activities this government has been engaged in to prepare for times when we have to, perhaps, regroup and look at a downturn in economic times and how well this government has prepared itself and the citizens of this province for such a time. We are, indeed, in the midst of that kind of economic downturn. It happens cyclically in this country and in the world and we are living through that at this current time.

In the Throne Speech that was provided, we did not look and find any kind of appropriate measures that this government was prepared to take to deal with the circumstances that are before us. I had heard prior to the Throne Speech, in press releases that were issued before the Throne Speech in anticipation of the opening of the session, that the government would be making an economic statement. That was the first time that I recall in the number of years I've been here that a government was coming forward with an economic statement together with the Throne Speech. We're still awaiting that economic statement because we did not hear that in the Throne Speech. I'm hoping that in the next few days this government is going to screw up its courage and have the Finance Minister stand up and give us a bit of an economic forecast, an economic statement as to where this government is going to go because there was a complete lack of it in the Throne Speech.

I heard this morning that the Minister of Finance for the Government of Canada is looking at bringing a budget in earlier because of the economic realities that this country is facing. Manitoba is not immune to that. I'm wondering what is happening with our government, our Minister of Finance, in terms of his preparing Manitobans for the time that we are living through currently.

This has an impact on every single family in this province. It has an impact on their finances. It has an impact on the jobs. It has an impact on the livelihoods of every Manitoban that's living in this province because its impact is going to be felt not

only to those individuals, but in your families, and also, in the economy and the finances of our province.

The government of Manitoba has depended heavily in the last nine years on federal transfer payments. Up to 34 percent or more of the current budget is made up of federal transfer payments, federal equalization payments, money coming directly to Manitoba from Ottawa. We are probably the only have-not province in this country that has done so poorly in terms of trying to have its own house in order.

We are depending on other provinces to contribute from their revenues to help sustain the economy of our province. That's kind of a shameful way to conduct business, but it appears that this government is proud of that fact and continues to pride itself on the fact that it can extract those dollars from Ottawa.

What happens when that money runs out? What happens when the economy dictates that Manitoba is either going to flatten out in terms of its receipts—in fact, I think there are some new realities on the horizon where we may even see less transfers than we saw before.

I think that's what the Finance Minister nationally is concerned about. That is why he is going to be coming out with an earlier budget rather than a later budget, to ensure that our country is on stable footing. But what is Manitoba doing? Well, if you look at the Throne Speech, there is very little that we're going to do.

Yes, we're going to ban logging in this country. Now that's going to help the economy a lot, isn't it? But there's one place that we're not going to ban logging and that's the Duck Mountain. Of course, that's in my area; it's north of my area. But indeed, probably the political reason for not banning logging in the Duck Mountain is because both the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) share that constituency and that is where the Duck Mountain is located.

The reality is that a ban on logging in provincial forests is not going to do anything for our economy. As a matter of fact, it's going to be a negative driver in terms of where our economy is going. If you look at the sustainable growth of forests in Manitoba, and this is a fact, it's not fiction, as a matter of fact we

today enjoy greater forests than we had 30 years ago. It is because of the conservation measures that have been taking place over time.

* (15:30)

Nobody has moved out to ban logging in certain areas of the province because they are called provincial forests. Why is Nopiming different than Duck Mountain? Can anybody tell me that? Can anybody suggest to me why Duck Mountain is treated differently than Nopiming Park is treated.

Madam Acting Speaker, I think, by and large, this government has shown us in the past that it is very political in the way it administers its affairs, and we saw that with the ban on hogs. Again, very political in the way that the ban was conducted and under the guise of protecting Lake Winnipeg. Well, if you really want to protect Lake Winnipeg, why didn't we address the issue of the effluent that flows through the river from the city of Winnipeg, the raw sewage that is dumped into the river from the city of Winnipeg—and yes, we are, but it's going to take us a number of years before we can actually say we're doing anything positive and constructive.

The government has been throwing money around as though it grows on trees. Madam Acting Speaker, if you look at, for example, the hydro line that was proposed. Now everybody who I know who has any credibility has come out against the government in terms of where the government is planning to locate its transmission line, but yet the government continues to push its agenda ahead despite the criticisms, despite the opposition that is coming forward because this government feels it knows best. Even Manitoba Hydro has indicated that this is not their course that they have chosen in terms of the proposed hydro line. This is purely a political maneuver by this government, a political decision made by this government to locate the hydro line where they want it rather than where the practical aspects and the economics dictate that it should be. Yet at the same time they are proposing to construct a highway along the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Now you tell me where there's going to be more destruction of forest. Is it going to be in a hydro line or is it going to be in a road? Anybody who knows anything about construction of hydro lines and construction of roads will tell you that a road will take up more of the treed area than hydro lines will.

Madam Acting Speaker, this government hasn't prepared this province for the new economy. It hasn't

prepared this province for a downturn in the economy, and yet they are sitting back today, they are not coming forward with any kind of economic vision and economic plan on how we're going to do and how we're going to deal with the issues in the future.

Madam Acting Speaker, I live in the rural part of this province and I'm proud to call rural Manitoba my home. There was a time in the history of this province not that long ago when a government paid attention to what's happening in rural Manitoba. They paid attention to what was happening in the north, and they paid attention to what was happening in the cities, but we have a government today that pays attention to what's happening in the city, pays attention to what's happening in the north, but they completely ignore the rural part, the southern rural part, the agro part of our province.

Now my colleague the critic for Agriculture has called on this government on many occasions to stop attacking the livelihoods of thousands of Manitobans by its policies that it is forcing on the rural part of our province, but we don't see any specific programming.

Now in the Throne Speech I read a couple of lines about this government kind of going back to the future. They were looking at programs that were developed by a former government, a former Minister of Rural Development, and now they were going to attach a few dollars to those programs that were developed a long time ago. There is no vision by this government as to where we could move in an innovative way in ensuring that rural Manitoba's economy is healthy.

As a matter of fact, the only reason rural Manitoba's economy is healthy is because of the people who live there, the resilience of its people in spite of what government is doing to them in a direct way by foisting all kinds of regulations and laws upon them that are negative to their way of life, negative to their economy and negative to their ability to survive. Madam Acting Speaker, we see this on a daily basis from this government.

Now the only agricultural member that they have in their caucus is the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). She's the only one who's got any practical experience in agriculture—

An Honourable Member: Don't insult Tom.

Mr. Derkach: My apologies to the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) because I know he

raises goats. I know he is a prominent goat farmer in the Interlake—

An Honourable Member: Sheep.

Mr. Derkach: That's not cheap. I'm giving him credit for being—

An Honourable Member: No, no, sheep. Sheep.

Mr. Derkach: Oh, sheep he's raising, not goats. I thought it was goats. Well, he raises sheep. He is a sheep farmer—

An Honourable Member: Not a cheap one.

Mr. Derkach: —and not a cheap one, but a sheep farmer, and, certainly, yes, there is one member, but he's having some difficulty. The Member for Interlake is having a little bit of difficulty clawing his way into Cabinet. I don't know, perhaps if he stays here long enough, he'll claw his way back in there.

We certainly would look forward to his innovative ideas that he learned. I think it was in Russia he told me he learned some of these practices that he wants to put in place. We certainly look forward to some of his ideas but, Madam Acting Speaker, I want to get back to the serious side of the Throne Speech.

Rural Manitoba is a part of this province that's filled with resources, and whether it's northern Manitoba with its minerals or, in fact, southern Manitoba where we have oil deposits, we have potash deposits and yet very little, if anything, is being done to ensure that those deposits are being not exploited but are being used to the maximum of the benefit of the people of this province.

When we look across the border at Saskatchewan and we see what's going on in Saskatchewan with regard to the oil industry, right now my understanding is that there are at least two potash mines, possibly a third one, that will be built in the next—one is being built as we speak and it's about 40 miles from the border. Yet we have a government here who has that same opportunity.

Now potash doesn't end at the border. The border of Manitoba wasn't created where the potash line was and there is opportunity. Never has there been a time in recent history where it's been more practical to start investing into a resource that will not only create jobs for that region, but will create jobs for the entire province.

Yes, it takes leadership. It takes the leadership of a government to work with the industries to ensure that the climate is right for investment in this province. Just this afternoon, we heard the Leader of the Opposition question the First Minister about why it is that the mining industry of Manitoba has condemned the approach of this government in terms of Manitoba being the worst jurisdiction to be investing in the resource industry and in mining.

Now, Madam Acting Speaker, the minister responsible says we are wrong, but then don't argue with us. Argue with the people who put the reports out.

Are you with the mining industry? Tell them why they are wrong, because I am sure that their research is a little better than the minister's research in this case.

Why are companies not investing in this province and why are they investing in Saskatchewan? Why are they investing in Alberta? Why are there oil wells being drilled every day in Saskatchewan to the degree that they are?

The minister says, they are here. Yes, we've got one or two going fine, but if you take a look at the comparison of what's happening in Saskatchewan to what's happening in Manitoba, we are so far behind. I guess we are so far behind that the minister thinks we're first.

If you look at the potash industry, this is a resource that we should be harvesting because there has never been a greater demand in the world for potash than there is right now. Now true enough, the downturn of the economy has an impact on the prices of potash, but the long-term outlook for potash is very positive. The minister knows that.

You don't build a mine in a year. It takes seven years to develop the resource. So, therefore, we should be doing the very thing that Saskatchewan is doing, and that is investing in that resource and making sure that on this side of the border, on the Manitoba side of the border, there is going to be a resource developed in the potash industry. I could go on and on.

One of the social problems we have in our province, of course, is with regard to our senior citizens and with regard to the state of health care in rural Manitoba. Now I heard the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) just a moment ago talk about that wonderful list of positives that have

occurred in Brandon. Yes, those were planned long before he became minister or became government.

* (15:40)

It was the former Member for Brandon West, Jim McCrae, who had a great deal to do with the fact that the Brandon general hospital was redeveloped and that the MRI was brought into Brandon general hospital. It was this government, and this government enjoyed the work that was done previous to it and, yes, the Minister of Health who's now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) was the individual who credited himself with doing all these things, and that's fine. That's how things go in government. The person who sows is not necessarily always the person who reaps the benefit, and in this case, that was true.

Nevertheless, Madam Acting Speaker, if we look outside of Brandon, and you try to get yourself an appointment in Brandon general hospital right now, it's almost impossible. You're going to wait for weeks and months. As a matter of fact, it's the case throughout the province.

I have a constituent, Madam Acting Speaker, a maternity person, who was going to be giving birth, and we don't have a birthing in my hospital, so she was taken by ambulance to the Brandon general hospital because she was considered a high-risk case. *[interjection]* Now, I'm getting some hassle from my own caucus.

This woman was taken from Russell to Brandon, to the general hospital, but, Madam Acting Speaker, Brandon general hospital couldn't help her either. So she was in labour at this point and was taken then from Brandon to the general hospital here in the city. Now, I might say that this is a strange case, but it hasn't happened just once. It's happened a number of times. That just shows you the lack of the kinds of services that rural Manitobans are now living under.

Madam Acting Speaker, look at the senior citizens of our province. Now, there are many people who need the services of a personal care home. Right now, in my community, there are 23 people waiting for personal care placement. The community of Russell, in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority, was supposed to be the first town to receive a personal care home some nine years ago.

Today, if you ask the chief executive officer of the ARHA as to where that's at, she would tell you that it's not even on the radar screen. Why, Madam Acting Speaker? Why is it that this government has

abandoned rural Manitoba in every case, whether it's in the economy, whether it's in support to agriculture, whether it's in support to the schools and the health facilities in our province, or whether it's in the lack of support to the resource development of our province.

Madam Acting Speaker, that's the characteristic of this government, and that is the lack of vision this government has for the well-being of our province and the growth of our province.

Madam Acting Speaker, I failed to check the time in terms of how much time I've got left—eight? But, I know there are others in this House who want to make some remarks, so I'll try to wrap my comments up as quickly as I can.

We on this side of the House aren't going to condemn the government for its Throne Speech, but the Throne Speech lacked the vision that Manitobans would have expected from a government at a time when the economy is in trouble. This government shows that it has no plan for this province. I think it has shown clearly that there is no vision that it has for getting ourselves out of the slump that we're in.

Yes, the Premier (Mr. Doer) attended the all-premiers conference with the Prime Minister to make sure that there was some co-operation, but it is time for the Premier or the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to come forward with an economic statement that shows us the way of how we're going to get out of the dilemma that we're finding ourselves in, how this government is going to help stimulate the economic activity, not only of the north or the city, but indeed of the entire province.

That's what this government needs to be challenged with and indeed that's why my leader, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), put forward the amendments to the Throne Speech, which, I think, make some sense, which show that there is some thought and that some work has gone into planning for what we should be doing in a time when our economy is at peril.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, with those few remarks, I want to take the opportunity to thank my constituents for their resilience and for continuing to work hard to ensure that they do their part in a time when the economy is faltering, at a time when all of us should be working towards rebuilding the economy of this province right from one end of the province to the other.

With those remarks, I thank you for the time, Madam Acting Speaker.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): What a wonderful place to be in Manitoba and in Canada where we are free to have different or differing opinions, and I beg to disagree with the opinions shared with us by the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

But, for now, Madam Acting Speaker, I wish to say that it is with joy and pride that I stand today at the House to speak in favour of the Throne Speech, which sets out the clear and prudent plans for government to weather the economic storm looming on the horizon.

But my joy is marred by deep sadness for the passing of a beloved colleague, the honourable Minister Oscar Lathlin. His passing is a personal loss. I had just started getting to know Oscar, a colleague, a brother, a father, a grandfather, and it would have been a joy to have Oscar around and delight in his company, his humour, his practical insights, his wisdom. But much greater than my personal loss is the community's loss of a determined worker, a strong defender, advocate and champion of northern issues and concerns. Oscar might strike one as quiet and unassuming, yet, in meetings I had the privilege to attend, Oscar was an active participant in discussions. He eloquently expressed his concerns for situations obtaining in various northern communities. He championed projects and programs that would provide education and self-sufficiency to members of these communities. For all this and more, Oscar will be greatly missed, and we who are left owe him a debt of gratitude for showing us great examples of strong, faithful and compassionate leadership. For this I and my colleagues are truly grateful, and to honour Oscar and his memory we will remember the principles he stood and fought for, and we'll continue the community initiatives and the deep concern he had for his constituents.

Madam Acting Speaker, I had a chance recently to speak with several members of my constituency. I asked them what they think of the Throne Speech. Not all of them offered a deep analysis of the sections of the speech, but in layperson and practical terms I was told they are hoping for the best and keeping their fingers crossed. Likewise, they affirmed the trust they have in the present government. One woman even said the alternative could be worse. They are happy that they have their jobs, although it may not be the ideal ones, especially

for new immigrants. These people own their modest homes. They are assured of quality health care when they need it. Their children are in school. One was even glad that with one income—because his wife is in school and trying to finish a trades program—they are surviving. It's heartening to know living in the constituency of Wellington afforded a one-income family with children to survive.

Madam Acting Speaker, as you know, Wellington shares a similar social economic profile as some of the constituencies in the Winnipeg core areas. Wellington is a diverse community: various ethnic backgrounds, ages and political involvement. I am delighted to share with my constituents our government's commitment and continued investment in skilled trades. This initiative is critical to addressing the evident need for increased participation of youth, and even not-so-young citizens, in the work force. I will gladly share with my constituents that Manitoba's apprenticeship program has grown significantly since 1999, with the number of registered apprentices up by 70 percent. I am rest assured that my esteemed Competitiveness, Training and Trade Minister, Andrew Swan, will be busy following through on this to make sure our province will have the trained work force its business and industry need. *[interjection]* I stand corrected—our Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who happens to be the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade. Thank you.

* (15:50)

Ms. Erna Braun, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Minister Oscar Lathlin is best remembered for his passion for training and education for residents of northern communities. That is not lost on this government. Responding to a key recommendation of a summit on Aboriginal business development and increasing the Aboriginal work force, a Northern Essential Skills initiative will be launched this year. The initiative will provide industry-based training for Aboriginal and northern residents prior to entering their apprenticeship program.

The huge Aboriginal population in the Wellington constituency has families and friends still living in the north. This initiative will be a boon to their loved ones and acquaintances. Right now there is an unprecedented situation in Manitoba's north where there are more jobs than there are workers. I would not be surprised if, upon learning this, some of the Aboriginal residents in the Wellington constituency would consider going back to the north

and availing of these training opportunities and be gainfully employed as a result.

In the coming year the Northern Development Strategy will provide new programs for training and community development. As well, a dedicated Métis economic development fund will be set up in partnership with the Manitoba Métis Federation. Moreover, in Flin Flon, the University College of the North will offer a new training program for the mining sector. Again, my constituents will be happy to know that this government's \$4.7-billion infrastructure investment plan includes northern Manitoba projects such as construction of the east side road, new upgrades to Highways 6 and 10 and improved roads for a single-access community. As well, they can expect to see a new UCN building in Thompson and an expansion of UCN facilities in The Pas which includes a new wellness centre. Moreover, affordable housing projects will be up in Thompson and The Pas.

Madam Acting Speaker, it is not only the northern regions of the province that are buzzing with activities. The four-year, \$4.7-billion investment will also see construction projects in Brandon and Westman areas, Eastman and the Interlake regions, as well as in the Winnipeg areas. For people who live in the city like me it is hard to imagine living in a community where access to other places is a big challenge. If it happens that I need to cook and for some reason some ingredients I need are missing, I can easily drive to the nearest grocery store where these ingredients are available. This is not the case for our northern brothers and sisters. If they find themselves in the same situation, for them there's not much they can do but wait for the next plane shipment of food supplies. In the meantime, some might resort to imagining that there are bridges and roads that will take them out of their remote location that leads to a bigger island or town where there is a northern store.

In the Throne Speech this government announced the construction of an east-side all-weather road. This major project will provide remote communities with access to goods and vital services. This will make a world of difference to the quality of life for northern residents. They will soon dream no more of these roads and bridges as it will be a reality.

Madam Acting Speaker, it is with such great honour for me to represent the residents of Wellington. What an even greater honour that the

premier health-care facility of the province is situated in the Wellington constituency. The past nine years saw the erection of several facilities and purchases of state-of-the-art diagnostic and medical equipment for the Health Sciences Centre. I'm so glad to know that mentioned in the Throne Speech is this expansion of the dialysis unit at the Health Sciences Centre and installation of a new MRI machine at the Children's Hospital. I personally know of several Wellington residents who will be benefiting from this development.

Certainly, Wellington constituents, along with the rest of Winnipeg, will be comforted knowing that this government has also committed to upgrading Winnipeg's waste-water treatment.

Madam Acting Speaker, I am so reassured knowing this government truly cares for people who are struggling to make ends meet. Sadly for me, I came from an old country where, for a majority of its citizens, three meals a day is an impossible dream, or receiving medical care is a myth. I have known of so many cases where people face serious medical conditions but did not seek medical care because it is not affordable or accessible. One relative of mine who lived in the province told me she witnessed her father die a slow and very painful death weeks after falling from a coconut tree. They didn't bother to bring him to hospital because they have no money for daily food, how much more for doctor's fee or hospitalization?

I myself was too young to know the reasons why my own father, when he suffered a heart attack, refused to be brought to the hospital although the nearest hospital was only 10 minutes away. Later on I realized that, without substantial down payment, admittance in hospital is refused and medical and drug costs are prohibitive for a low-income family like ours. My father was realistic and did not want to burden his family with hospital expenses, knowing his family has no extra funds anywhere to withdraw from.

The value of universal health care and the lifesaving results it brings is foreign to so many people in my old country. I am forever grateful to the wisdom, compassion, and vision of Tommy Douglas and his party mates who, against all odds, relentlessly pursued access to universal health care for all regardless of economic stature in life. The life I still enjoy today, I owe it through God's grace and the skills of neurosurgeons at the Health Sciences Centre and being a Manitoba Health card carrier.

All over this great country, citizens are served well by an accessible health care. In Manitoba, our government has health care accessibility as its top priority. One of the last vestiges of the patient payment system is being eliminated thanks to a significant agreement between the province and the Manitoba Medical Association. Starting on April 1, 2009, Manitoba doctors will no longer charge tray fees to patients for publicly insured services.

In the upcoming session, our government will also introduce legislation to ban government health-care premiums in Manitoba. Over the next two years, we'll see significant investments in specialized medical equipment to the tune of 85.5 million in addition to the 51 million in 2008-2009. That is more than double the 40 million invested over the past two years.

Given my first-hand experience of poverty in my early age, I can fully appreciate our government's continued strategies to reduce poverty. According to Statistics Canada, child poverty in Manitoba dropped by 36 percent from 1999 through 2006. Those in my constituency who are experiencing financial challenges will gladly welcome the Rewarding Work program. This new initiative will help low-income, working families with the cost in raising their children and will support them in their desire to continue working. For those on welfare, this program will make it easier for them to move from welfare to work. In addition, our government will publish multi-year capital plans for health care, education, highways, and water management. This provides predictability to the construction industry and I wish well for the employment prospects for Manitoba's work force.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Being an older community, many homes in the Wellington constituency need retrofitting to reduce the cost of heating the homes in the winter months. My constituents will be delighted to know there are existing programs to retrofit older homes for energy and water conservation. I have witnessed recently how the program of this government, in co-operation with Manitoba Hydro, has retrofitted older homes of low-income residents.

One resident said she pays \$500 a month during winter time and that is a real burden on her budget. As we speak, her basement insulation is now finished, maybe the attic insulation as well, and I will certainly come back and visit her in February to ask

how much ease the retrofitting work did to her budget.

* (16:00)

For those in my constituency who live in Manitoba Housing, they will see the comfort and improved aesthetics the significantly expanded programs to overhaul public housing stock will bring. This expansion and partnership with community groups will provide training and employment opportunities for local residents. The workers doing retrofitting in the homes of low-income residents we recently visited were formerly unemployed and some were problem members of the community. With the training they received, they are now employed and finding satisfaction in the work they do.

I have seen the pride and joy in the faces of these men and women as they work in the basements and attics of older homes. Seeing the fruits of their hard work and from the proud owners of these homes, you can tell they are so happy. This government cares for them and will do many things to improve their life.

Madam Acting Speaker, the workers who reside in the Wellington constituency and, of course, in other areas will be encouraged to know that this government has definite plans to keep workers safe. The workers compensation coverage for firefighters will be expanded and presumptive diseases under the WCB act will be added.

The police act will be modernized to protect police officers who put their lives at risk to help keep citizens safe. As well, a new food safety act will be introduced to help ensure the safety of our food chain.

Another most welcome news to Wellington constituents is their government proceeding with expansion of child-care options under our five-year Family Choices plan. Close to 3,000 funded child-care spaces will be added over two years under this plan. As well, new capital funding will be provided in the coming year, and a new recruitment and retention initiative will be introduced for child-care workers.

Madam Acting Speaker, I can speak much longer, but I see my colleagues on this side of the House would also like to share with you how the Speech from the Throne has also given their constituents more reasons to cheer about. Like me, they too are bearers of good news to their

constituents, as brought about by the Throne Speech which I'm so proud to support. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Madam Acting Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the amendments to the Throne Speech put forward by our leader. I just want to indicate that it is a true honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of the people of Charleswood.

I'd like to welcome back all honourable members today, I would note except for two, and would just like to comment on the untimely passing of Oscar Lathlin at the age of 61. Oscar had been in this Chamber as long as I have been and that's 10 years. I want to indicate that I will certainly miss him and the passion he had about Aboriginal and northern initiatives and particularly his commitment to education for Aboriginal youth. He saw this as something very, very significant for young Aboriginal youth to get ahead and he spoke out with a lot of commitment and passion for what he believed in.

I really commend him for his ability to keep that issue out on the agenda because I think it is critically important. We're certainly going to miss his presence here in the House. Also, the Member for Elmwood, Jim Maloway, we certainly wish him well as he has moved on to federal politics.

Madam Acting Speaker, I'd like to welcome back the table officers and the pages and the Sergeant-at-Arms and tell them it's a very big pleasure to work with all of them. Everybody's really become part of our family here in the Legislature and it's sort of like having a Leg family. It's certainly an honour to work with the people that we have here in Manitoba.

I'd like to also express thanks to Mr. Speaker for his patience and fairness in dealing with all of the challenges that all of us present to him on a very regular basis. We certainly appreciate how he handles himself in the chair.

Madam Acting Speaker, if there was ever a Throne Speech that missed the boat, it was this particular one. There's an economic crisis out there and all the Premier was able to come up with is steady-as-she-goes. Well, that's not right. This was the time to put forward a vision for Manitoba not to be paralyzed. For a government to be paralyzed at a time like this does not position Manitoba very well to deal with the challenges that are on the horizon, if not already here in some instances.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This Throne Speech missed out on presenting a lot of opportunities. I know we have seen that for the last many, many Throne Speeches, but this one, in particular, was an important, very significant one in terms of timing in what is happening in Manitoba. I think the government had a lot of chances to stimulate the economic engine and I don't think they did it. They were either paralyzed or out of steam or out of ideas or something. This was not the time for 10-second sound bites. A 10-point plan would have been a much more substantive way to look at what we need to do in order to strengthen Manitoba for the long haul.

You have to wonder, you know, there are headlines out there that talk about Manitoba being a western weakling, Manitoba being a have-not province. We're being talked about in Ontario for the amount of equalization payments that come here, in many instances, from a lot of people in Ontario. I have to wonder why after all this time, after nine years in government, this government doesn't try harder to move beyond what others are labelling us as a western weakling. You'd think they'd be embarrassed and that that would put some fire in their belly and spring in their bounce to make some things happen here that would make Manitoba a stronger province.

We're the only have-not province in the west. It was interesting in reading some of the articles that have come across, and even from national papers. Now it's comments like, not only are we a have-not province, but that we're a will-not province. We will not work harder to become a have province.

So people in Manitoba and outside of Manitoba are becoming much, much more aware of the failings of this government and their failings to make us more independent from federal transfers. Instead, what this government has done has ramped that up, in fact, and made us very, very dependent as a province on Canada, on the federal government for federal handouts. So you have to wonder where's their pride, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Manitoba is going to stay a have-not province as long as this NDP lack the courage to ask the right questions, as long as the NDP lacks the commitment to a vision and as long as the NDP lacks a course of action. We haven't seen those three major commitments from this government to move forward. So, as long as that is lacking, we're not

going to see a whole lot of changes going on in Manitoba.

It was interesting, too, that there was all this comment from the government that they were going to put forward an economic statement. I thought, well, that's kind of interesting. We'll have a Throne Speech and an economic statement. It was surprising to see that really wasn't there. Basically, the Throne Speech was a lot about banning various things and a lot about spending. But in all of those announcements they really missed the bigger picture. In that bigger picture, they also did not give Manitobans any comfort level by addressing the people of Manitoba with an economic statement so that Manitobans would have a sense of what their future is going to be like.

Certainly, when we have uncertain economic times, an economic plan from this government would have been beneficial because it would have given people a sense of how the government plans to weather an economic storm. But, unfortunately, there was a void of a plan in this Throne Speech. All there really was was a rehash of a lot of commitments that this government has made in the budget of last April and at various other points throughout the year.

When the government should be spending wisely, reducing debt, reducing taxes and setting clear priorities, none of that was very obvious in this Throne Speech, and it obviously was not one of the goals that this government put forward. So instead we've got a province that has reached new heights in debt, dependency and spending. That cannot go on forever because, at some point, when you max out your credit card, somebody has got to pay the piper. In this case, it is going to be the taxpayers of Manitoba and, in this case, it's going to be those young taxpayers that are just becoming adults and are going to be faced with a debt that I don't think they ever expected, with a disappointment in a government that is so dependent. You know, instead of growing up and wanting to leave home and work on their own, like young people do, the government instead has entrenched itself into expecting and needing federal money just in order to have the dollars they need here to provide programming.

* (16:10)

The kind of spending we've seen is certainly not what we're seeing other provinces do unless they have the money to afford it. Mr. Acting Speaker, Saskatchewan and B.C. have focussed on debt repayment while delivering personal tax relief. In

talking to somebody recently from Saskatchewan, she was saying that they have lowered their debt by 40 percent this year alone and by the end of the Saskatchewan Party's first term in office, they will have eliminated the debt in that province. Well, what that means is they're not going to be paying interest payments on the debt to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. Instead, they're going to be able to put that into social programs. They're going to be able to put it into infrastructure. They're going to be able to do more for the people of their province than what Manitoba is ever, ever going to be able to dream of doing.

When we look at our net debt of \$10 billion to Saskatchewan's 4 billion, Saskatchewan is leaving Manitoba in the dust and they're leaving Manitoba in the dust in more ways than one. You know, for a lot of years Manitoba liked to compare itself to Saskatchewan, but that was as long as Manitoba was doing really well. There was a time that Manitoba was much more competitive and probably was able to compete at a better level than Saskatchewan and we have fallen far below that and we can't even compete now with any of the provinces in western Canada let alone the rest of Canada.

Manitobans have the second highest per capita debt repayments in the country. That is a lot of money, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it does not bode well especially for the young in this province.

The dependency issue is one, I think, that many of us have commented about over the years and we're becoming more and more concerned about that because Manitoba is now dependent on 30 percent of our revenues here from handouts from the federal government. People need to realize that when it comes from the federal government, that means it's coming from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario; they're all of the ones that are funding a lot of the programs here in Manitoba now. Thirty percent of the revenue we have in this province and 30 percent of our spending here is being paid for by people from other provinces. In 1999, that was only 28 percent; now it's 37 percent.

You have to wonder how in the world, when this government was receiving the kind of money it was receiving, when it had more money than what was ever available in the 1990s, how could they have put us into such a horrible position that we are not even prepared for our future in this province? They've really weakened our ability. You know, our reputation alone as a have-not province is really

affecting the mindsets of a lot of people out there. We are not always looked upon in a very favourable way, whether it's by tourists, companies, people that might want to be moving here from other parts of this country.

You know, transfer payments are up by 113 percent since 1999. That's more than doubled from \$1.6 billion to \$3.6 billion. That is very, very disconcerting. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund, I don't know how many times the government has been out, whether it's part of their Throne Speech or comments before and afterwards, talking about having \$800 million in that Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Well, they have it, but they can't spend all of that just on the rainy day. There's only \$670 million in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The rest is dedicated health dollars and it's federal health dollars that have been put in there to address specific waiting lists. So the government cannot just easily dip into that part of the fund for whatever they like in health care or whatever they like in anything. That is very, very specifically earmarked for health-care waiting lists that have been determined. Those waiting lists have been determined across the country.

But it's interesting how this government has left that money in there and basically left it and padded their rainy-day fund so that they could run around and get their quick 10-second sound bite that they've got \$800 million. It makes the government look more fiscally responsible and more capable to weather the storm when that is not true.

They've only got \$670 million and that's not going to go very far when we have a serious downturn in this province. Basically, the Premier has not made it possible for Manitoba to be standing on its own two feet. Even as the *Free Press* editorial said, the Premier has built a house of cards in good times and he doesn't want Manitobans to realize this, because a house of cards comes down pretty quick. One or two big puffs and that house of cards is going to crumble.

All signs in this country are pointing to a financial crisis, and the Premier was the only one in Canada that was not tightening his belt. He can't be blamed for the crisis, but he sure can be blamed for failing to plan for tough times when the times were good, because that is when you should be fixing your house. As many people have said, if you've got a hole in the roof, you don't fix it when it's raining. You fix it when the sun is shining, and this government did not do that.

Instead, we've seen a lot of commitment to some very questionable spending. Whether it's spending or a commitment towards it, there's the vote tax, the Bipole III on the wrong side of the province, the waste-water plant and what they were forcing the City to do, debt-servicing costs, the floodway master-labour agreement that is costing millions and millions of dollars that did not have to be spent.

So they've been very busy lately, spending a lot of money on feel-good announcements. It was interesting to note that in September alone, when they knew what was happening, when the country was already in an economic downturn, in that one month alone the government went out and spent \$225 million. Those are not the type of actions that bode well for Manitoba at all, because that's a very careless approach to managing an economy.

The government has now set itself up so that they can run deficits with their new unbalanced budget legislation, and it makes it look like they won't have a deficit. So it's going to be a shell game, and we see that happening all the time with how ministers in the House answer questions. Almost everything becomes a shell game. It becomes a 10-minute or a 10-second sound bite; it's blame somebody else or be missing in action or not take responsibility.

Now that they've brought in this legislation, Bill 38, we knew why they were doing it. Everybody's been talking about storm clouds on the horizon and we knew what the government wanted to do with this. We certainly realize that what is going to happen now, as financial statements come out—it is really going to be a shell game.

So once you start down that road of running deficits in your operating budget, it's going to be very difficult to stop. It's like the Frito Lay potato-chip people say, it's tough to stop at just one. I think that we'll see that with this government. It's like being—those potato chips are really good and you can't just stop at one.

Manitoba's debts and the infrastructure deficits have already set a lower-than-necessary speed limit for the economy. Manitoba is going to have a very, very difficult time, I think, over the next number of years and decade to deal with the legacy of the spending of this NDP government.

This Throne Speech, unfortunately, did not change anything. Where are we going to be two or three years from now or 10 years from now? It

reminds me of that nursery rhyme: Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to get her poor dog a bone but, when she got there, the cupboard was bare and so the old dog had none.

* (16:20)

So then, what happens to health, education, justice, conservation, family services and housing, infrastructure, seniors, water stewardship, agriculture? What happens to all of them when we see a government that wasn't working hard to get its house in order. In fact, they seem to be doing a lot of things to get it out of order. It's troublesome.

Why no mention of improving graduation rates in the Throne Speech? If we want to talk about moving Manitoba forward and having the strength of our economy, where was any commitment to improving graduation rates?

Why no mention of a family services system that is failing children? A system that this government created and refuses to be accountable for.

Why no mention of how they are going to sustain our health-care system when there will be less money coming into government coffers? Dead silence on the ER crisis in Winnipeg and throughout rural Manitoba. Dead silence on mental health and treatment addictions. Dead silence on the doctor and nursing shortage. Those numbers are getting worse all the time. No mention about patient outcomes, information technology, action on affordable housing.

There's a lot of talk from this government but it doesn't very often translate into action. It translates into a lot of rehashed news releases, rehashed announcements in the Throne Speech. They have had nine good years. They have not put in place the types of structures that will make this province stronger. They have never had to govern in hard times. We can see already what we can expect over the next few years.

This particular Throne Speech, they were paralyzed when they should have been doing something. They either didn't know how, didn't want to or were just absolutely paralyzed. So, live for today, tomorrow's going to take care of itself, not true.

This is one time when this government should have stepped up to the plate and presented a better vision and taken advantage of more opportunities to put Manitoba on a good economic path.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this NDP government has failed Manitobans with this Throne Speech. It is going to be Manitobans who pay the price. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the Throne Speech. I thank the members opposite for that warm welcome.

I, too, like many members, would like to put a few words on the record with respect to our colleague Oscar Lathlin and the loss that we have all experienced in his untimely passing.

I was often the first person in the Cabinet room early in the morning with my morning coffee, reviewing my notes, and Oscar was often the second. We would often share a few minutes to talk about some of our challenges within our departments and talk a little bit about our personal experiences and whatnot. I learned very much from Minister Lathlin, and I'm going to miss him very, very much.

I would like to also say what a privilege it is to represent the constituency of Gimli and the fine communities that make up the constituency, West St. Paul, St. Andrews, the Village of Dunnottar, Winnipeg Beach and of course, the Municipality of Gimli.

As a member of the Legislature of 100 percent Icelandic descent, I also had the privilege of travelling to Iceland at the invitation of the Minister of Education this past August and spent a week there being toured around.

I apologize to *Hansard* in advance, having visited Reykjavík and Akureyri and, of course, my ancestral lands where my mother was from, in Skagafjörður, and had a tremendous opportunity to make connections with my colleagues in Iceland and some of my family in Iceland, as well.

Of course, Iceland, as many people know, was one of the first casualties of the current economic crisis. There are many people with very strong connections in the community of Gimli, Arborg, Riverton, Lundar, Eriksdale and many Icelandic communities throughout the province where certainly we know that our ancestral lands is in a very difficult time. We have many family and friends in Iceland and we wish them well as they navigate these very difficult waters of economic uncertainty.

The Gimli constituency has been very blessed by the efforts of this government in many ways. I recall, prior to my election in 2003, the opening of the

Sigurbjorg Stefansson School, a brand new early year school in my own community. Since that time, of course, we've seen the waste-water treatment plant, a state of the art facility that will be coming on-line full stream after three phases, and the completion of that particular project we've seen, of course, several kilometres of new highway construction, particularly on No. 8 highway, with repairs in Main Street, Winnipeg Beach, as well.

I'm looking forward very much to the grand opening of the West St. Paul Community Centre, the recreation complex that had been a long time dream of the community of West St. Paul, and they've realized that dream and that facility will be opening soon. I'm very much looking forward to that, and I look forward to continuing to work with my constituents to improve the quality of life that we take for granted in many ways but enjoy so much here in the province of Manitoba.

One thing about having an opportunity to speak after some of the honourable members, it's always fascinating to hear the critics of the Throne Speech. It's fascinating to hear the opposition and their positions on this particular Throne Speech, which, I think, is a very sound statement of the current economic affairs for the province of Manitoba, and a very sound plan that this government has put in place through many prudent and fiscal decisions that were made over the course of nine years in government that have allowed us to be in a very good position to weather the economic storm.

It's often interesting to hear members complain about what's not in the Throne Speech, and, certainly, the leader of the Liberal Party had done so when he talked about Lake Winnipeg. Of course, as the MLA for Gimli, a lifelong resident and someone who's lived by the lake all his life, I think it's incumbent to remind the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), the Liberal leader, about all the things that we have done to address the health of Lake Winnipeg: the state-of-the-art waste-water treatment facility, as I mentioned, in the community of Gimli itself; we'll be replacing lagoons that are located very, very close to the lake itself; and, in the event of incredible episodes of rain as we had this summer, there was potential for a tremendous discharge of sewage into the lake because of the rainfall that we had—156 percent increase over traditional levels of precipitation. So having that waste-water treatment plant up and running is critical as part of our strategy to address the lake.

The regulations that we brought in with regard to household products; the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) said we should just ban phosphate detergents, of course, without any consideration to the consumer, without any consideration to the industry. But he said we should just ban it. We, of course, had engaged in a process and due diligence and went further than an outright ban of one particular product. We looked at all sources of phosphates that needed to be addressed in legislation and proceeded with that. Of course, the water regulations, The Water Protection Act, all the things that we've done are going to contribute to bringing back the lake to the state that it should have been maintained. However, previous decisions over the course of several decades, of course, have brought us to this position where we have a very, very tremendous challenge ahead in terms of restoring the health of the lake, Mr. Acting Speaker.

So it's always interesting to hear what the Liberal leader has to say about what's not in the speech. I'm looking forward to what the Liberal follower has to say in his remarks on the Throne Speech, Mr. Acting Speaker.

You know, I've also heard the members of the opposition speak about the lack of a 10-point plan. Well, perhaps they didn't read the information that was provided. Perhaps they weren't paying attention to the Throne Speech because, quite frankly, the Throne Speech contains a 10-point economic strategy, and I can speak to each of those individually just to put it on the record to remind members about saving strong. Of course, point No. 1, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund which is \$818 million—and that has grown from \$226 million in 1999—and the balanced Budget 2008, that's part of the strategy. It will be balanced without running a deficit. Point No. 3 is to maintain the debt repayment; \$110-million debt payment will proceed this year. Point No. 4, choosing to proceed with tax cuts. The member opposite said you're not cutting taxes, you should be cutting taxes. Well, yes, we are going to continue to proceed with the tax cuts that have been promised, and these are affordable and sustainable tax cuts.

* (16:30)

It's not the time for reckless decisions. If you go back to the election promises of the members opposite, I believe the tax cuts that they had promised were in excess of \$600 million, if not more, and you were to factor that into the economic

realities today, had members opposite been successful in the election, had they passed legislation that would've resulted in \$600 million in tax cuts, then I can't imagine what position Manitoba would be in today, or what that would mean to proceed with promises that they'd made in the election, what would that mean to health care, what would that mean to education, what would that mean to social services, what would that mean to services that are essential to support Manitobans in their daily lives and the quality of life that we enjoy here in the province of Manitoba.

So, point No. 4 was to maintain or proceed with tax cuts that are affordable and sustainable, and these are the tax cuts that we've always been able to deliver in the province of Manitoba, recognizing a slow and steady place will indeed win the race when it comes to affordable and sustainable tax cuts.

Point No. 5 in the economic plan, 10-point plan: We'll remind members opposite it's the accelerated investment in infrastructure, \$4.7 billion in capital investments in key areas including schools, including hospitals, including highways and universities and colleges. This will, of course, have a tremendous impact in stimulating the economy. Public sector funding of infrastructure programs can result in an incredible multiplier for private sector jobs in support of those infrastructure programs.

New training measures in apprenticeships. One of the challenges we do have in the province of Manitoba is the work force and the need for more training in certain sectors within Manitoba. Certainly, targeting northern essential skills initiative, where we have a tremendous untapped resource of potential labourers and potential employees, will be a tremendous asset to northern Manitoba and to all of Manitoba, as we have people entering the work force in the skills area that are essential for the growth and the continued prosperity here in the province of Manitoba.

Point No. 7 was to increase access to credit and to capital, doubling the budget of the community enterprises investment tax credit, boosting the maximum loan guarantee under the Business Start Program, creating a new credit guarantee program to assist non-agricultural rural enterprises. The rural economy can often be the hardest hit in many areas because of some of the other challenges that rural enterprises might experience. So that is a very important initiative to support rural enterprises that are non-agricultural in the credit guarantee program.

Pension flexibility. Point No. 8 of our 10-point plan, adding to the pension regulations to ensure workers' assets are protected and that businesses do not have to declare bankruptcy or cut benefits as a result of shortfalls based on decreased valuations—a very important part of a 10-point plan, as we look at our seniors and those who have retired and expect a certain quality of life and a certain income based on the pensions that they were promised and the pensions that should be delivered, even though we are in the midst of decreased valuations.

Helping homeowners. Many Manitobans are concerned about their homes, indeed, as their most important asset that they will purchase, and we'll keep a close watch on the housing market to ensure the recent reassessment reflects the values of properties.

Point No. 10, growing through trade. We'll continue to move forward in a province-wide partnership to develop the CentrePort, our inland port, and invest in infrastructure for the 20,000-acre port area. Manitoba will also reduce the aviation fuel tax for cargo flights to 1.5 cents per litre from 3.2 cents and expand the exemption for international flights to include all cargo flights to and from the United States.

So there is the 10-point economic plan that members opposite seem to have missed over the course of the Throne Speech in the delivery of that Throne Speech.

So, yes, Manitoba is well positioned to weather the economic storm.

It was curious to hear the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) say that we are wasteful in our spending and talking about the wastewater treatment plant as being wasteful spending. I find that really curious, as someone who's lived by the lake all his life and has seen the impacts of raw sewage and the impacts of sewage coming from the city of Winnipeg into the south basin. The fishers will tell you what they have found in their nets on occasion when that has occurred.

Now, I know members opposite had a golden opportunity in the '90s to refer the Winnipeg wastewater treatment facilities to the Clean Environment Commission for licensing, but chose to ignore that. We realized that that was not a responsible decision. We proceeded and referred the wastewater treatment plant to the Clean Environment Commission, the licensing has occurred, the process

has been undertaken, and now we know that we have to invest a significant amount of money with their partners in the City of Winnipeg to ensure that there's appropriate treatment of waste water, and that's all part of the plan to address the needs of Lake Winnipeg and cleaning up Lake Winnipeg.

Now, the member opposite said that we should be paying down debt so we could put money into social programs and infrastructure. Well it's not an either/or. We saw what either/or meant in the 1990s. We saw that either/or meant that we'd lose 242 teachers in one fell swoop because budgets were being cut to the education system. We saw what "or" meant when you had several hundreds of nurses not being hired, or being fired, because of the budget that was announced because of different priorities of government of the day.

It's not an either/or. You can have it both ways, and we're on track to make our debt repayment as promised as part of the 10-point economic plan. We are going to continue to provide supports for Manitobans in all the social services and health care and in education and in justice and in family services, services that are important to Manitobans. You can do both, and this is a government that will do both. That is our commitment to Manitobans.

So to suggest that you should put money—pay off debt first, and then look at social programs. That didn't work in the 1990s. We have heard many people say that cutting the positions for doctors was something that—for doctor training, throughout the province of Manitoba and throughout Canada—in hindsight, was not a good idea. To cut the training positions for nurses was not a good idea, and to cut the number of teachers in the system was not a good idea. So, as I said, you can have it both ways. You can make appropriate investments and you can pay down debt, and you won't compromise the services that are important to Manitobans.

Now looking at what this means for rural Manitoba, what it means for infrastructure, what it means for poverty, what it means for children, health and the environment—I'm absolutely delighted to be speaking on the Throne Speech and what will happen in the course of the next year as Manitobans, as the government moves forward to ensure that Manitobans enjoy the quality of life that we've come to enjoy and take for granted, as I said, in this beautiful province of ours.

Now, wearing the Education hat, I know that there are a lot of things that don't get a lot of

headlines in the province of Manitoba or perhaps were recognized more so outside of Canada, or outside of Manitoba, for the work that we're doing in our education system. Case in point, our commitment to civics education, so students can understand the importance of being responsible citizens in their province and exercising the right to vote and getting engaged in their community.

In fact, just recently we launched the second edition of Youth Making a Difference, and the Youth Making a Difference brochure is part of that citizenship agenda. It tells people about all the wonderful things that students are doing in our schools. Quite frankly, as a teacher for 13 years teaching in the high school, I'd often have people say to me, how is it that you can teach these days because kids are just a tough bunch to work with? They're rotten kids. And I would say, no, 95 percent of kids are fine or just great; 5 percent need a little bit more of our attention.

I know that there are a lot of educators on this side of the House, and a lot of educators on this side of the House who would agree with that, that kids are great. It was great to go to work in the school every single day and see the great things that our kids are doing, and the Youth Making a Difference brochure celebrates the things that our students are doing, celebrates that they're recognizing that they need to be active participants in our community, that they can make a difference in their community, and they do that through volunteering. They do that volunteering locally. They do that, Mr. Acting Speaker, through international agencies and supporting non-government organizations and supporting causes beyond our borders, because they get it. They understand that we all have to work together to make our community a better place.

We're recognized nationally. Our curriculum has been held up nationally as a great example of civics education. We're also recognized internationally for education for sustainable development, as it is a common theme throughout our curriculum, in our social studies, where we say we can strike a balance in our world. We can find a way to do things that are important for people, that are important for progress, but we can do it in a way that provides balance in our environment and makes us responsible citizens to our environment.

That's what this Throne Speech is all about. It's creating a balance. It's creating a balance financially. It's creating a balance in terms of services that can be

delivered, and it's creating a balance to provide supports to Manitobans on all fronts where those supports are needed.

* (16:40)

So there are a lot of things that we're doing in our education system. If you want to talk about the health of our children and what we've been doing with mandatory physical education. If you want to talk about the arts programs in our schools which are second to none. In fact, I had it confirmed from outside sources that Manitoba is the home of the best music education program in Canada and, arguably, in North America.

It's about providing a well-rounded education. It's about providing as many opportunities as possible for our children here in Manitoba in our education system. That's what this Throne Speech is about. It's about providing opportunities for all Manitobans. You see that in our commitment to training: 4,000 new spaces over four years for apprenticeships. It's in our commitment to taking the program to the students with our expansion of University College of the North, and it's about developing a strategy that meets the needs of individuals on a regional basis with our Northern Development Strategy.

This is a Throne Speech that speaks to an incredible vision for the province and for the future of this province by providing the programming and opportunities to all Manitobans. With that is the infrastructure challenges that we do face because growth is a good problem to have. We are growing, and we're continuing to invest record amounts in capital to support our schools, somewhat of an aging infrastructure where we're turning the corner on that, addressing the capital needs for our aging infrastructure and looking at new needs as they emerge and how we can support those new needs.

In the infrastructure announcement in the Throne Speech \$4.7 billion is a significant commitment to the people of Manitoba and, as I said, we all know that public sector jobs can provide tremendous spin-offs. The multiplier, I believe, is for one public sector job, we're looking at approximately seven private sector jobs, if I'm not mistaken, to address the needs of the workers and the projects that will be undertaken over the next four years with that ambitious plan.

Another issue that I'm really excited to see is some of the changes that we're making to make our

roads safer. I had been a member of the Parent Resource Institute for Drug Education with students at the Gimli High School, and certainly Manitoba has been a leader with respect to initiatives to reduce drinking and driving and impaired driving and driver safety issues. Again, we affirm our commitment to make our roads safer and doing so on many fronts, whether it's to include legislation around the use of cellphones and electronic devices while driving and, as far as the health of young children in banning smoking in cars, I think is very critical to the health needs of children who are subjected to that in such a confined space for a long period of time.

So there's a number of other issues as far as expanding the programs to support seniors with the SafetyAid Program, recognizing that the success of this particular program in expanding it to more rural and northern communities I think is a tremendous opportunity to support our seniors who are particularly vulnerable to criminals. I think it's a fantastic initiative to see that expand. So there are a number of safety issues that we see being addressed in the Throne Speech—and on poverty.

Perhaps the most vulnerable in economic times of uncertainty are the poor, and certainly we have reduced child poverty by over one-third and will continue to work on initiatives that enable parents to participate fully in the work force. Part of that, of course, is having opportunities for child care for parents to ensure that they have an opportunity to participate in the economy. Of course, it was a tremendous announcement yesterday where 350 new spaces will be created at a bargain basement price of \$1.5 million. When you consider the assets that we have in our public schools that might sit empty or sit as storage, now we have an opportunity to convert that space to be a very important part of the community as a child-care centre, and that's a really good fit.

That's a really good fit because high school students who might have an interest in a career in child care, Mr. Acting Speaker, have an opportunity to work in the early childhood education centres that are attached to the school and earn credit towards that degree should they choose to become an early childhood educator. So there are a number of initiatives that are really good fits and makes good economic sense in terms of the infrastructure. It makes good economic sense in terms of what opportunities might be available for parents who are seeking employment and have barriers to full-time

employment because they can't find appropriate early childhood education or child-care opportunities.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So there are also important issues dealing with housing, and housing issues are part of the Throne Speech. There are undertakings to upgrade existing public housing units in older homes, becoming more energy efficient, as my colleague from Wellington had mentioned, Mr. Speaker. The need to find ways to make homes more energy efficient will have a tremendous impact on the household economies in areas where the housing is traditionally not very energy efficient, and it's a significant cost with individuals who don't have tremendous means. Working in partnership to ensure that they have better opportunities there to make their houses more energy efficient, I think, is a very important step to make as well.

So, the opposition also talked about our health-care system. Oh, boy, where do you start when you hear Tories talk about the health-care system?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bjornson: The opposition, Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, in the 1990s—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bjornson: —in the 1990s it happened across the country where training positions were cut, and the shortage of doctors across the country, in fact, around the world, was a product of the policies and the practices of the 1990s throughout Canada. We have done incredible work by increasing the training spaces to bring more doctors into our hospitals, and we are doing incredible work to bring them into hospitals that they would like to practise in. There are no more fruit flies in the operating rooms.

There are incredible facilities built throughout Manitoba, and, after building a brand new health centre in Gimli, not only did we build a brand new health centre but now we're committing to bring more services to the community with the dialysis unit that will be added to a brand new hospital. We're continuing to find ways to provide more services closer to home for more Manitobans.

When you think about the investment in infrastructure, think about the investment in the personnel and the training, think about the investment in equipment. When I first raised it, I heard the members opposite chirping, but I will

compare our record any day to what we have done and what we'll continue to do for health care to what members opposite had done during the 1990s and what they allegedly planned to do, because members opposite said during the last election that they didn't need to increase the health-care budget, that health was not the No. 1 priority for the Conservative Party.

I think that was kind of stated throughout the 1990s, or implied in the 1990s. It was not their priority at that time, nor was education for that matter. We'll continue to work to improve the health-care system and the health-care delivery for all Manitobans. Of course, eliminating fees is another feather in our cap as social democrats who believe that health care should be accessible for everyone, and it shouldn't matter about the size of your wallet in terms of receiving quality of care. I'm very proud to be on this side of the House and continue to work every day with my colleagues to ensure that we have the best health care possible in the province of Manitoba.

Of course, Throne Speech also deals with the environment. I know members opposite haven't necessarily been tremendous environment champions. They'd rather see a hydro line go through the last boreal forest of its size and the incredible asset of the east side. They'd rather see a hydro line go through there. We've committed to go on the west side of Lake Manitoba because we know it's the right thing to do. The ecotourism would be a significant benefit to Manitoba, and I hope to have the opportunity to get up there with a canoe this summer and enjoy first-hand all the splendour that the east side has to offer.

* (16:50)

Our commitment to the environment goes beyond, of course, the commitment on the east side, but it talks about our leadership role in this area, the economic significance that was underlined 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. Of course, we made the commitment to sustainable development as a key component in our economy.

Many constituents are concerned about the environment, and I hear time and time again from my constituents about the health of Lake Winnipeg. Certainly, this government has done an incredible amount of work to work towards the restoration of Lake Winnipeg. We've done an incredible amount of

work to do what's right for Manitobans. I also have to speak about the ban of logging in provincial parks. As a child, my parents took us to many provincial parks on camping trips. I'm very much looking forward to visiting them with my children, and a legacy of this government will be the fact that logging is no longer allowed in these provincial parks. My children will enjoy the natural splendour that Manitoba has to offer as we travel to many of our provincial parks, hopefully in the next few years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand on this side of the House and speak to the Throne Speech and all that it holds in store for Manitobans: a very stable economic plan in very uncertain economic times; a very stable economic plan in terms of providing the best services possible, the best infrastructure possible, for all of Manitobans; and a very stable economic plan that has defined this government in the last nine years as we have continued to balance the budget, maintain programs, improve programs and provide a quality of life for Manitobans that we come to enjoy and expect in this fine province here of Manitoba.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I, too, am pleased to be able to rise and just put a few comments on the record regarding the Throne Speech. It's also a privilege to be able to follow the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson). I was listening intently to some of the comments that he put on the record, and I find it interesting that he didn't refer to the comment and the promise that the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province made in 1999 of how he was going to fix health care with \$15 million and in six months.

He continuously talked about things that they were doing, but failed to indicate some of the things that they had promised but neglected to do. The other point I would like to make, with specific reference to the Throne Speech, is the fact that in the Throne Speech we have a mention of 1999 made eight times. Six times he mentioned the times, well, since 1999. We have a government here who is living in the past. We're looking for a vision statement as to where they will be going in the future, and somehow I fail to see that.

In the course of the comments that I make, I will be referring also to what was really lacking in this Throne Speech. That was, they mentioned eastern Manitoba, they mentioned northern Manitoba, they mentioned the city of Winnipeg, they mentioned

western Manitoba, but for some reason they totally forgot southern Manitoba, the area of the province that is growing the fastest within rural Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that I'm following the Minister of Education, the comments that he made about all the wonderful things that they were doing. Yet they totally failed to address some of the issues that are taking place within the province and didn't even mention—like not even one mention made of southern Manitoba, which is the area that I represent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to you that I am so pleased and proud to be able to represent an area that is the fastest growing within rural Manitoba. The growth is there and if you look—at this point, I guess, it's a draft of the constituency boundaries as they're looking at changes. It's going to be just a little postage stamp that I will be representing within the province of Manitoba. This again indicates very clearly the growth that has taken place. So here we have a government who's come up with a Throne Speech, who has generalized—there's no real vision for the province. They've not given the people of Manitoba a clear direction as to where they are planning to go within the next number of years and, I guess, within even one year. Surely, we would think that somehow there would be a direction that would be given.

I also found it interesting, as I listened to the previous speakers on the government side, about how they were talking about how proud they were, the fact of all the things, whether they were capital projects, other projects, that they had received within their own constituencies. I refer back to 1999 again. That was when through our democratic process—yes, the NDP were elected. The Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province at that time stood out there and he held up his hands and he said to all Manitobans: I want to assure you of one thing, and that is that I will govern for the whole province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would indicate to you very clearly the constituency of Pembina is not seeing that taking place. Again, through the course of my presentation here, I will indicate to you that, in education, in health care, in other infrastructure needs such as roads, we are not experiencing what some of the MLAs from other parts of the province are experiencing. It looks to me as though the Province, the Premier, the ministers are governing and giving to certain parts of the province the things that they need, but other areas they're totally

omitting. Again, I refer you back to the Throne Speech where southern Manitoba was totally omitted.

Education: I need to indicate this while the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) is here, and I know that he and I have had this discussion many, many times about the growth that we have seen. This is not something that has happened overnight. This should be no surprise to anyone. This has happened within the last number of years, and we should have been planning with this in mind. But today we have 46 huts in Garden Valley School Division. They're asking for another 14 huts for next year in Garden Valley School Division.

Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated time and time again, not only through the questions that I have asked in this House but through the petitions that I have presented in this House, the comments are there, and certainly if the government is listening—which some days I'm wondering whether they are. I know that the Minister of Education and I have had some good discussions, and I think he understands the urgency of the needs that we have. So maybe it's the Premier of the province who's standing in the way of some of these capital projects taking place. I'm not sure exactly where it is, but I hope somehow they can sort this out.

Mr. Speaker, we have students who do not, as I have indicated time and time again, have timely access to washrooms. They are needing to go home. They don't have the ability to go to the washrooms in the schools. There are needs out there that are not being met by the Province, by this minister, again, who indicated just in his speech a few minutes ago that the needs of the students were paramount, in his opinion. He was talking about them receiving a good education. Again, I would challenge him that this is something that we are finding difficult to comprehend within the constituency of Pembina that I represent. It's not only Garden Valley School Division. I want to put out the message there that Western School Division, which is the neighbouring school division, is starting to experience some of the same pressures that Garden Valley School Division is experiencing.

I would indicate very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be proactive in the approach that we take. Again, I hope it's not because of the lack of the mention of southern Manitoba within the Throne Speech that they're just simply omitting the area. I hope it's by the fact that—well, I'm not sure what I'm

hoping on that one. I really wish that they would respond to some of the needs that we have out there.

The other area I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker, is the whole area of health care. Again, it's through petitions that I've presented, through questions I have asked, the needs that we have and, this again, is all due to the growth that we have within the province, the growth that we are experiencing within the Pembina constituency.

We have asked time and time again, and I know that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has been in Morden and has, in fact, indicated that there is a desperate need for us to replace the Tabor Home.

However, to date, this has not taken place.

I just talked to her during our previous session, and again she assured me we know that the needs are there. You know, we can talk about something forever, but finally there does come a point in time when we need do something. We need to act and we need to act—

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 22 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

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