

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
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McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
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WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Concordia	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 8—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Safety Precautions to Be Taken When
Approaching Tow Trucks and
Other Designated Vehicles)**

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill No. 8, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety Precautions to Be Taken When Approaching Tow Trucks and Other Designated Vehicles), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we currently have provisions in legislation that ensure the protection of public safety when it comes to police, fire and ambulance vehicles. We have other vehicles that are involved either with enforcement or providing roadside assistance. This would extend the protection of The Highway Traffic Act to those vehicles and their operators and create a much safer environment. I urge all members of the House to support this.

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

**Bill 219—The Workplace Safety and Health
Amendment Act (Harassment and
Violence in the Workplace)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill No. 219, The Workplace

Safety and Health Amendment Act (Harassment and Violence in the Workplace); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité de l'hygiène—et l'hygiène du travail (harcèlement et violence dans le lieu de travail), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster, that Bill No. 219, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act (Harassment and Violence in the Workplace), be now read a first time.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill we had originally brought in several years ago. In light of changes that have happened in Ontario and Saskatchewan, we have made significant revisions to update and change this bill. It is now introduced as an important step in helping to have insurance of respectful workplaces in Manitoba. This provides workers with the right to a workplace free of harassment and violence and requires employers to protect workers from workplace-related harassment and violence.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose

this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

And to urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

And this is signed by Frank Wieler, Shirley Wolfe, Ben Klassen 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.

PTH 15–Traffic Signals

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the traffic—where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) consider the immediate installation of

traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Ray Joyal, D. Rychykowski, Stefanie Freund and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program, however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Jason Colbert, Gwen Colbert, Deanna Klatt and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

Whiteshell Provincial Park–Lagoons

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009 the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Terry Lagimodiere, Cheryl Fleury, Ben Thiessen and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Nominee Program–90-Day Guarantee

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first

priority in processing provincial nominee certificates.

The lengthy processing times for PNP application causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by D. Gonzales, R. Gonzales, and R. Andrade and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Rapid City Reservoir and Catwalk

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for the petition.

The Province of Manitoba has a role in providing maintenance to artificial water reservoirs.

The purposes of the Rapid City reservoir are: water conservation, recreation, stock watering as well as maintaining water levels in wells.

Due to the low water level and the amount of vegetation in the reservoir, it is no longer usable for recreational activities such as canoeing or swimming.

Due to the amount of silt buildup and vegetation in the reservoir, the use of the Rapid City Fish Ladder, needed for the natural upstream migration of fish, is inhibited, reducing the fish count from 2,300 in 1999 to 15 in 2008.

The catwalk structure spanning the Rapid City spillway, used by children to get to and from the school, was damaged when planks were incorrectly pulled from the spillway by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation and has yet to be replaced.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) to consider dredging the Rapid City reservoir as soon as possible.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) to consider replacing the Rapid City catwalk structure as soon as possible.

This petition is signed by Robert Sharpe, Lesley Hedley, Everett Olson and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economy

Government Development Strategy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In less than two years, of the past two years, 10,000 Manitoba families have already been affected by job losses in the manufacturing sector, and then yesterday alone we saw announcements of a further 770 job layoffs here in the province of Manitoba—770 workers who, going into Christmas, are facing the prospect, Mr. Speaker, of layoffs, employment insurance and the prospect of declining incomes going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier why it is that unlike leaders in the rest of Canada who have launched their own economic action plans, why is this leader, this Premier, continuing to rely on the tin cup approach of going to Ottawa for handouts when what Manitoba needs is its very own economic action plan?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think—I think the member opposite missed the Throne Speech where we generated 12,000 person years of employment for over \$1.3 billion of direct government investment at a time when the job creation record of Manitoba has been stable over the last year, and in the month of November, Stats Canada indicated we created 3,100 jobs.

We don't like to see any jobs lost in Manitoba, including the phased layoff at Convergys or the problems at Tembec. We don't like to see any jobs lost. But, in context, Manitoba has performed the best in the West, fourth best in the country, with 3,100 jobs created over November and a relatively stable situation over the last year, that due in small measure to the economic plans we put forward in the last two budgets and in this Throne Speech.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're well aware that he's been living large off of transfer payments from Ottawa for the last 10 years. We're aware of that fact, but that is not a strategy for Manitoba. That is the Oliver Twist approach to

begging for handouts when what Manitoba needs is an economic action plan.

Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. have voted us off the island when it comes to the western Canada free trade talks. We're one of three provinces that still has a payroll tax that kills jobs. We've got the lowest weekly income in western Canada, Mr. Speaker, and 770 families in Manitoba in one day, just yesterday, finding out that their jobs are being lost.

He can spin the numbers anyway he likes, Mr. Speaker, and he can try to say that flat is the new up, but what Manitobans are looking for is not depressing, low expectations and more tin cup policies but leadership and an action plan for Manitoba.

When are they gonna get one from this Premier?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I know the member doesn't like to deal with the facts, at least accurate facts, but the performance of the Manitoba economy has been exceeding the Canadian average for the last three years, and, in this year, it's the best performing economy in the country. The best performing economy in the country is 0.2 negative growth because we are in a recession.

But the reality is all the independent forecasters, all the independent think tanks have acknowledged that the Manitoba economy has performed the best in Canada this year and the best over the last three years, due in—due in no small measure to efforts that we have made in things like CentrePort, things like public investments in—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —in the agricultural sector, things like—things like the Advanced Manufacturing Initiative, things like the mining sector rebounding very well in the last year, things like the biotech sector doing quite well and increasing its share of the Manitoba economy, things like the new media sector generating many new companies and jobs in Manitoba.

Manitoba has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we went into the recession with the seventh performing economy in the country. The only reason that we had less decline this year than the other provinces in the

country is because we never had the growth that those other provinces had in the years leading in, and as we come out of the recession, the economists are saying we're going back to No. 7 coming out of the recession.

And we see—and the numbers that those families in Pine Falls and those families that have family members working at Convergys are not impressed with the back-patting that we see from this Premier, the tin cup approach of begging for more money from Ottawa. They need to see an economic strategy that involves expanding our trade, not sitting out of free trade talks with the rest of the country. They want to see an approach to reducing taxes, not keeping payroll taxes in place to make us uncompetitive.

When is this Premier going to stop patting himself on the back because of Ottawa's generosity and actually launch an economic action plan that builds the economy of this great province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear the member—the member has never actually read our economic growth strategy for the province.

When you're the best performing economy in the country, that is the result—that is the result, Mr. Speaker, of the private sector, the governments at all levels and community economic development corporations all working together to move Manitoba forward.

We just recently announced the first biodiesel mandate for the country, building on top of our ethanol mandate. Both of those—both of those initiatives—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —generated significant employment in Manitoba. We also have one of the best agrifood nutraceuticals clusters in the country at Portage la Prairie, at the St. Boniface Hospital, at the Richardson nutraceutical centre out at the University of Manitoba. These kinds of investments are developing new jobs in the knowledge economy. We have a trade corridor and a knowledge corridor flowing from Manitoba right down to Texas where we're collaborating together on exchanging best practices in the knowledge economy.

The member knows those things, but he doesn't want to read the work.

* (13:50)

Economy Government Development Strategy

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, under the Filmon government, call centres in Manitoba flourished under the Manitoba Call Centre Team strategy, which resulted in 14,000 jobs in the industry.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Taillieu: The NDP, the opposition then, called these McJobs, and when they got their hands on the wheel they killed this initiative, and now we are seeing the results. Yet the Premier has the audacity to be on the radio this morning saying this is strictly a story of the economic situation in the United States. The reality is it's his government's lack of a plan that has resulted in these job losses today.

When is the Premier going to get it, Mr. Speaker, and implement strategies that attract businesses rather than kill them?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, Covergys shut three call centres in Alberta for 1,000 jobs. You know what? They've had a far greater job loss in the western provinces than we have. Covergys cut 240 jobs in Kamloops, B.C., and these jobs were cut well before the jobs that were announced in Manitoba.

The American economy is the major market for call centres. The American economy and consumer confidence is at a record low. It's not a surprise that we're not entirely immune from this recession, but the reality is, Mr. Speaker, our job record has been stable over the last year. We saw growth in jobs last month. We have the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada and one of the highest participation rates in the economy at over 68 percent.

Manitoba's job situation has performed quite well relative to our peers in western Canada and indeed in the whole country.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this new Premier has made no commitment to economic development in this province. He's a job killer, not a job creator. Call centres for the first time this year have had to pay Workers Compensation Board premiums when the NDP imposed an expansion of coverage. These additional costs, along with the tax on jobs, the payroll tax, are negative policies that drive small

business away. This government continues to burden small business rather than support small business.

Mr. Speaker, when is the Premier going to get it and start creating an economic climate in Manitoba that attracts businesses rather than kills them?

Mr. Selinger: You know, a recent KPMG study pegged Manitoba, out of 60 cities in North America, in the top three, Mr. Speaker, for costs of doing business. If you take a look at the economic modeling we've done in Manitoba—and we report on this every year in the budget—Brandon and Winnipeg are always in the top three for the best place to do business in terms of costs.

Everything all in, internal rate of return, bottom line, Manitoba is a good place to do business, which is why we are one of the only economies in Canada that have actually generated jobs and maintained jobs, which is why the Conference Board of Canada has reported the Manitoba economy as performing the best in the country during a time of recession.

It's not an easy time. We're not immune from this recession, but we have performed relatively well.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, today on the radio the Premier said: But the industry's also going through some major restructuring all over the place. They're reducing overhead costs and shutting down big operations and moving it into the home.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to note some headlines from across the country. In March, a call centre in New Brunswick announces an expansion of 113 employees. In August: Downtown call centre in Hamilton adds 150 new jobs. In November: Big move for Pembroke call centre. The P.E.I.-based company is looking to hire 100 new people to add to its workforce. And just yesterday in Nova Scotia a call centre is getting \$2 million to boost and create 350 new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier not telling the truth or do they simply not know how far Manitoba is falling behind?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I've cautioned members before about picking their words very carefully. The honourable member used the word about not telling the truth. All members in this House are honourable members, and I ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment there about not telling the truth.

Mrs. Taillieu: I withdraw.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, you know, we never in any way are unhappy when other parts of the country generate jobs, because the whole Canadian economy has taken a hit in this recession. The reality is, when you look at provinces like Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, the job losses have been very significant.

We've been very fortunate in this province in being able to maintain a steady situation with respect to employment and maintain the second lowest unemployment rate in the country with a high rate of participation in the economy. I'm pleased that new jobs are being generated across this country, including in Manitoba of over 3,100 last month, but we have never said that we will be immune from this recession. It has impacts and governments have unique roles to play in a recession, which is why we announced a \$4.7-billion capital stimulus program which, in the last year, has generated 12,000 person years of employment.

Those are the kinds of things that all governments have to do to lift us out of a recession. We're happy to be part of that process.

Tembec Closure Cutting Licence Suspension

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Tembec has announced that it has no intention to reopen the paper mill in Powerview-Pine Falls. It will either sell the mill or shut it down completely by February the 1st, less than 60 days from now.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why should Tembec be allowed to continue to harvest our forests? Will he at least immediately suspend Tembec's right to their cutting licence?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): The honourable member will know that up to 80 percent of Tembec's cutting rights are linked to the operation of the mill, and if the mill shuts down, those rights disappear.

And in the meantime, we have people on the site, as we speak, making sure that Tembec is abiding by its obligations and by the restrictions that are placed on it at this particular time.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, I take that answer as a no, obviously.

Tembec has applied for another 20-year extension to their timber-cutting licence. They've notified this government that they'll either sell the mill or shut it down within the next 60 days, yet this government is entertaining a 20-year extension to

their licence. This will permit Tembec to cut down our forests and ship the wood out of the province for processing even after they close the mill.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation: If he refuses to suspend Tembec's existing licence, will he at least deny the 20-year extension?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty obvious to me and should be to everyone here that if the mill shuts down, the government won't be entertaining any renewal of Tembec's leases.

Mr. Hawranik: The Minister of Conservation made a deal to provide \$2.7 million to Tembec so it would not cut wood in our provincial parks. Shortly thereafter, Tembec starts to lay off employees and later locks them out of their jobs. Now the mill will be closed in less than 60 days if it can't be sold.

So I ask the Minister of Conservation: Why did he refuse to demand that the mill remain open before handing that cheque to Tembec?

Mr. Blaikie: Well, Mr. Speaker, at the time that that cheque was issued, there was no probability of the mill closing down, but the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Blaikie: —the member—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Blaikie: Pardon?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I just want to assure the member that we have people on site. We are making sure that Tembec is operating within the rules, the obligations and the restrictions placed on them, and as far as any future leases are concerned, I've already said that 80 percent of what Tembec is entitled to in terms of FMLs is linked to the operation of the mill. The rest has to do with private contracts, which I'm sure Conservatives wouldn't want people to violate. They'd be the first one on their feet if we were in violation of those kinds of contracts.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are monitoring Tembec. We are making sure they're living up to their obligations and restrictions, and as far as any future FMLs are concerned, they are all dependent on whether or not the mill shuts down and even then, they're not for sure.

* (14:00)

Educational Facilities

Government Strategy for Presence of Asbestos

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, in spring of 2009, the issue of asbestos in our schools was raised, and it took nearly six weeks for the disgraced former Minister of Education to tell us how widespread the problem was. We now know that 66 percent of all our public schools in Manitoba have some asbestos in them.

Can the new Minister of Education advise the House what her plan is for dealing with asbestos in our aging schools?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to—*[interjection]* I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We take asbestos as a very important environmental health concern in our schools. Contained and encapsulated asbestos, according to Health Canada, Mr. Speaker, if asbestos fibres are enclosed or tightly bound in a product, there are no significant health risks.

Our department works with school divisions all across this province in regards to abatement issues around asbestos, and we make sure that we're working with school divisions when they raise concerns so that we can be there for them if there is a health concern.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, once again this government is a day late and a dollar short. In Canada, asbestos-related diseases are the No. 1 workplace killer, striking not only retired miners but construction workers and anyone who's been in contact with asbestos. We now know that if asbestos is encapsulated, the risk is minimized but can quickly turn deadly if the encapsulation is tampered or disrupted.

Parents of over 180,000 students, teachers and staff in our schools enter our schools with the expectation that they are in a safe environment. Does this Minister of Education have full confidence that all the asbestos in the 453 schools with asbestos across this province is safely encapsulated?

Ms. Allan: I want to remind the member opposite that it was our government that put in place Workplace Safety and Health regulations, and I want to also remind the members opposite that Workplace Safety and Health works with our department, the Department of Education, in regards to this whole issue. They do proactive inspections in areas where

the age of a building may be of concern and where we think that asbestos might be present, Mr. Speaker.

We work very, very closely with school divisions all across this province to make sure that if they raise any concerns, they are immediately addressed.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, the number of reported new cases annually of the deadly asbestos-related cancer known as mesoloma is up 67 percent over a decade and a half according to federal figures.

What concerns us is this minister's response that only when an issue is raised, then will they start to deal with it. The problem is once you've been exposed, it's already then too late. We are calling on this minister, as we did on the previous minister, to not just identify that there may be a problem but to be proactive in dealing with this issue.

We've got aging schools, over 467 of them. They're aging. They're starting to crumble and the concern is that the encapsulation of asbestos might be disturbed. What is she going to do, proactively, going forward? What's her plan to protect students and staff and teachers in those schools? What is she doing on a go-forward basis?

Ms. Allan: I think I already told the critic for Education exactly what we're doing in this province. I told him about the fact that we passed legislation. I told him about the fact that we work with Workplace Safety and Health and they're inspecting our schools. I told him that we work with school divisions, but what I do not do, Mr. Speaker, is put false information on the record.

The member put false information on the record when he was discussing this issue earlier. He said other jurisdictions in Canada have adopted comprehensive asbestos eradication plans for their schools including Saskatchewan and Québec. It's important to tell this House neither province has a school asbestos removal program.

I think it's important in regards to this very important health industry—or health issue that correct information is put on the record, Mr. Speaker.

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba School-Based Programs

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has got its priorities wrong when it comes to helping troubled youth in this province.

They're willing to spend a quarter of a million dollars trying to advertise gangs off of the streets but won't commit much needed resources for addictions counselling in schools. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba says that it's binge—says that binge drinking among high school students is on the rise. In fact, there's a higher rate of high school binge drinking in Manitoba than the national average.

Can the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) explain why this NDP government is refusing to provide resources to maintain AFM school-based programming?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): I'm pleased to let the members know, in fact all the members know, that in 1999 there was about 20 schools that were receiving assistance from AFM. Right now, that's 55 schools, an increase of 120 percent.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, we're not just within a small group of schools. We're around the province and we're continuing to look on how to expand the program as far as drug addiction, as far as alcohol or any other addiction programs, and I'm pleased with the 120 percent increase so far, but we're got further ways to go.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, beginning next year, the Mountainview School Division is facing a tough decision. Either they take money out of the classroom to keep minimal amounts of addiction counselling available or they scale back programming.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, about 50 schools throughout Manitoba will be facing the same predicament next September. A funding shortfall at AFM means they no longer have the resources to provide addictions counselling services to the schools at the former level.

When is the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) going to stand up for youth in this province and make addictions services available when and where they're needed?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this year we've had a million-dollar increase in the AFM budget. I know that the members opposite continue to vote against the million-dollar increase.

Again, previously, we've had a 66 percent increase in the last nine years, and we are continuing to expand programs. And we're not just doing it to youth programs. We're doing it to adult programs.

We've expanded programs into the different areas around the province, but it's also working with children.

I'm pleased with the Healthy Child initiative. We're starting to work with addictive behaviours early, very early, because it's not just one that runs into problems, it's the base and the support. So the Healthy Child is investing \$28 million in early education.

I know we're doing lots in youth education and we're continuing to do lots for adult addiction treatment, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite who vote against it.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, what they're clearly doing is cutting the funding to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, for the amount of money this NDP government is wasting on misaligned ad campaigns, they could provide addiction counselling for troubled youth and help keep those young people—give those young people a future.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has the highest dropout rate and one of the highest binge drinking rates in Canada among young people.

When will this Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) get her priorities straight and stand up for the youth of this province?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, let's get this clear. We have increased the budget to AFM. We've increased—and I'm sorry, I did put inaccurate information on the record because what happened was there's 64 schools that are getting assistance, not 23.

And I have to say that the current budget for school programs is 1,345,000, which is a huge increase over what was happening in the 1990s.

Rural Health-Care Services Wait Times

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, last July a 92-year-old lady, Mrs. Mary Price, from Elkhorn fell and sustained injuries to her hip and wrist. She was taken to Moosomin, Saskatchewan, because due to the shortage of doctors in Manitoba, that's where her doctor practises. After two days she was ambulated to Brandon to see a specialist, where in spite of being

notified of her coming, she waited in a hallway, on a gurney, for over seven hours.

Can the Minister of Health tell the Price family why, if we don't have hallway medicine and if we don't have highway medicine, why their 92-year-old mother had to wait seven hours in a hallway, on a gurney, before finally being admitted to a room by an attending doctor, not even the specialist?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): A seven-hour wait for anyone is a long time, for a 92-year-old individual is unacceptable, and I invite the member to give me the details of the case and I commit to him that we'll investigate.

Ambulance Fees

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly do that, but five days later, Mrs. Price's family still hadn't been seen by or heard from the doctor looking after her needs, and she was sent back to Elkhorn where a few days later she died.

To add insult to injury, her five heartbroken sons then received an ambulance bill for a trip that they were never notified of. It was a bill for \$1,660 for travel from Moosomin to Brandon, which included a \$700 charge for the seven hours she lay on a gurney, in a hallway, while ambulance attendants waited to make sure she was there.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, why should this family have to pay a \$1,600 bill when \$700 of it was for lying in a hallway, on a gurney, waiting for medical care she never received? Will the minister at least help the Price—the distraught Price family re-examine this billing?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say to the member again, that a family that is dealing with the loss of a parent, that's more than enough for anyone to deal with. I will commit to the member that we will investigate the situation.

We know that in 2007 we committed to cover the cost of interfacility transfers. It was a \$7-million investment. So the case that we're hearing of here most sincerely sounds like a problem that we want to investigate.

I'm going to presume that the member has already sent me correspondence about this. If he has not, let's get together immediately after question

period so that we can investigate more fully. Thank you.

**Manitoba Hydro
Boreal Forest Cutting for Power Lines**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the NDP are bringing in the chainsaws and the heavy machinery. They've made the decision to do some clearcutting.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro is gonna be putting in a power line to accommodate some cottagers. The issue is is that it's in the—in the boreal forest. Remember Gary Doer who said no to clearcutting, that the boreal forest, after all, that's why we want to have the hydro line down on the west side as opposed to the east side?

Well, Mr. Speaker, under the new leadership of the New Democratic Party they are gonna cut 19 kilometres into the boreal forest, 30 foot wide. The machinery's in there today. I'm surprised. I think many Manitobans would be surprised to learn this about-face in terms of their attitudes towards our boreal forest.

My question to the Premier is: Why has this Premier now made it very clear that there's no problem in terms of facilitating a few cottagers so that they can have power? We will clearcut down the boreal forest, whatever it takes in order to provide that power to those cottage owners.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, you know, cottages are very important to many people. This is a local cottage project and this—these people have asked for electricity to come to their community so that they could get away from diesel—use of diesel, and Manitoba Hydro has worked very closely with this community to ensure that they could have clean energy in that cottage development.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, local cottages is her justification, which happens to be in the boreal forest. It is—it is in a provincial—in a provincial park, and the government says now it's okay for us to do clearcutting in order to be able to accommodate.

Mr. Speaker, there was no consultation done within regards to the Sagkeeng First Nations. In fact, Chief Donovan Fontaine states, and I quote: "We will do what is necessary to ensure our traditional territory is respected . . ."

Mr. Speaker, again we see a change in policy from this government. Why is the government not consulting with Sagkeeng First Nations, and in particular Chief Fontaine, in regards to what they are doing? What's on the government's agenda in regards to this whole issue?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the boreal forests are very important, and we have taken tremendous steps to ensure that there is a pristine forest protected, some unique area. There are areas that you could protect, but the member opposite talks about this particular issue about consultation.

I say to him this is a project that's being led by the local community, and it is my understanding that where the line is going is in a road right of way, that it's marked off on the maps now and local people very much are leading this.

But the member opposite should remember that this is going to get clean energy into a community and displace the use of diesel, and that's very important.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: [*inaudible*] realize that you cannot have it both ways. You cannot say, we are the great champion of the boreal forest and then bring in the heavy machinery and bring in the chainsaws and clearcut 19 kilometres 30 feet wide, Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate a few—a few cottagers.

There's other alternatives than having a power line, Mr. Speaker, go through. And it's 30 metres, I understand, as opposed to 30 feet, which is even that much more significant. You cannot have it both ways. Are you there to defend the needs of those cottagers, a handful of cottagers, or are you there to protect the interests of Manitoba's environment, of the boreal forest and, in fact, the best interests of Manitobans?

That's what we're asking the Premier to do. You can't cherry-pick. You can't say, no, no, we can't do it in terms of the bipole, but it's okay for us to do it for a few cottages. That's what the government is doing.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, this is a local line. It travels a short distance to bring clean energy into a cottage area—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: —owned—led by local people.

Mr. Speaker, you can have it both ways. You can bring clean energy into an area where there is local leadership to have it happen, and you can protect the boreal forest and you can take a leadership position—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Wowchuk: —UNESCO heritage site in the province—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Let's have a little decorum. Order. Order. I remind members when the Speaker is standing, that all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I'm trying to call for order here. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, this line is very different than a bipole line. It's a single line along a road access versus the Bipole III line that the members forward—and I'm very pleased to see that the member opposite has stated his position. They would have Bipole III go on the east side of the province and lose our opportunity to have a heritage park.

Decker Colony Dugout Licensing

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Thousands of rural Manitobans who cannot get access to municipal water services must rely on their own resources for domestic and livestock purposes. Many use run-off water from dugouts or small dams.

The Decker colony, Mr. Speaker, is one of those communities that cannot access municipal water. The colony uses dugout water.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Water Stewardship explain why a limit is being imposed on the colony with regard to filling the dugout that is usually filled by spring run-off?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been working with communities around the province. I'm not aware of the facts on this particular issue. I can take it under advisement and get back to the member.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, her department is imposing a licence on a privately constructed dugout.

The minister surely has to know that there is a policy within the government that is now going to impose these kinds of licences on private dugouts.

So, Mr. Speaker, the colony is also being restricted from—in terms of time limits as to when the dugout can be filled. They say—the licence says it can be filled in March and in April and in May, but if there's a rainfall in June or July, they cannot have that dugout filled by run-off water.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister what purpose such restriction has on a community that is already short of water for its domestic and its livestock needs and is supplementing those needs by hauling water.

What purpose is there to this licence, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Melnick: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've said, as to the specifics of this case, I will look into it. I have taken it under advisement.

The department works very hard to ensure that water is available where and when it is needed, Mr. Speaker. It has also worked very hard over the last couple of years to move water out when it is thought to be a hindrance to the sorts of production that the member is talking about.

I will look into this matter and I will get back to the House.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously there has to be a government policy when the officials of her department are bringing sheets that are a licence for a community to sign in terms of the restrictions where they can draw water from and when.

I have checked with other users of water who use private dugouts because they don't have access to municipal water. Mr. Speaker. Nobody that I have talked to knows anything about a licence, and I want to ask the minister if it is her policy now, her government's policy, to impose licences on privately constructed water retention dams and privately constructed dugouts? *[interjection]*

* (14:20)

Ms. Melnick: I know the member from Minnedosa would like to answer questions. The only way she's going to be able to do it is cross the floor and come over here.

Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the issue here is that we are actually working around licensing policies, that we have water resource officers, that we're not allowing the kind of wild-west tactics that went on in the 1990s. I wonder if that's really behind what the member is asking about.

But, again, I'll check out the specifics with the department and I will get back to the House.

Elder Abuse Prevention Government Strategy

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister responsible for seniors attended a news conference to help launch a Web site. The Web site, incidentally, was funded by the federal government and without any help from this NDP minister. The Web site is designed to provide resources to seniors and caregivers to help prevent elder abuse.

Despite his comments yesterday, the NDP government has dropped the ball on this issue. The truth is there is no meaningful elder abuse prevention strategy in Manitoba. Even though the minister says there is a strategy, the group that created this new Web site couldn't even get a copy of it.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister: Is there, in fact, an elder abuse strategy? And if there is, I'd ask that the minister table it today.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that the member, along with a few other people in this Chamber, attended the launch of a Web site which actually talked about informing people about elders' abuse. It talked about the whole strategy, which had the service, which has a phone line that people who think that there's abuse can phone in, and we've contracted that since 2007.

It also has the Seniors Secretariat. Basically, what they're doing is they're providing support and assistance to groups to get this information out there. It's talking about RHAs and other professionals getting support and information about the issues about elders' abuse. It talked about setting up a network between the police, health people and

community groups to come together to understand abuse and know how to take action, and that, Mr. Speaker, is—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table for the minister information on a copy of Nova Scotia's Elder Abuse Strategy, which was published almost five years ago. This is a 31-page document that is publicly available.

This is a serious lack of resource—a serious lack of resources for elder abuse prevention in Manitoba. In truth, the senior abuse line—phone line—is only available during regular business hours Monday to Friday and there is no crisis prevention or abuse counsellors on staff. The NDP government has paid only lip-service to this important issue, a one-page strategy, a press release.

Why is there no meaningful elder abuse strategy in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker? Can the minister please table a strategy? If he's serious about this issue, table the strategy today.

Mr. Rondeau: And I'd like to continue by saying we have safe suites where people can have access to safe accommodation if they need it. We have a 1-800 number which we contract so that the counsellors are available anywhere in Manitoba, and I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that's in stark contravention to what they did when they wiped out the farm abuse line. They had nothing there.

We have a stress line that was removed under the Tories. We have a line that is available from all over Manitoba. We have counsellors. We have safe suites, and we have a program that's comprehensive and available to everyone. That is a very good strategy.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Members' statements.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Please, order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Springfield, on a point of order?

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in *Beauchesne*, it's very clear that answers should be factual, and I'd like to just point

out to this House that, in fact, asbestos eradication was planned for Montréal schools as early as June 5th of 2008. WorkSafeBC reports asbestos eradication for their schools.

There are other provinces that were planning asbestos eradication for their schools, and the minister was wrong on this point, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Springfield, it's not a point of order. It's a dispute over the facts.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Jack Kostiuk

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): While it's always an honour to recognize our members of our communities and pass on their stories to the Assembly, today I'm particularly proud to honour Mr. Jack Kostiuk of Angusville, Manitoba, for his long-standing dedication to local and province-wide amateur baseball, and for his recent induction to the Baseball Manitoba's Honour Society. While Mr. Kostiuk is not a constituent of mine, he is a constituent of the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). He is my dad, and I'm proud to rise in the Chamber to pay tribute to him today—on his birthday, as a matter of fact.

Dad's tireless devotion to the sport of baseball and to the community were recognized by Baseball Manitoba at an annual awards ceremony in Brandon on November 14th where he was recognized as both a player and a community volunteer.

As a left-handed pitcher, nicknamed Lefty by many friends and foe, Jack played in the Northwest League, was one of the top pitchers in western Manitoba. Growing up in Angusville, a Cardinal fan from birth, I remember fondly the trips to communities of Riverside, Grandview and Souris cheering my dad's team on.

Birtle Sports Day on July 1st will always bring back fond memories of watching the Cardinals play from the centre field fence, enjoying a picnic of baba's barbecued chicken.

After retrying—retiring from the field, Jack continued to contribute by coaching and managing several community teams, as well as serving on the Angusville Cardinals executive in several different capacities through the years.

Jack was always a community builder. He aided in the development and construction of the community's new ball diamonds and maintained the facilities for many years after its completion.

I am extremely proud of all the citizens who apply their own unique passions to their—to improve their own communities. While it's always an honour to be officially recognized for your efforts, I am sure that watching the sports of baseball's—baseball flourish in Angusville for decades has been my father's greatest reward. I'm very proud of you, Dad.

Last Post Fund

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Last Post Fund on reaching their 100th year of operation.

With relentless care and dedication, the Last Post Fund has been raising money to provide veterans with a proper funeral—burial and funeral, and headstones since 1909. The fund was launched by Montreal veteran Arthur H.D. Hair who stopped at nothing to ensure that an old soldier he knew was buried with dignity. It has since grown into an important non-profit, national organization with nine chapters spanning the country, including a Manitoba-Saskatchewan branch.

Providing our brave soldiers with a final resting place is an honourable duty, one that eternalizes their sacrifice and provides solace to families and loved ones. Over the last century the Last Post Fund has helped bury 145,000 Canadian and Allied Forces veterans from Canada, England, South Africa and other allied countries.

Yet the fund does not stop at the burials of individual soldiers. It also owns and operates the National Field of Honour in Pointe-Claire, Québec, a national historic site and the first cemetery in Canada devoted entirely to veterans and their families. It also organizes commemorative ceremonies and cares for the families of fallen soldiers.

The Last Post Fund has recently expanded its scope of operation beyond Canadian Forces veterans. Just last month the fund provided two markers for the graves of fallen Canadian Rangers in Northern Ontario. This recognizes the important work of Rangers in our country.

Congratulations to the Last Post Fund on 100 years of devoted service to Canada's veterans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Kim Makoski

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I rise today to highlight the wonderful initiative of a constituent of mine, Kim Makoski, who is the author of the cookbooks *From My Kitchen to Yours*, volumes 1 through 3.

While Ms. Makoski's cookbooks contain hundreds of delicious recipes, they also raise money for the Firefighters Burn Fund. Four dollars from each cookbook sold is donated to support and improve the Manitoba Firefighters Children's Burn Unit. The proceeds of the first two cookbooks have raised over \$4,000 for the fund.

* (14:30)

With the recent release of *From My Kitchen to Yours*, volume 3, Kim hopes to be able to continue to raise money to improve the lives of children who suffer serious burns.

Ms. Makoski's involvement with the burn fund began after two children she knew suffered major burns and received treatment at the Manitoba Firefighters Children's Burn Unit and Burn Camp. The challenges facing these children and the support group services offered touched her and inspired her to support the fund.

In Kim's own words, and I quote, "As I listened, I kept thinking about how difficult it must be for those people involved in treating kids to emotionally deal with that all day—every day. I feel that a lot of respect and admiration is due to them, and this is a small way of reminding others of the good that they do, and try to help the kids involved."

I would like to congratulate Kim Makoski for her worthwhile endeavour and encourage all members to support this initiative.

And, in conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, if members are still looking for a holiday gift for a friend or for the cook in their family, I strongly recommend *From My Kitchen to Yours* as a great gift idea and a great way to support the Firefighters Burn Fund.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Achievements of Young Manitobans

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I wish to recognize a number of young people who are engaged in learning

about our political system, our province and communities within our province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

This fall, I have received a number of letters from the students of Springs Christian Academy on a variety of public issues, from the service legislation to Bipole III. These young students explained their ideas with dashes of logic, passion and articulacy.

I am encouraged to see these young people engaged on issues of social concern that we will be building a better future with them.

Another young student in my constituency is Matthew Dyck. Matthew is in grade 4, home schooled. He, too, wrote to me in this instance to ask more information about our province and the sort of work we do at this Legislature. I was able to visit Matthew at his home and was impressed by his interest in the range of subjects, including the architecture of this very big, beautiful building.

Finally, there is a young woman who deserves public recognition for a strong start what promises to be exceptional career in medicine. Navdeep Bhullar is a medical student at the University of Manitoba. Earlier this month, this bright, young woman, Navdeep Bhullar, won the Dr. James S. McGoey Research Award for her work in medical research. Her other achievements are many. I commend Navdeep and her parents for this extraordinary achievement. Suffice to say that if Matthew or the students want to look ahead, they should look for Navdeep Bhullar's achievement.

I am proud of these young people. They have demonstrated all the interests in the world around them, and as such, have begun to recognize the implicit responsibility share by young Manitobans to uphold our civic virtues, among them to the duty to ensure the well-being of members of our community.

As politicians, our role is to give our youth all the safety, security and opportunity that we can and remind young people that sky is the limit for them to achieve right here in our great province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Legislation for Residential Pet Owners

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many, many people who have come forward to bring change and improvement to Manitoba with respect to the ability for pet owners to have pets in apartments.

For many years, NDP and Conservative governments in our province have presided over a situation that discriminates against pet owners. That's because so many apartments in Manitoba have not permitted pets. Tens of thousands of Manitoba pet owners have been forced to give up their pets. The result is that each year thousands of cats and dogs are taken to the Winnipeg Humane Society because their owners have no other choice.

We need to change in Manitoba, to follow what's happened in Ontario where they've ended discrimination against pet owners. The result in Ontario has been a win-win for pet owners and for landlords. It's a win for landlords because pet owners are good tenants. As a group, they stay longer, are more reliable in paying their rent, and when they walk their dogs they keep an eye on the neighbourhood and decrease crime. Furthermore, landlords can set reasonable rules for the behaviour and control of the pets.

As well as all these benefits, a large body of evidence now shows that people who have pets are healthier, and, as a result, not only is this good for the individuals with pets, but it results in a decrease in the health-care costs overall, which is good for the health of all taxpayers.

I want to thank the more than 200 people who have signed the petition which I table in support of pet owners in Manitoba, and to thank people like Larry and Lois Todd, Peter Tindale and Norman Bunn, who have helped gather these signatures.

I also want to mention very briefly, Mr. Speaker, Bill 219, to ensure respect for workplaces—respectful workplaces in our province, and thank Judi Daly and Leah Ross for their assistance and support in bringing forth this bill.

* * *

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, and just on a point of clarification—

Mr. Speaker: Point of clarification?

Mr. Hawranik: —clarify something.

This goes back to, I recall, when we had a western Canada tour. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you were there at the time. We had a tour of western Canada, in terms of the legislatures, to determine what the rules were in each legislature, and how the House was functioning, and how things were going, and

how we could improve the rules that were here in our Legislature.

And that—when I recall what we did there, Mr. Speaker, we went into Saskatchewan, into Regina, to talk to the various officials in Regina and the Saskatchewan Legislature. We then proceeded, I believe, into Victoria. We went into Victoria and we talked to various officials there about—including the Speakers of both houses, and of course the clerks and so on and other officials.

And, thirdly, we went to, I believe it was Edmonton. We—in fact, the member from Inkster came along and participated in that process, as well as the member from Russell, yourself, Clerk, and we met with the clerks in those three legislatures, with the Speakers in those three legislatures, and we had a—in fact, it was—it was—it was a really—a great learning experience.

But one thing that came out of that meeting was the fact that in those legislatures, in fact we talked about it extensively, it was not only in those legislatures, but it's legislatures across the country, seemed to come up with the policy, I believe, that the Speaker himself controls the Legislative Building and the grounds. And certainly I would welcome your input, Mr. Speaker, in that. And I believe that the Speaker of the Legislature, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, should actually control the grounds, as well as the building itself, and I know we talked about it extensively.

We were—we were on those tours. Unfortunately, the Government House Leader of the day couldn't make it and—but we certainly filled him in, in terms of what the agenda was and what the—and what was going on at those meetings, Mr. Speaker.

So, just for clarification, I wonder if you might enlighten the House as to—or at least confirm that that was the case throughout western Canada and perhaps throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker: For clarification of the House, on the information that was passed on by—passed on by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, we did have indications—*[interjection]* Order, please.

We have—we did get many indications that a lot of jurisdictions in Canada that the building and the grounds were under the jurisdiction of the Speaker to be independent of government and—but that's in other jurisdictions. In Manitoba, it's a different story; the Legislative Chamber here is under the jurisdiction of the Speaker, but the grounds and the rest of the

building are under Department of Government Services. And it would have to come from members request to have it changed.

I could not request it myself but if—but if it's the will of the members, they would have to deal with the government and the House. So, okay?

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 36(1) I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that the regularly scheduled business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the continuing loss of jobs in the province of Manitoba, and the NDP government's failure to develop a strategy to keep jobs in Manitoba and to make our economy competitive.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member—or the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, I believe I should remind all members that under rule 36(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House is allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. And, as stated in *Beauchesne* citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. Matter of the remainder of their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there's urgency and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. McFadyen: We bring the motion today in light of the announcements made yesterday with respect to both the decision of Tembec to look for a new buyer for the plant in Pine Falls-Powerview, and if that buyer isn't found in short order, to seek to permanently close that plant, Mr. Speaker, putting some 270 Manitobans out of work.

Mr. Speaker, on the same day as that announcement was made, we received news, unfortunately, that Convergys was making an announcement to lay off a further 500 Manitobans, many of whom are resident in my constituency of

Fort Whyte, and this is following other announcements and layoffs by that company in Manitoba made over the past number of months that have had a negative impact on communities, including Brandon and Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for the urgency today and the test of urgency is one of comparison to the other matters on the agenda for discussion and debate today. The reason for the urgency here is that, contrary to what's happened in other jurisdictions, including at the federal level in the context of the current global economic turn-down, we have yet, in Manitoba, to see any meaningful action from government and any meaningful strategy from government to tackle the economic challenges that we face.

Those 770 families that yesterday received this news, Mr. Speaker, are looking to their government and their Legislature to treat this issue with a level of urgency that they now have to treat their own financial circumstances with, and that is a high level of urgency.

In the case of Pine Falls, we have people who have been without income, receiving pay at below the minimum wage now for 100 days, a very significant period of time for those individuals and their families and their entire community.

In the case of the Convergys workers, we're looking at the possibility of layoffs occurring over the next very short period of time, and for all of these reasons, there is significant urgency in addressing all of these issues.

Against the—or in terms of the context of the motion, Mr. Speaker, the 770 layoffs announced yesterday on black Tuesday occurred following 12,000 layoffs within the manufacturing sectors in Manitoba over the past 20 months alone, and the news that came out from Statistics Canada, showing that as of September 2009 we had a 70 percent–seven-zero percent increase in the number of Manitobans claiming regular EI benefits from where we were as of April 2007. And so that is some—close to 7,000 Manitobans claiming benefits as of September who hadn't been prior to that time.

Mr. Speaker, we have been raising with this government the need for an economic plan now for several years, and the urgency—the urgency for that plan became even more severe just over a year ago when global economies and global markets went into the tailspin that have preoccupied economies and

markets since that time. And we, at the time, called on the government to move up the date of their budget in order to send a clear message to Manitobans that they were working on the issue, that they cared about the issue, that they had a plan to deal with the issue of job losses in the economy, and, rather than take our advice at the time, they waited until the very last minute, the very end of March, before recalling the House and introducing a budget, one of the last budgets to be introduced in Canada, after the federal government led the way by recalling the House at an unprecedentedly early date in January of this year to introduce their budget, their economic action plan and their commitment to Canadians to address the issue of their incomes and their jobs.

That level of urgency at the federal government has been sadly lacking here in Manitoba. And we saw, just few days ago, the fourth quarterly update on the national economic strategy, Mr. Speaker. We saw reports of expected significant recoveries in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia and other provinces, as the federal government takes action. And we are disappointed that we are now looking, here in Manitoba, at being all the way back in seventh place, at best, as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is satisfied with the status quo. He said that flat is the new up as recently as question period today. He was bragging about the fact that we are going to have negative economic growth in Manitoba in 2009. I think that must be a first. I don't know that in—the years that I've been following these proceedings that I've ever heard a Manitoba premier stand up in this House and brag about the fact that we are going to have negative economic growth in Manitoba in any year. It doesn't matter how that compares to other places. The fact that jobs are being lost, we're having negative GDP growth and the Premier is up patting himself on the back is a shocking display of a Premier and a government that are hopelessly out of touch with what's going on in communities around the province, communities like—communities like Pine Falls, communities like Winnipeg, which are now seeing significant layoffs, and other places that are feeling similarly anxious about the direction of Manitoba's economy.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that they've received unprecedented support from the federal government over the past 10 years, in the form of both equalization and other program transfers. But we also know, given the equalization formula, that we

can't continue to count on handouts from Ottawa as we look to the future. And this problem we are confronted with not next year, or the year after or into the following decades, but immediately, and that's why we have such urgency in dealing with these issues.

As we look at the other business before the House, Mr. Speaker, we have debate on the Speech from the Throne. But the Throne Speech fails to even omit Manitoba Hydro, and so how can you say that we're dealing with the most urgent issue facing Manitobans when the—when the content of the Throne Speech doesn't even deal with our most important Crown corporation, Manitoba Hydro, which was—which was and should be the centrepiece of the economic vision for the province.

And so this ought to trump Throne Speech debate. It ought to come ahead of the other matters that were scheduled to be dealt with today in the House. We need to deal with the issues of Manitoba Hydro urgently. We have to deal with what's happening with Tembec, Convergys and these record EI claims on an urgent basis, Mr. Speaker, and, if we don't, I fear that we send a message to Manitobans that we're not in touch with the things that they are concerned about, that if we move off of these issues today and instead focus on a Throne Speech that doesn't contain references to Hydro, that contains no economic action plan, that contains no vision for the future of Manitoba's economy and how we're going to create the jobs of the future, that we send a message to Manitobans that we're focussed on things that are not—that are not their top priority.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have examples that we are quite concerned about: the fact that we're one of three provinces that still has a payroll tax; the fact that we've been left out of the western Canada Free Trade discussions, and these are meetings that carry on, on a virtually—a monthly basis, our neighbours to the west, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia getting together to figure out how to grow their economies together. As we have further challenges with the American border, we see Ontario and Québec entering into discussions to integrate their economies, to build a large trading bloc in the centre of North America to the east. So we've got these large trading blocs forming to the east, large trading blocs forming to the west, challenges with the American border and a complacency in Manitoba on issues of trade and economic development that is going to result in even more job losses than those losses that we saw yesterday, we fear.

* (14:50)

And so we know, Mr. Speaker, that this province has the potential to be an economic powerhouse. If we can focus on Manitoba Hydro, if we can get to the table on trade, if we can deal with the issue of our uncompetitive taxes and regulations—but it's not going to happen unless this House deems it to be urgent and gets on with the business of debating and bringing forward an economic action plan for the province of Manitoba.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we ought to pay tribute to and show our concern for those 770 Manitoba families who have received such discouraging news over the past number of days, set aside the normal business of the House and deal with this urgent matter of Manitoba's economy and the need for an action plan for growing jobs, for creating jobs and protecting jobs here in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition, and he certainly has a number of concerns. But the very fact that he has a number of concerns, it seems to me, argues against the urgency of this plea.

What is the honourable Leader of the Opposition being—have a sense of urgency about? Is it Hydro? Is it Tembec? Is it Convergys? Is it the payroll tax? Is it all the things that he listed, Mr. Speaker? You can't have an emergency debate or a matter of urgent pressing necessity about a whole bunch of things. You have to have it about one thing, and the Leader of the Opposition can't seem to make up his mind.

But that's really beside the point procedurally, because procedurally we are in the middle of the Throne Speech debate, and there's an opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition, although he's already spoke, but for his members to get up and speak about all the things that the Leader of the Opposition just put forward. That's why we have from time to time in the House Throne Speech debates, budget debates, debates where people can speak about what's ever on their mind when they can talk about the general condition of things, which is what the Leader of the Opposition really wants to have a debate about, and we want to proceed with the Throne Speech so that we can hear from honourable members on the other side and they can talk about all the things that the

Leader of the Opposition cited as wanting to have the House addressed.

And it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that's the way I see it. But, of course, the House is in your hands with respect to whether or not this particular request should be entertained.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to this MUPI.

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

Mr. Gerrard: First of all, I think it's very clear that this has been brought forward at the earliest possible time with 770 families suffering because of the announcements yesterday in terms of layoffs at Convergys and the shutdown of the Tembec plant.

Second, the reason that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside is quite frankly that there isn't an economic plan and there needs to be one, and I have been calling for an economic update and an economic plan for some time, and this only adds to the urgency and the need for such an economic plan. The fact is that we need such a plan under these circumstances so that people in businesses can plan their future. The fact is if there's no economic plan the people who've been laid off may leave the province because they don't know what's gonna happen in this province.

The fact is that we want to have this debate so that people can know what the situation is and have some assurance that something is gonna be done, and that they don't need to be fleeing the province because there's a government without a plan. Certainly, the future of Manitoba Hydro and what happens there should be part of that plan.

Mr. Speaker, we've had major concerns raised with regard to risk management of Manitoba Hydro, and we want to make sure that moving forward that Manitoba Hydro and its future is an integral part of the future of Manitoba, and that is why this is a very important time to be having this matter of urgent public importance debated, and that's why I believe that you should rule that we should have this debate today. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on whether the motion proposed by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition should be debated today. The notice required by rule 36(1) was provided. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring

urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward; however, I was not persuaded that the ordinary business of the House should be set aside to deal with this issue today. Although this is an issue that some members may have a concern about, I do not believe that the public interest will be harmed if the business of the House is not set aside to debate the motion today. Additionally, I would like to note that other avenues exist for members to raise this issue, including question period, members' statements and the Throne Speech debate.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we will now move on to orders of the day.

Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) 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 Fourth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Healthy Living, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): I'd like to give other members time to speak on this important issue and on any other topics that they would like to. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on the amendment to the Throne Speech, but, before I begin, I would like to acknowledge all the people who work in this

building. Whatever their roles are in this building, they have a very large impact on what we do, and I am very grateful for the help that they give us.

The Throne Speech is once again very light on detail and mostly a reannouncement of old announcements, no long-term planning going forward from here, a whole bunch of words that don't really give us much of a direction in this province. We've seen the economy in this province sliding for the last 10 years. Our debt has went from \$13.5 billion to \$21.2 billion. Our budget in this province has increased from \$6 billion to \$11 billion. That's 4 more billion to spend every year, and the NDP have spent it quite happily. They're not able to live within their means or within our means. We see them continuously entering into things that fail, are a waste of our money as Manitobans and everyone's money in this province.

Ranchers Choice debacle that we heard about this past week and the sale of the equipment from that was a clear loss of \$4.5 million to the people of Manitoba.

The Spirited Energy campaign: another loss of \$3 million to the people of this province.

Enhanced IDs: We have ID cards now that so far are costing \$1,750 per card; \$14 million wasted there and no indication that they're going to move off that line.

The west-side hydro route: We're hearing numbers that range all the way from \$640 million up to a billion dollars in increased costs, and that's a cost that goes on year after year after year. There will be increased line loss every year for the life of that line. And the premier, the former premier liked to play loose with those numbers. He would say, oh, no. There'd be—they will cut down on line loss. Well, initially, it will. They're going to take part of the power—they're going to take part of the power off Bipole I and Bipole II and put it down the third line, so there'll be a little less load on Bipole I and II and part of the load on III, but when the new power projects come on stream in a few years, they're going to load those lines all up full again. Conawapa's going to be a major project that will put a lot of power down the Bipole III line, and then the line loss goes up. The length of the line, the amount of the load creates line loss. And there's going to be a continuous, every year, line loss of probably in the range of 60 to 100 megawatts. That's power that could be sold by this province; it's going to be lost

and lost forever, lost year after year. That's indefensible.

* (15:00)

The nitrogen removal in the—in the Winnipeg waste-water treatment plants—unnecessary, we've been told over and over again. We see the data that says this is probably detrimental to the lake rather than good for the lake, for Lake Winnipeg, and yet they're determined, they're bound and determined they're going to spend an extra 350 to 500 million dollars on that process. Once again, pretty poor judgment.

We're in a time when our debt, our borrowing goes up and up and up in this province. We have a government that's quite willing to put another billion dollars on that debt, or billion and a half dollars on debt without blinking an eye, without even being concerned about building debt in this province.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And debt has to be paid back at some point, you would hope, but if it's not paid back then you pay interest on it. You have to service that debt forever, and it's not going to be very long before we're paying close to a billion dollars a year out of our provincial budget in debt servicing.

It's almost getting to the point now that you can finance province with the stupid overexpenditures. Maybe we could become a have province if we forgot about all these extra borrowings and extra overexpenditures. Throne Speech fails to address the economic challenges. After 10 years of unrestrained spending, we're suddenly hearing words like fiscal restraint. Well, I ask, where have you been? How did you just start to realize that maybe fiscal restraint was something you should be doing as a government of this province? Don't you owe it to every Manitoban to show fiscal restraint with the way you're spending their money? It's not the government's money; it's the people's money.

I haven't been an MLA for very long, but something I have noticed, ever since day one, is the cavalier attitude of this government toward fiscal responsibility, the Alfred E. Neuman approach of "What, me worry?" I was raised to understand that for every action there's a reaction, that there are consequences to what you do. While this NDP government has happily been fiddling more money away, other provinces have been playing the ant to our grasshopper, and it looks like the ants are getting

tired. With Mr. Doer gone, the level of entertainment from the fiddling has even slipped somewhat.

Mr. Speaker, there were several areas that the Throne Speech was almost silent on—first being municipal governance. We see municipalities unable to cope with infrastructure needs, simply because they don't the fiscal ability to pay for it. This past year, '09, and next year, 2010, there's been a considerable investment, or will be, made in infrastructure through the various stimulus packages of the federal government. This has been good news to the municipalities who had projects ready to go, funding in place and were fortunate enough to have their projects approved. The stimulus funding is coming mostly in the first two years of the multiyear program and, even at that rate, it doesn't come close to addressing the needs. What is going to happen for the remaining program years, either three or four years remaining in the program? Municipalities repeatedly ask that funding from other levels of government be consistent and predictable; it's very difficult to operate when your revenues are constantly changing.

I know that municipal-provincial tax sharing, the VLT revenues, are somewhat predictable, but I believe there are other ways the Province could assist municipalities. One that I was able to bring a resolution forward on earlier this year, but wasn't supported by the government of the day, is the removal of PST from municipal purchases. I don't see why one level of government should be taxing another level of government. Federal government removed the—federal government removed the GST several years ago, chose not to take it any longer and it was considerable money, and it meant considerable savings to municipalities.

What did the Province of Manitoba do, under this government? They expanded the list of things that were taxable, provincial sales tax, to municipalities, instead of taking it off as they should do. What's the right thing to do on that? Definitely remove it.

Another thing the federal government has done is dedicated, and, once again, this is predictable, this is what municipalities are asking for—they've dedicated a portion of the fuel tax back to the municipalities for infrastructure. A good move; it's predictable. They know how much money they're getting this year. They know how much money they're getting next year.

We in the Conservative Party in Manitoba have promised one-half of 1 percent of provincial sales tax to go to municipalities when we form government. That is a predictable number again, and that, by the way, translates into about a hundred million dollars. That's a fairly substantial amount of money would be going to municipalities.

Beyond that, we would—it would certainly be helpful to municipalities if the Province stopped downloading on them on top of all the other things that they're taking from them. And, once again, I refer to the provincial sales tax that they've expanded, that health facilities, 10 percent of the cost of a health facility, or 20 percent if you don't have the money up front, comes out of the municipality.

We just put up a new personal care home in my community. It opened last spring. The community contribution to it was \$2.9 million. That contribution came out of the municipalities, and that's substantial for small municipalities, and that's what we have out there.

We continue to see a download onto property, onto municipalities in education tax. They can claim—the NDP can claim that they're covering off the increases in education tax; it's simply not true. When they remove some of the farmland education tax, or they increase the education property tax credit, all it does is create a shift in the different classifications of assessment. I've done the numbers, I've looked at them, I've compared the same pieces of property, and the commercial properties and went up and absorbed, they've increased enough to absorb both the others. So the assault on property taxes still continues with the—with the education tax.

Properly done, the education tax should be removed from most properties in this province.

Another place that they're placing a need onto municipalities, in some areas, is their cottage-lot development expansion with no thought given to what they're gonna do with waste disposal from those properties. They're just automatically taking the idea that it's gonna go into municipal lagoons.

Well, surprise, surprise. Some of those municipalities don't have capacity to handle those cottages, and if the Province is going to wreak the returns from cabins in provincial parks, then they certainly should be compensating municipalities for what's going on out there.

Actual municipal funding, and I've heard the government say this many times, has gone up, but, as

a percentage of the budget of Manitoba, it's gone down since they went into power.

Recently, at the AMM convention, we met with the former local government districts, who are now R.M.s, and there were a number of agreements made with those local government districts when they became R.M.s, and most of them were around roads. Some of them were around office operation, but mostly around roads. And there was basically two types of roads earmarked in those municipalities: market roads, which were to be a hundred percent the responsibility of the Province, and then the other main roads which were, supposedly, going to be 50-50 percent funded by the Province and the municipality.

* (15:10)

That was done for a reason. That was done because those municipalities don't have the assessment to raise money at a high enough level to supply all the infrastructure on these roads. What happened is on the 50-50 roads, the government has continued since 1997 to use a lump sum that was there in 1997 as their number. As costs on those roads has gone up, the percentage the Province is funding has gone down because they have never increased their share of the costs. So now they're at about 70-30 and getting worse and worse, and these municipalities are really struggling.

The market roads, the ones that the Province is supposed to totally look after, have been largely ignored too. I have a couple in my constituency where the road grade has gotten lower than the land around it and the water runs across them all summer long and that's not acceptable.

We were told about a bridge in the R.M. of Reynolds that was clearly a provincial responsibility. The Province wasn't going to fix it, so Reynolds went through one of stimulus programs and got one-third, one-third, one-third funding. Now Reynolds has to answer to their ratepayers. They have to make that access, make that road, make that bridge available. They're caught. They shouldn't be paying one-third. The Province should be paying two-thirds and because Reynolds was able to access the funding the direction they did, they should be saying thank you to the federal government for the other third.

Conservation districts in this province, there's some talk about them in the Throne Speech but very little. I believe that in this province most of the

drainage that needs to be in this province is here. Most of the drains are there. The maintenance of drains is woefully inadequate. I think the systems there, that would handle most of the water—but because of maintenance most of these drains will not handle the water. There's sedimented, there's vegetation and then the government turns around and quite willing to spend money through crop insurance on flooded acres, that if they spent the money on drain repair, drain maintenance, they would only spend it once. They take the chance of spending the money every year that there's any water around.

Some of the things that are going on that I don't know why the government doesn't catch on to a little bit better but the impact they're having on small business in this province. Right at the present time, even, 33 percent of every business dollar is tax, but the things that are happening at small business—most of these small businesses, with the increases, and the constant—the ongoing and they're gonna continue to go, from what I can understand, increases in minimum wage, you're not creating more employment. There's only X number of dollars they have in those small businesses to pay for employees, so one person has to go, then the owners probably do more of the work themselves. That's reality. They just don't have the wherewithal to raise that payroll. They can't do it. They're small businesses.

So, as you well know, and I think you've seen the numbers, I've seen the numbers, there were a lot less students employed this summer after several fairly significant rises in minimum wage. I think it would be worthwhile looking at a two-tier minimum wage in this province.

Another thing that—I've got a—I've got a restaurant in my constituency, fairly good restaurant. They refuse to open on civic holidays. They simply say they can't afford to pay the extra wages required on a civic holiday.

Most small and large businesses are suffering under this NDP government. They've never understood who actually signs paycheques. We know that there are at least 60 businesses in Manitoba on job sharing.

We know that Tembec, Pine Falls, may actually close. That's 270 jobs. We were told today that Convergys has laid off 275 people in September and October, cutting another 500 jobs off the payrolls. These failures are not accidents. They're caused by a provincial government that has lost all touch with business, large and small, a government who uses the

words "we hope" or "we are hopeful" far too often, a government that has no concept to leadership, no understanding of the business world and no idea how to make Manitoba a more business-friendly climate.

Why are two world-class Canola crushing plants being built in Yorkton? Because of the business climate in Saskatchewan. What will Manitoban producers do? They will transfer Canola to Yorkton, which means more trucks travelling longer distances, and also means all the value-added spinoffs are in Saskatchewan.

The Manitoba government recently mandated biodiesel. Unfortunately, after several years of promising there would be a local production, none is forthcoming. The result is we now have—are importing biodiesel from other jurisdictions. Not only are we not benefiting from the value-added, we are not even supplying the raw products, another NDP boondoggle.

Recently, the NDP—the former minister of Conservation, to be precise—put new regulations in place for waste-water management. The minister stated—started off by talking about the environment. When he was asked to present the science, they realized he had no good arguments so he switched to a human-health issue. Now, there is no one in this House that doesn't want clean water in Manitoba, and I certainly support a lot of the regulations, but the one pertaining to ejectors is ludicrous. There are certainly areas of the province where ejectors shouldn't be used, but in the sparsely populated rural areas they are by far the best waste disposal method.

I recently talked to one of the septic truck drivers in our area, and he made two comments I will refer to: septic tanks is the same process as the first two cells of a lagoon and the pump-out takes care of what happens in the third. Septic fields fail far more often than ejectors and are more sensitive to flooding. It's a myth that ejectors spray. They pump out. Every lagoon is designed with an outlet to a waterway. I don't know why—everybody realizes that. Ejectors require 10 acres, by the way. So they're on large acreages, and the population in my area is two to four people per square mile.

On my own farm I've had an ejector system for 45 years, three generations; nobody's sick, nobody's died. Now I want to turn the farm over to my son, and either he or I will have to spend 20 to 25,000 dollars to put a septic field in place. My system is over 300 feet from my house, but a field would be

part of my lawn—very close to the house should have failed.

The upgrades to municipal septic plants or lagoons are usually carried out with either one-third or 50 percent funding from other levels of government. But, as an individual, I am expected to pay a hundred percent of the upgrade. I give the former minister credit for doing some consultation prior to the implementation, but I take the credit back because it was a refusal to listen to the advice he received.

I attended a meeting in Neepawa that 35 municipalities participated in, and the unanimous message was to leave ejector systems alone. I understood that was the message the minister received in most other jurisdictions. The AMM and KAP have a very good position on this issue when they say don't put in a blanket regulation; address the issues on a zone-by-zone or case-by-case basis.

*(15:20)

Laura Rance, a recent *Free Press* article, says that inspections could be a condition of sale. She goes on to say, simply having a septic field is no guarantee of environmental compliance. She adds: It makes sense to keep the environment clean, but provincial regulations need to focus on the goal rather than on targeting the specific methods used to accomplish it.

There are currently 89 boil water orders in Manitoba. I believe if the new Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) were to check those orders, he would find that almost every one is related to septic fields, not ejectors and not livestock. I believe the NDP could provide a much better service to the public if they actually did something about boil water issues, instead of making regulations that have very little impact on water issues and create hardship for a lot of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we see an NDP government that is out of control. They have an addiction to spending money and no idea how to get results. The NDP are certainly in first place for making announcements, and in first place for the number of times they make the same announcements over and over again. If actual results and success of their programs—bang for the buck, so to speak—was part of the formula, I can assure this House that the NDP would be in first place with their level of failure.

I totally support the amendment of the Throne Speech, but I fear common sense will once again not

prevail. The NDP government has once again shown that they have no long-term plan, no long-term goals. Steady as she goes is not good enough for us in this opposition; it is not good enough for the people of Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I have so many thoughts and ideas that I would like to talk about in such a limited time frame, I'm going to be somewhat constrained to stick to—but to only a few issues, but I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that they are critically important issues.

One of those issues is something that I've attempted to bring to the attention of the government, and tried to get the government to address the needs of individuals that are living primarily in the communities of Weston and Brooklands, and for whatever reasons, they have decided to ignore those needs.

Mr. Speaker, two days ago I brought to the Chamber a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the need to have a medical clinic in Weston—or located in Weston or Brooklands, and the government, in its wisdom, was not in favour of seeing that debate to occur. And I do appreciate the official opposition who had taken the position that they saw the merits of the urgency and were prepared to debate that issue the other day.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the following day, I raised the question in question period, and I looked to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to answer the question and he chose not to answer the question. Rather, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) stands up to answer the question and just tries to appease: Well, the residents in those two communities can go elsewhere. They can go up further North End Winnipeg or go downtown Winnipeg and get services through there.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health, the Premier of this province and, ultimately, the member from Wellington are doing a disservice by being quiet and not addressing an issue that is so critically important to the communities of Weston and Brooklands.

And I would suggest to them that they would be better advised to listen and to participate and get engaged in a discussion in a very real way. In order to accommodate that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally invite those three members, or any other member of the New Democratic caucus, to attend a public meeting on Tuesday, December the 29th, at

7 p.m., at the Weston community centre, where we will be talking about the need for a medical clinic that would be based in Weston and Brooklands, and they can share their ideas and their thoughts in regards to that. I can assure government members that they would be given adequate equal time, in terms of presenting what their idea is and what it is that they're prepared to do.

This is an issue in which I will not allow the government to be silent on. I believe the 6,000-plus individuals that live in those two communities deserve better than what they're getting from this government, Mr. Speaker, and I will push to ensure that the issue does remain not only alive, but relevant and that ultimately the communities will have a medical clinic.

Having said that, I wanted to—it's interesting that we end the year in the same way in which we start the year. We look at the beginning of the year in terms of what was happening at the Seven Oaks Hospital, and now, eight—no, 12 months later we're talking about what's happening in health care at a medical clinic, Mr. Speaker: one that affected in The Maples, the Kildonan, the north, many of my constituents at the beginning, and now it's just south of me. And many residents that I represent use the Weston-Brooklands community from Tyndall Park and Meadows—and Meadows West.

In both locations, what I have seen is government has been very silent and not taking the type of actions that are—that are necessary, and, much like the Weston and Brooklands, I will continue to monitor and to advocate what I believe North End residents in Winnipeg want to see at our community hospital facility, and that's why, you know, it was interesting when yesterday—yesterday when the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) addressed the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, what she had talked about and what she didn't talk about.

First off, you know, it was interesting. I give a member's statement and I talk about the medical clinic and the need for Weston and Brooklands. She followed immediately after my comments about the needs of Weston and Brooklands. She's the Minister of Health, she didn't even say one word about Weston and Brooklands and the needs of those residents, and that's right after I had spoken. She was aware that there was an emergency debate and yet she chose not to speak about that, Mr. Speaker.

Well, what did she talk about? Well, one of the things that she highlighted, and quote—and I quote

from the Minister of Health: and building a new birthing centre for the south end Winnipeg will continue to improve the kind of care for maternal newborn issues for which we have a very intense commitment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what—you know, it's nice to see that she's giving some recognition to the Victoria Hospital and the potential role that it can play. But let us—let us realize that it was this government that took obstetrics out of the Victoria Hospital, and they're—they're the individuals, and it was the opposition that tried to humble and embarrass members from the—such as members from St. Norbert and St. Vital for sitting and saying absolutely nothing when the government was making bad decisions now, and now they're trying to say, well, we're bringing birthing privileges to south Winnipeg. Well, they're doing it because I believe they realize that they made a mistake and that the opposition was right, and now they're trying to compensate and say that they're doing such a good job by bringing this in. Well, voters—voters—*[interjection]*—that's right. Well, you know, voters will make that determination in the next provincial election I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, they take out obstetrics and then they—and now they're going to bring in birthing. But the member from Kildonan should be very quiet on this issue, because what has she done in Seven Oaks Hospital? Why doesn't Seven Oaks Hospital have—why doesn't Seven Oaks Hospital provide birthing privileges? Why is Seven Oaks being left to the side?

Well, that brings me back to January. Remember in January I brought forward and I said that the government was reducing emergency services to the residents in the North End through Seven Oaks Hospital in its emergency department. The government had no idea in terms of exactly what it was that they were doing. You know, the minister says was—I was wrong in what I was saying, that there was no reduction in emergency services. She was telling people in North End that I was providing misinformation. What a bunch of crap, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister of Health was saying—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: —it made no sense, and she was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Order. Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: —misleading Manitobans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: I withdraw the word "crap," Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): Order. Order.

I don't need to tell anyone that that word is completely unacceptable, never mind on parliamentary—the member is going to withdraw it right now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Altemeyer): No, no, withdraw the comment, then continue your speech.

* (15:30)

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know it is—it might be a good word to describe the situation, but I will withdraw—I will withdraw the word in order to be able to continue on.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that the government and what the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) was trying to tell Manitobans and people living in Winnipeg north was inappropriate because there was absolutely no evidence whatsoever to substantiate what it is that the Minister of Health was saying, because she was misleading people. She was trying to give the impression that there were no changes that were happening in the emergency department at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

And what did we see from the member from Kildonan, the member from The Maples, the member from Burrows, the member from St. Johns? Absolutely nothing. You'd think they would stand up for those residents that were getting a reduction in emergency services. No, not a word, Mr. Speaker. In fact, they didn't even have the courage to attend a public meeting to defend the actions of this Minister of Health.

This Minister of Health has been an absolute and total failure in terms of delivering health-care services to North End residents, and what I see now, she's going to provide birthing privileges for a south-end hospital at Victoria, which is a good thing. The Liberals are the ones that said we should've had obstetrics there. It does show that there's a double standard. If you're in the south end, maybe the MLAs there are a little bit more vocal, whereas in the North End the MLAs sit on their hands and say nothing with duct tape over their mouths, Mr. Speaker, because it's in the North End should have birthing privileges, too, at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

In fact, it was the Manitoba Liberal Party, in the early '90s, talked about the advantages of having a training centre for midwives, and that, in fact, we should—we should be having a live birth at the Seven Oaks Hospital. But not this government, Mr. Speaker. Not this group of NDP MLAs. They've ignored the needs of North End Winnipeg, and that's why I highlight the fact of here we go again with the Westbrook Medical centre. You'd think this government would learn. You'd think this government would realize that health-care services in North End Winnipeg, in particular, I'm talking now about Weston and Brooklands, are very important, too, and they shouldn't be taking those people for granted, and that's what they're doing.

And I would suggest to you that if the government want to do something honourable in terms of the residents of Weston and Brooklands, that they would stand up today, and they would make the commitment that the people that are primarily using the clinic in Weston and Brooklands have nothing to fear, that there will be a clinic going forward. Whether it's a public or private clinic, there will be a clinic going forward in Weston and Brooklands, and the residents of those areas, some 6,000-plus, many of which are seniors, Mr. Speaker, many of which are new immigrants, many of which are on limited fixed incomes, need to have that community-based clinic.

And, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, not only is it morally the right thing to do, but financially it is the best thing to do. So I would encourage the government to act on that particular issue.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I had the opportunity in the last few question periods to raise an issue which really, really, I think, amazes a number of Manitobans. And that is, of course, the issue of nitrogen and removing nitrogen or nitrate from the waste water that is—that is being proposed at the—in Winnipeg at the plant.

And, you know, the government is prepared to waste in excess of a half billion dollars. They're just going to throw it out. Here's a half billion in tax dollars; it's all going down the drain. There is no value to spending that half billion dollars. Yet this government has—*[interjection]* Well, you know what? A minister says something from her seat, and I wish she would tell the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to answer the question, or the Deputy Premier to answer the question, and put on the record who, outside of CEC, is telling you that you have to spend

that half billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Name a scientist. Tell me a scientist. Give me a scientist that is telling you that it's worth spending a billion—or a half billion dollars to get rid of nitrogen in order to save some whales in Churchill and the river system, you know.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, if the government wants to save some tax dollars, it could show some leadership and reverse the decision. It does not have to spend—it doesn't have to commit the half billion dollars, because that's going to be the cost of your decision, a half billion-plus of tax dollars that's going to go towards this. Why? To take nitrates out. And there is no evidence.

You know, Lake—I believe it was Lake Erie was a dead lake at one point in time and today—and today it is a lake that's doing quite well. They didn't take nitrates out of it; it was phosphorus. And, you know, all you have to do if you really want to spend the money, you'll take a look at some of the—you know, the Leader of the Liberal Party has brought forward ideas on getting rid of phosphorus and at a fraction of the cost that—of the half-billion dollars, and it's gonna do a whole lot more to save Lake Winnipeg and protect our ecosystem, Mr. Speaker.

But you'd think—common sense—you know, if I sit down with a group of 12-year-olds, I believe that those 12-year-olds can make a better decision than this Cabinet, Mr. Speaker. You know, I believe that, and I say a group, you know, a group of 15–15—I understand now you have 16 in Cabinet. That was an important expenditure, you know. Here we are having tough economic times and what does the government do? Expands Cabinet. Expands bureaucracy.

Well, I could—I could get a better decision coming from a group of 15-year-olds, Mr. Speaker, than the current Cabinet, in dealing with the type of expenditures that this government is committing the taxpayers to, and I don't understand why it is they cannot realize that going ahead with this half-billion-dollar baby is just wrong. It's a mistake and I don't know how much more clearer that we can be on that particular issue.

You know, it's much like the Hydro issue; you know, west side versus east side versus under the lake, Mr. Speaker. You know, the government says, well, we want to protect the boreal forest and that's the reason why we're gonna build on the west side. Well, we find out that there's gonna be a new line going into the boreal forest, some 19 kilometres,

30-metre path. This government is taking out the chain saws, the heavy machinery and they're gonna make that clearcut path so that they can accommodate a few cottages.

I wonder if there's any New Democrats that actually have cottages in that area. I don't quite understand why it is that they're gonna abandon their principles, Mr. Speaker, and the Deputy Premier says no, that no New Democrats have it, and I'm glad to see that she says no.

But you know something, Mr. Speaker, when it seems to accommodate their desires, even if it means clearcutting in the boreal forest, then it's okay to do it, that it's okay to go ahead, and for those few cottage owners that want to have power, they'll plough down those trees, destroy that environment and they'll pop up a power line. But, you know, when it comes time to try to defend their argument why it needs to go—the Hydro bipole has to go down the west side, well, they use the boreal forest. We can't cut any trees down in the boreal forest.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there's some inconsistency—inconsistencies that are there, you know. I think that the government—you know, we had—we had demonstrated very clearly that there is—there is another option to that bipole line. You know, you don't have to go on either side of the lake. You can actually go underneath the lake. For the government's information, they've actually built power lines under an ocean, under a sea. We can actually have a line under Lake Winnipeg, which would be more environmentally sound than having it go either on the east side or the—or the west side. Yeah.

An Honourable Member: We? We? John Ryan.

Mr. Lamoureux: We, being—we, being the people of Manitoba, could actually be better served by having the line going under Lake Winnipeg—

An Honourable Member: John Ryan's done the work on that.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, Jack—you know, the member from Kildonan makes reference to an individual. You know, that individual used to be one of the advisers to the NDP, in a very significant way, from what I understand. Can't blame him for being discouraged.

And, you know, when we raised the issue—when we raised the issue in committee about what about the possibility of going under the lake, I believe the

response was, well the—there would be oil-seeping possibilities from the lines.

An Honourable Member: No, that's not what we said.

Mr. Lamoureux: You know—well, it was something of a similar nature. Yes, it was—it's not an exact quote, but they gave the impression that they looked into it, when we find out, Mr. Chairperson, that they didn't look into it. There was no comprehensive understanding. They never even realized that as an option. They even studied that as an option. How irresponsible. Am I surprised? Well, not really.

* (15:40)

You know, there's this—there comes a point in time when government does so many things that are so out in left field that it just does—no longer has that surprising impact, Mr. Chairperson, or Mr. Speaker.

You know, on the Hydro issue, now we have a report coming forward, and we anxiously await when we get to have Manitoba Hydro before committee again where it is all these accusations, very serious accusations, about mismanagement, and, Mr. Speaker, again we're talking hundreds—hundreds of millions of dollars being wasted again.

You know, add it up, add up the monies that we're talking about, whether it's the bipole, you know, the proposal, a half billion dollars, and when I say a half billion dollars, that's minimal. You know, I am being conservative in my estimates when I say a half billion dollars on the bipole line going on the west side, additional cost. An absolute in excess of a half billion dollars on the nitrogen issue, Mr. Speaker. You know, on this whole mismanagement issue, we're talking again hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, we could talk about the floodway and the cost overruns or the construction of the—*[interjection]* Oh, yes, there was. On the construction of the Manitoba Hydro building, and, again, the tens of millions of dollars in cost overruns.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly amazing. We're not talking about a few hundred millions of dollars; we're talking well over a billion dollars that this government has been mismanaging and has to be held accountable for.

There's no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that when Manitobans become more and more and the more they become aware of the—of the management

of this government in the direction that they're taking the province, this government is not gonna survive.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that this government is heading in the direction that they were going back in the late '80s, and, you know, it's not with a great amount of pleasure that I say that in the sense that in the short term Manitobans will pay the price, you know. Manitoba does have far more potential, and, you know, they say, well, look, housing prices have gone up—that's a good thing.

Well, I'll tell you something, housing prices is a good thing maybe if you're established. What about, whether it's young people, someone's, you know, your daughters, your sons, individuals that are moving into the province, people that are on fixed incomes, you know there was a time in which you could actually—and it wasn't that long ago—you could actually buy a house and you could virtually live on, you know, \$10-\$11 an hour, and you didn't have these huge mortgages, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't that long ago. It's—you know, you're only talking eight years. Today, yes, house prices have gone up. Yes, you know, each—most of us probably have increased in terms of our equity.

But what about our—the future? Our children and young people, people coming into the province, you know? So, yes, there have been some advantages for some—for some people and, generally speaking, you know, employment hasn't been all that bad. But, there are areas of the economy that we could have been doing so much better if, in fact, the government would've been putting better priorities and better programming.

You know, when you spend \$10 billion, it's hard to say that everything you spent is bad. There's a lot of good things that happen when you spend \$10 billion. There should be, Mr. Speaker, but my job is—a member—a member of the opposition, is to point out where government really needs to improve itself, and I've given some very clear examples of why it's important that government needs to revisit some of the issues.

You know, health care and the needs that are in health care—yet take a look at the amount of bureaucracy that has grown and the lack of accountability within that bureaucracy. You know, the Liberal Party has advocated that the regional health authorities come before a standing committee. MLAs of all political stripes should be able to question the decisions that are being made by regional health-care authorities, whether that

happens to be in Winnipeg, Thompson, Winkler. Where these regional health-care authorities are, Manitobans need more accountability, need—I shouldn't say Manitobans. These regional health-care authorities need to have more accountability, and the accountability can take place here inside this Legislature. It doesn't have to be the Chamber. It can be a committee room. These regional health-care authorities, if it was up to me, I would say that we should look at replacing them with something that's far, far better. But if the government persists on having them, then let's at least make them better by having them come before standing committees.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I've talked about the importance of immigration to this province, and I was very happy and grateful back in the late '90s to be involved in some of the discussions that ultimately led—and I'm not saying that I influenced discussions, but I would suggest to you that I was aware of some of the discussions that were taking place in the creation of the Provincial Nominee Program. And I was very happy when that agreement was ultimately signed in the late '90s and felt that, yes, this is a window of opportunity for Manitobans, and we do need to expand in that—in the area of immigration. And there has been some progress, but the government has neglected certain aspects of that program. One of those is in terms of the processing times.

So many days through the session I rise and I stand about—talking about reducing the processing times, giving a guarantee of 90 days for the family stream. It's a reasonable request. In fact, it wasn't a problem at one point in time within the Provincial Nominee Program and now, in the Throne Speech that the government has put forward, it's saying that the guarantee be of a six-month nature. Well, that's just wrong. There is no reason why we cannot provide a 90-day guarantee for processing of PNP applications for the—for the family stream. I would question in terms of why it is the government hasn't recognized that value. If it means that we need to put in additional resources, then we should put in additional resources. I'd just as soon see more people working in the provincial nominee office than additional hirings in terms of the Cabinet. You know, we created more positions within Cabinet and spin doctors for Cabinet than we have in terms of the provincial nominee office and, in a very real way, immigration is what has at least assisted, in a very major way, the success of Manitoba's economy not only in the last few years, but virtually through its

inception. And the potential is even better, so we need to look at the Provincial Nominee Program as a program that, if handled and managed properly, that it could lead to much more success.

You know, I listened to others talk about Hydro and the important role Hydro could have at taking us out of that have-not province area and some of the entrepreneurship that's—Manitoba has to offer. Well, I would suggest to you that another important plank is a good, solid Provincial Nominee Program has the potential to develop Manitoba's many different industries, and we need to take advantage of that particular program. And that's why, you know, I was glad to see that there was a Cabinet change because, hopefully, out of that Cabinet change we will see some new ideas and ways in which we can make the program even that much better.

Suffice to say, that it's—I believe it's ultimately critical that the government bring in a 90-day guarantee for the family stream. There is no excuse not to have a 90-day guarantee. I would suggest to you that it can be done, and, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the next Throne Speech in the sense of hopefully they will reduce that six-month guarantee to a 90-day guarantee, and I intentionally single out the family stream. So we'll have to wait and see actually what takes place in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I'd like to comment on—just before I realize my time is about to expire—is the issue of justice. Again, I look to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) to provide comprehensive policy in terms of combating crime in Winnipeg, in Manitoba. I think that in the past we have seen a direction that has really disappointed a great deal of people, and I'll—I'm going to cite two examples: one is the ankle bracelet concept. With the ankle bracelet concept, we believe it should have been comprehensive. That means it's more than just GPS. You know, you can have monitors, in-home monitors. There's just so much more that we could be doing in that area, and I would encourage the government to do that.

* (15:50)

We need to ensure that there is, indeed, consequences to crimes, and, in certain areas, when a youth commits a crime, there has not been a consequence, and that—in those areas have actually expanded, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that there are areas that the government needs to spend more time on, so a little

bit less on some of the flash, a little bit more on some of the actual causes, Mr. Speaker. Let's be a little bit more aggressive in terms of helping young people also. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's an honour today to rise in this Chamber on behalf of the citizens of Minnedosa constituency to debate the Throne Speech, and it's a privilege to serve my constituents on such an important occasion.

First of all, I'd like to call attention to the hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are senior citizens and students, who have been staffing the H1N1 clinics throughout Manitoba. And I would also like to pay special tribute to those in the Minnedosa constituency working with the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority to ensure that the safety of our communities as we weather through this very serious health issue—regardless of the mixed messages and unclear strategic planning from the department, front-line staff have logged many overtime hours preparing for administering vaccinations, and they should be commended for that.

From comments made by the members opposite regarding the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would think that Manitoba was living in a middle-class dominated Whoville. And, being the season for the story of Whoville and the Grinch, Whoville individuals across the—on the other side of the House believe that two cars in every driveway and Christmas trees overflowing with gifts seems to be the theme. I don't know exactly where this individual—these individuals live. In a dream world, I would presume, but I know that throughout the province, there have been a reported case of increases in the use of food banks, and charities are overwhelmed by those in need.

The Christmas Cheer Board registry in Brandon is struggling to keep up with the demands with needy families, and I know the food banks within my community such as Souris, Rivers and Minnedosa have been struggling to keep their shelves full and to ensure that families who are in need are receiving the care and the support that they need with regard to food and other resources to keep them safe and warm.

A 14 percent increase in the number of people collecting EI benefits in September for Manitobans does not include—eclude—allude, sorry, allude to a Whoville type of Christmas or a celebration of abundance like earlier NDP speakers have described.

So I just wanted to put that on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are serious times with serious challenges, and I encourage members to be cognizant of the fact that there are many that are living without at this—at this time of year.

I have a situation in my constituency. A mother of four children, the youngest being three months old, who, to this point today, has not had a call back from the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh). She has no heat in her home, has been using a heater—industrial heater to keep her house warm for her family. And I find it very discouraging that this government would not respond to the needs of families, such as this young mother and her four children are looking for. I spoke to her—our office spoke to her earlier today and she had still not received a call. She was in tears and felt that she was being forgotten. So I assured her today that I would raise this in my Throne Speech and encourage the government to take action on this. The minister's office has been called twice. I'm encouraging them to take action.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a true economic climate of our province, not the spin offered by this NDP government who convolutes numbers to fit their own agenda. This is reality. Members opposite are using the Throne debate to describe a Christmas in abundance. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) is calling on Manitobans to tighten their belts as they look forward to increased hydro rates, if you have hydro. Pharmacare deductibles and other user fees, at the time—same time expanding the size of their Cabinet to reward their friends and wasting hundreds of millions of tax dollars, hard-earned tax dollars, recklessly. Between an inefficient, unreliable and politically motivated west-side Bipole III line, a purely planned enhanced—a poorly planned, enhanced ID campaign and the frivolous expenses that would come from adding another government department and renaming others, over \$650 million will have to be wasted by this Premier, who has the audacity to ask Manitobans to tighten their belts—*[interjection]*

And we hear from the member opposite, the only NDP member from that side of the House who was ever fired from Cabinet. It's interesting that he has a comment at all.

It is absolutely critical that the new Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) is honest with this House, and with the people of Manitoba and provide an economic update. It is—it often—it's often insinuated

by members opposite that large-scale debt is preferable to the loss of social programming. However, the actual cost of this government's lack of financial prudence needs to be put into perspective. This year the Province's interest payment on the debt totals over \$750 million. The entire City of Winnipeg operates on a budget little more than that.

Imagine the number of nurses, technologists, pathologists, social workers or rural doctors that could be hired, the number of homeless that would benefit from \$750 million. And \$750 million would do a lot for affordable housing. Instead of talking about how cutting back on spending would disfavour Manitobans, maybe you should be looking at how much more social programming could be provided, or incentives to attract businesses could be implemented if the provincial government wasn't having to service so much debt.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important issues in the constituency of Minnedosa and the southwestern part of the province, is the dire state of the agriculture industry, and hearing earlier with regard to the Interlake, there are issues that this government needs to be addressing with regard to the agriculture sector. And it seems to be going on deaf ears on this side of—at that side of government.

The lack of support and vision from this government is very sad. Our new Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) will certainly have his hands full, and I sincerely hope that he will sit down with the producers of Manitoba, listen to their concerns and respect the feedback that he receives. Hopefully, he will have more respect of the consultation process as the—as the Ag Minister than he was when with municipal leaders with regard to the on-site, waste-water management issue, which is a huge issue facing Manitobans.

Cattle producers are leaving the industry in record numbers, with the price per head not even covering the cost to feed. Hay yields have been diminished, even as prices continue to rise, and farmers from other provinces are taking advantage of their own government's programs to purchase substantial amounts of Manitoba hay for themselves. Excessive moisture has severely diminished the availability of feed, forcing producers to concentrate on maintaining their business just through the winter. Both Alberta and Saskatchewan have announced programming to help struggling livestock producers, and this NDP government is oblivious, not one new program.

Several unaddressed and new challenges facing the industry, including long term—long-term effects from BSE and tuberculosis in herds, drought and excess moisture minimizing feed crop yields and country-of-origin labelling. The Throne Speech offered no acknowledgement of these difficulties and absolutely no support in finding solutions. Farmers are our allies in the stewardship of our land, water and resource conservation. We all acknowledge that a fine balance is required for sustainable land practices, but this government needs to start providing incentives to aid farmers in their adoption of sustainable practices. Instead, agriculture producers are constantly finding themselves pitted against the government that prefers punishment and regulations like that of Bill 17.

A strong and healthy agriculture sector is one of the main driving forces of the province's economy. As well, there are the Manitobans that put food on our table every single day and, unfortunately, there seems to be a disconnect in the minds of the NDP between the food they buy at the grocery store and the families that produce it.

Highways and hard infrastructure are in the—in a very poor state after being neglected for years by this NDP government, despite the attentions that are being put forward by this side of the House. When highways in my constituency are finally addressed, it's after projects that have been announced and reannounced and reannounced and reannounced through Throne Speech after Throne Speech.

*(16:00)

I'll assume that the reason why the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) shunned municipal leaders from my communities who wanted to meet with him at the AMM convention in Brandon is because he's not quite feeling comfortable in his new portfolio. Hopefully, he'll feel more confident soon, given the fact that not even the first—this is not the first time that he's held this portfolio. And I will be encouraging the municipal leaders in my communities to continue to request meetings with this minister.

Mr. Speaker, the resilience and ambition of the communities in my constituency never cease to amaze me. I can speak of the individuals behind the recently completed Souris pool or those currently working to fundraise for new recreation facilities in Rivers and in Minnedosa, neither of which have, to date, received penny of support from this government or any support from this government.

This constituency is certainly a hot spot for community involvement and this rural-in rural Manitoba, and it is time that this government step up and realize the value of these communities to the provincial economy and landscape.

In recent years, we have seen this government shamelessly throw incredible amounts of money down the drain whenever or whether by ignoring the interests of public stakeholders and common sense by building a more expensive and less efficient hydro line down the west side of the province or a \$3-million misuse for a branding campaign or the appalling waste of money through the enhanced driver's licence program. This money could have been better spent to support our community groups who have worked to bring valuable improvements to their communities instead of leaving them out to dry.

This—the Throne Speech speaks about adding low-income housing over the next five years, and the fact is that residents of northern communities have been waiting that long for their approved housing projects to make it through this government's bureaucratic red tape. If the new Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) would have actually met with residents of the Duck Bay community when they—when they drove over three hours to meet at her office, she would have known of the deplorable living conditions that these people face. So the—so to the Manitobans waiting for affordable housing, I say, don't hold your breath.

I look forward to details on proposed amendments to The Community Economic Development Fund Act. Hopefully, the intentions will be to address the accountability issues that led to the granting of \$300,000 in taxpayer money to a baker from British Columbia, a baker whose business was never even established. How does this benefit the residents of northern Manitoba?

This government is continually bragging about the amount of money that is being doled out, especially in regards to health care. On this side of the House, we don't measure success by dollars but by results. All the Throne Speech offered the citizens of Manitoba in terms of health care were recycled announcements.

While I'm sure residents of the Westman area appreciate the capital investment in the Westman Regional Lab, which was announced five years ago, addressing the chronic shortage of pathologists and staff in the facility to decrease wait times for

diagnostic tests and to an acceptable level, would have been even more welcoming.

Communities like Souris who have a shortage of technologists who continually work back-to-back on shifts, off shifts and have very little time to take days off, are looking forward to seeing some type of acknowledgement from this government that they are facing challenges and that they need support from this government in that area. Communities like Melita who have seen their ER close because of technologists shortages should be a sign to this government and this Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) that there are challenges that need to be addressed. In fact, there is no strategy announced to deal with wait times or health-care staffing shortages in the province at all.

As was expected, the challenges faced by rural areas with regard to health care were blatantly ignored in this Throne Speech except, of course, for the dialysis unit in Russell whose ongoing reannouncement has lasted much longer than many rural residents needing that service have survived and, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that's a statement that the government should be taking to heart.

On a number of occasions, I've brought to the attention of this House the need for increased addiction services in our high schools. Last year I discovered that due to inadequate funding of AFM, a moratorium was imposed on such services in schools. This is at a time when we see increased levels of alcohol and drug-related issues in our youth. The member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Briese) raised the issue today, and I think that what this government has done in its response is just make people realize that they may learn of issues, but they ignore them if they become a challenge for them and continue to let communities struggle on their own. Instead of addressing the issue, the former minister of Healthy Living obviously dropped the ball, and now we see 23 of 26 AFM offices will be closed over the holiday season because of budget shortfalls. This NDP government is leaving Manitobans actively seeking treatment for their addictions out in the cold.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It is appropriate that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is offering senior opportunities to get back in the work force in their golden years as it was under his watch that thousands of seniors lost their retirement savings in the Crocus scandal. Their first pay stub should include a sorry note, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Members on this side of the House have met with seniors service co-ordinators throughout the province who rightfully feel abandoned by this government. One after another responsibilities are being offloaded onto these organizations without the attached dollar to properly provide the services. In rural areas, services to seniors groups can't even afford the transportation costs between communities and co-ordinators are spending the majority of their time fund raising instead of providing necessary services to our seniors. Congregate meal programs are being slashed and programs to provide affordable transportation to and from medical appointments are being discontinued.

I've been contacted by an employee who has worked as a senior services co-ordinator for 19 years and was recently given a wage increase to \$11 an hour. They are being forced to attend seminars at their own expense. These people are practically volunteering their time because they feel that Manitoba's seniors deserve these services, and they do, Madam Deputy Speaker. Seniors are dynamic and valuable citizens of our province as are those people who work with them. The lack of commitment to Manitobans who work with seniors speaks of this government's lack of commitment to senior citizens in general, and shame on this government for not supporting these individuals with proper resources.

Ten years in power, Madam Deputy Speaker, can be characterized as an era of missed opportunities. There is a clear disconnect between the NDP and the Manitobans on long wait lists to see specialists, or agriculture producers who are leaving the industry because they can't feed their livestock, or the future generations of Manitobans who will be paying for this government's reckless spending.

This Throne Speech was full of reannouncements of old promises that have failed to materialize. While the speech did contain noble goals that we, in fact, do support, I must advocate for my constituents who are still waiting on four- or five-year-old promises and will be burdened by an even greater level of debt in the future. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to welcome back the Speaker, yourself as well, table officer—table officers, Sergeant-at-Arms, pages, Hansard staff, and all the other people that make this institution function on a daily basis.

I would also, at this point, like to congratulate our new Premier (Mr. Selinger) and our new—my new ministerial colleagues, and I'm very proud to say that our caucus reflects the ethnic diversity of Manitoba. Particularly—I'm particularly proud of the fact that we have six immigrants in our caucus, Madam Speaker. I think that's close to my heart because I'm an immigrant myself.

I'd like to speak to the subamendment of the amendment to the Throne Speech and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm proud of this Throne Speech. Our collective challenges are stated bluntly and are matched with solutions that are consistent—that consistently match elegance with feasibility. This is a balanced and intelligent plan to lead Manitoba through an uncertain time onto steadier ground. There are, of course, two views: the glass is half full; the glass is half empty. And we've certainly been hearing a lot about how the glass was half empty and how members opposite are painting the canvas entirely black, but the sky is not falling, I assure you.

Last Monday night I accidentally had a few minutes and I was watching a local TV program and who's on but a spokesperson for the Real Estate Board of Winnipeg. And what are they so ecstatic about? They're ecstatic about the fact that they haven't had a November that's as successful as this November. They sold more houses and condominiums and buildings than they ever did before. Now that, to me, seems to be the people speaking. It seems, to me, they're giving us a vote of confidence that things can't be nearly as gloomy as our honourable colleagues opposite would like to paint the canvas.

Regarding an important sector in my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, the mining sector. The Throne Speech demonstrates that the government recognizes the importance of the mining sector not only to the north but the entire province. Manitoba's mineral sector is the province's second-largest primary resource industry. In 2008, our province produced \$2.5-billion worth of metals, industrial minerals and petroleum. The sector is an important source of employment for northern Aboriginal communities. Through 2008, 5,200 Manitobans were employed in the mineral sector, resulting in 18,000 spinoff jobs. Manitoba can boast nine producing mines, two refineries and two working smelters.

* (16:10)

Now, we're all aware of the challenges facing single-industry communities, particularly mining communities like Flin Flon and Sherridon and Snow Lake and Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake. There is a boom-bust cycle, and governments have to be aware of that, and they are aware of that.

I'd also like to point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that private companies invested \$141.5 million towards mineral exploration in 2008. And, as the Throne Speech pointed out, HudBay Minerals continues to work towards the development of the Lawlor zinc, copper, gold mine. They've also restarted their Chisel North copper, zinc mine and restarted the concentrators at Snow Lake. And, as well, in Snow Lake, Garson Gold and Alexis Minerals are working towards reopening the New Britannia gold mine.

And I'd like to say a little bit about the Lawlor deposit, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a huge deposit. Alan Vowles and Dave Koop, two gentlemen that are responsible for actually finding that deposit, deserve a lot of credit. They're both—at least Alan Vowles, but I think also Dave Koop—are protégés of Bob Fraser [*phonetic*], a former geophysicist at the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, Alan Vowles is an extremely talented individual. I guess he's a Renaissance man. I know him in the one sense as an artist because I am getting a picture framed—or reframed—that he actually painted of Tom Creighton, who was the—one of the people, along with Dave Collins, who discovered the first Flin Flon ore deposit. So this geophysicist is also a great artist, and he's also a leading figure in developing Wavemill technology, which is being—which will be used all over the world, which uses wave action to create electricity and also pure water. So these are very, very talented individuals, and they use a system called a Crone EM system for electromagnetic imaging, and that's how they could image the actual ore body that we will be developing at the Lawlor deposit. And it was incredible because, usually, this particular system only works up to a hundred metres underground, and then they tweak it to make it work to 300 metres. But these two gentlemen took this electronic—electromagnetic imaging system to a kilometre down. So the ore deposits they're discovering are way, way down.

And what are those ore deposits? Well, we called it a zinc mine at one point, and then we discovered that there is \$3-billion to \$4-billion worth

of gold there as well. And now we've discovered next to that deposit another huge deposit, which has an enormous amount of copper and an enormous amount of gold. So we're talking billions and billions and billions of dollars. We do know that the zinc alone that we've identified so far near the Lawlor deposit, or at the Lawlor deposit, is enough to keep the zinc smelter in Flin Flon operating for over 20 years, and it's only the beginning. So this is a huge development, and I'm very happy that it took place at the down cycle of mining.

And I would like to, Mr. Speaker, actually read page 29 of a northern magazine called *Northroots*, a very good magazine. And, on page 29, I'd like to quote what the magazine says. It says: On October the 30th, 2009, HudBay Mineral CEO, Peter Jones, announced the reopening of Chisel North Mine and the Snow Lake Concentrator. Zinc prices are up and the Lawlor deposit is on the front burner. A production ramp will be built from Chisel North to the Lawlor deposit. The ramp will take 30 months to build, providing access to Lawlor's high-grade zinc and to a drilling platform from which to expand knowledge of the gold deposit as yet unnamed. The ramp will cost \$85 million; phases 2 and 3 will see the Lawlor site developed. Production shaft and refurbishing the concentrator will bring the total commitment to about \$450 million. And that's great news for Snow Lake, Cranberry Portage and Flin Flon area. So that is wonderful news for us.

Now, clearly, the private sector is confident that the government will continue to move towards ensuring that northern Manitoba is an attractive place in which to invest. Simultaneously, the government is working with companies and communities to rehabilitate orphaned and abandoned mines. The Throne Speech noted the Province's significant contribution of \$42 million towards a number of mine rehabilitation projects. And I was fortunate to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the mining minister not too long ago when we made this announcement, together with a company called Hasco, who was doing the—doing the rehabilitation project.

I should also point out at Lynn Lake a number of projects are involved, including dike enhancement, surface water management, tailings capping, and site remediation. It will be carried out at both the east and the west tailing management areas. Also, they are moving the old dump, which is on the tailings area, into a—they're working on building a new dump. That's in the works.

At Sherridon, a three-year, \$35.5-million project to neutralize and relocate tailings includes a 10 percent set aside and a \$500,000 training allowance for local First Nations and northern communities. Sherridon and Gohl Lake is a small community so this is a huge amount of money for them. It's a huge amount of money for a small community like that, and it's stark contrast to what was happening years ago. If we go back to the early '50s when Sherridon—when the Sherridon mine closed and the Sherridon community moved to what is now Lynn Lake largely, although some of Sherridon-Gohl Lake still remained, the tailings were just there oxidizing away. They were a hazard.

I might point out when this was happening in 1953 both governments were Liberal, the ones in this province and the one in Ottawa. They obviously ignored the problem. The problem was ignored for many years—were ignored for many years, and so I'm really happy that we're finally working on it.

Now, the early '90s, mid-'90s, weren't much different either, because I remember we—I would at least raise the issue about the unsafe condition of the mining tunnels around the Sherridon area. I remember one case where two kids got stuck on an ice floe actually in a mine shaft, because, you know, it filled up with water and the kids got on the ice floe and the ice floe took off and they were stuck there. Now we had trouble at that time begging the government for just a little fence around those unfenced mining shafts. Now we've done an awful lot of work to clean up and we are going to spend even more work to make sure that it's rehabilitated properly.

I should also point out that Snow Lake will undergo tailing remediation and re-vegetation. At Gods Lake stockpile steel will be removed, tailings will be capped and the mine site will be cleaned up.

An Honourable Member: How about Lynn Lake?

Mr. Jennissen: Ruttan Mine will see a newly designed water treatment facility as well as remediation at the tailings area, and Lynn Lake, as the honourable member mentioned, is also in the picture for cleanup. Rehabilitation work will be carried out at 13 other sites, which have been identified as posing potential hazards to public health and safety and to the environment.

As the Premier (Mr. Selinger) noted in late October, these investments position Manitoba as a

leader in the rehabilitation of orphaned and abandoned mines, and if you compare that to what the Tory legacy was, well, there's just no comparison.

Further, the programs and partnerships, funding initiatives and community involvement engendered by the Province's funding commitment enabled northern communities to be on the front lines of projects that ultimately aimed to secure the health of their own environment.

This government's stand towards mining in Manitoba demonstrates a characteristically comprehensive view of what is after all a very important issue. The economic health of the sector is secured by friendly business climate while issues of human health and environmental stewardship are tended to fairly and without compromise.

Having touched upon the Throne Speech treatment of one central component of northern Manitoba's economy, it is fitting to presently note other ways in which the Throne Speech addresses the wider issue of economic development in northern infrastructure investment. It is not a secret that northern Manitoba has been hurt by softening global markets. Forestry and mining in the north and agriculture in the south are sectors of the economy which are particularly susceptible to the whims of the current anemic export markets.

The Throne Speech is reassuring in its commitment to keep the development of our northern infrastructure firmly in mind, both so that the unemployment is presently staved off, and so that as a community we prosper from the opportunity of tomorrow's economic booms.

There is and will be a lot of emphasis on more apprenticeship training supports and the retraining and reskilling of workers, because the miners that may be unemployed or under stress today will be needed when the boom occurs in the near future, and the boom is occurring right now. I would also add that The Community Economic Development Fund Act will be strengthened so as to further encourage the deepening and broadening of the northern economy.

Roads are the unromantic linchpins of northern economic development, and the government's pledge to spend almost \$545 million in 2010 on more than 1,500 kilometres of roads, including 45.5 million on single-access roads, suggests a willingness on behalf of the government to do the grunt work necessary to

foster the further economic development of the province as a whole. As the member from Transcona pointed out the other day, in the early and mid-'90s the Tories were spending approximately \$100 million a year on road infrastructure. We're spending five and a half times that much, and a quarter of that budget goes to northern roads, which were sorely neglected under the Tory legacy.

* (16:20)

A 2010 economic summit led by the Premier and bringing together business, labour, Aboriginal and local government leaders is a promising way—is a promising way in which to strengthen the province-wide partnership that will enable us to continue to weather the present economic storm while looking towards ways in which we will together ensure a bright outlook for all Manitobans.

It is common knowledge, although a bit of a cliché, to acknowledge young people as the most important key to the future strength, economic and otherwise, of our province. I'm confident that the Throne Speech's stated strategies for the furthering of educational excellence in our northern communities will be beneficial both presently and stretching into the future. The strategies include the construction of the main campus of the University College of the North in Thompson, a student centre, a research library and 24 units of family housing at UCN's campus in The Pas—a commitment to work closely with federal government and First Nation leaders to find the most effective ways to help and encourage students who live in our First Nation communities. Now I agree that more help is needed from the feds, particularly on the reserves, because schools there need to be funded. Students need to be funded at the same level we fund our provincial students at our provincial schools.

Regarding health care and fitness—though it is abundantly clear and abundantly apparent that this government is moving aggressively to ensure the economic security of Manitobans across all regions and sectors of our province. I also know that they understand that quality of life is not to be found solely or always on bank statements and bottom lines. The Throne Speech accentuates on important existing promises while pledging action on a number of other important fronts, none more important than health care.

Significant improvements to northern Manitoba's health-care system are being carried through. Work will soon begin on dialysis units in both the Peguis

and Berens River communities. And I should point out that in Flin Flon itself, we've doubled the dialysis capacity and as well as doing, you know, major renovations to the Flin Flon hospital. Also the Province's program which aims to recruit nurses from the Philippines to deliver care at underserved rural facilities has been successful in retaining health professionals, and northern Manitoba remains a primary focus of the government. I'm heartened by the Province's pledge to increase the northern allowance so as to help citizens of the north with the high costs of nutritious food, vital for healthy communities. Further, the adult fitness tax credit, modeled on the existing credit for children, will encourage the active lifestyle that in turn help to ease the strain on our health-care systems.

Now we judge governments and administrations in a sense by what they do for our own riding, our own communities, our own, in our own backyard so to speak—what happens to our own individual constituencies. And I would love to have the time to take you on a little bit of tour, just basically from my own community, starting 10 miles south of Cranberry Portage, where from Fidler's Corner, which is at the junction of No. 10 Highway and 39. We have 16 kilometres of paved road that we've been asking for for a generation. We have it now. We have paved roads from Cranberry Portage, 30 kilometres also to Baker's Narrows. And then we find that 10A and No. 10 in Flin Flon itself are paved. And so when you drive by Triple 7, a huge, a huge find, a huge mine and you drive by the Flintoba Mall, all those weren't there before. Those roads weren't paved; that mall wasn't there; Triple 7 wasn't there.

You go over the hill and down into Flin Flon, and you find a new primary health-care facility which wasn't there before. And that primary health-care facility happens to be right across from the R.H. Channing Auditorium, where last Saturday I had the honour of listening to Heather Bishop and the Flin Flon Community Choir put on a fantastic performance, as they always do, in the R.H. Channing Auditorium—because those people are a very creative group of people in Flin Flon, believe you me, usually spearheaded by Mark and Crystal Kolt, two outstanding, creative citizens in my community in Flin Flon.

At any rate, when I look at the program, the program makes mention of the supports that were given—the Flin Flon auditorium upgrade supports from Neighbourhood Alive!, supports from the

Manitoba Community Services. The raised seating was paid for in, in part by the government of Manitoba. We've done a lot for the arts and culture community of Flin Flon, and it's really nice to see.

I'm proud of a lot of things that this government has done and is still doing and will continue to do. I am proud of a lot of things. I could mention, and in no particular order, that we have \$860 million in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that wasn't there under the old regime, and we didn't have to sell a Crown corporation to do it. We didn't have to sell our Crown corporations. We are in the process of creating 1,500 units of social housing, desperately needed, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of our educational supports for our own northern University College of the North; it was a long time in coming. Some of the members opposite spoke against the university for the north.

We are very proud of the massive hydro investments in northern Manitoba, which is good for all Manitobans, and I'm proud that we're working with Aboriginal people to do that. When was the last time, as the member from Thompson often asks, when was the last time the Tories built a dam? They don't build dams, and when we build them, they do a lot of whinging and crying and whining. But we are building dams in northern Manitoba. It's gonna be good for northern Manitoba and southern Manitoba. It's gonna be good for all of us. We are—we are using our resources in the north.

Hydro power is to this province what oil is to Alberta. The only difference is their oil is gonna run out along with their Tory governments and our water will keep flowing.

We are spending \$545 million on infrastructure and roads, including 28 bridges. That's \$4 billion over 10 years. When was the last time the Tories put in much over a hundred million for our roads? We've tripled the budget on winter roads. We've realigned roads in the north so that we can build all-weather roads, roads to Brochet and Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake where all-weather roads are needed, because we're facing global warming, we're facing climate change, and when those winter roads are no longer functional, you're not gonna be able to be flying in millions of litres and gallons of diesel, Mr. Speaker. So we need—we need all-weather roads and we are in the process of developing them over time.

I'm proud—I'm proud of CentrePort. I'm proud of the role that this government gives the Port of Churchill as well and the people that support the Port

of Churchill. I could mention the Hudson Bay Route Association, of which I have been and probably will—always will be a proud member.

I'm proud of the Lighthouses programs that help our young people to discover healthy alternatives so that they have a place to be at night. I'm proud of that program. I'm proud of the Neighbourhoods Alive! initiative in Flin Flon, which we expanded from the larger cities to smaller places such as, you know, Dauphin and Selkirk, I believe, and Flin Flon and so on.

I'm proud that we're cleaning up the parks in Flin Flon. There are some metal contaminants there that we really wish weren't there, but our government didn't back away from it. They didn't say, we'll wait till industry cleans it up. We work together to make it—to make it better.

I am proud—I am proud of the fact that there's a freezer program. I'm proud of the fact that we have a freezer program in northern Manitoba so that the people in Brochet and Lac Brochet and Tadoule Lake and Shamattawa, who are poor people to start with, in the summer time, can take material from, you know, from their environment, such as berries, or caribou meat later on, and freeze it and have healthy food. That was not a very expensive initiative, and it was a wonderful initiative to help those people. So I'm proud of the freezer program.

I am proud that we restored core funding to friendship centres that were cut in the mean, lean years. I'm proud of the fact that we have a thousand cottage lots. It's brought great economic activity to our region in the north, particularly my home community of Cranberry Portage. We have all kinds of reasons to be proud.

And, last of all, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that the Throne Speech committed our government to the continued protection of our province's endangered polar bears as well. I mean, it may not seem like an awful lot to the members opposite, but it is a very important symbol. Upgrades at the Churchill facility and a new polar bear research and Arctic exhibit at Assiniboine Park Zoo will encourage valuable research necessary for the well-being of the species.

As was—as was mentioned in the Throne Speech, polar bears are symbols of the strength and majesty of Manitoba's north, and the government's protection of these bears suggests the larger way in which northern values are included in their vision of a province in which no community is left behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Well, Mr. Speaker, the time being 4:30, I will probably begin my speech starting at the next opportunity.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hour being—the hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 45(3)—order, please—I'm interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that is, the subamendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the subamendment, say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would request if we could have a recorded vote.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have support for a recorded vote?

Okay, the honourable member does have support.

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

Order. The question before the House is the subamendment moved by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Division

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

Yeas

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Faurschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 32.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we're going to—order. Order. Order. Order.

We're going to continue on now with resumed debate on the amendment that is moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), and just prior to, I had recognized the honourable member for Springfield, but there was only about eight seconds left, so he didn't have a chance to—so I'm asking if the leave of the House for me to recognize the honourable member for Springfield to speak. *Agreed? [Agreed]*

Mr. Schuler: And I do wish to put a few comments on the record in regards, not just to the amendment, the wonderful amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition but also on the Throne Speech that was given approximately a week and a half ago.

Before I do that, I'd like to once again take the opportunity to say thank you to the wonderful people of the Rural Municipality of Springfield and the Rural Municipality of East St. Paul that make up the constituency called Springfield. They are an incredibly wonderful group of individuals, very generous and kind to myself and my family, and as we travel, we just feel incredibly welcome. They make us just feel so special when we travel around

and we appreciate that. It's a great community to be representing and for those of you who travel through and have the opportunity to visit know what a great community Springfield and East St. Paul are.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank those individuals in my office who do a lot of hard work and serve the people of Springfield, the constituency of Springfield, the R.M.s of Springfield and East St. Paul, and that would be Gayle Dowler, who's been my constituency assistant for longer than I've been an MLA. She does just an amazing job and is recognized and known throughout the community as an individual who does amazing work on behalf of all constituents.

I'd also like to thank Gladys Hayward Williams, who does a lot of the work here at the Legislature, my legislative assistant, and works extraordinarily hard at making sure that what we do here legislatively is done properly and it's done well. I'd like to also thank Matthew Lepage [*phonetic*], my latest employee. He's a wonderful young student who helps out part time, very bright young man from East St. Paul, and we look forward to a lot of great things from him in coming years in the future.

Also would like to thank—say special thank you to all of those in this building. In fact, a couple of weeks ago, we had Take Your Child to Work Day, and I had the opportunity to take my 14-year-old, Brigitta, and we toured the building and had the opportunity to meet with a lot of the various offices that make this wonderful and exotic and just amazing building work. We had the opportunity to meet with the Clerk's department, and I'd like to thank the Clerk for actually having taken time and for having taken serious a young student coming forward, a grade 9 student. We had an opportunity to sit down with the Clerk and she explained what her role is and what her duty is. She had a wonderful package prepared for us. We'd like to thank the Clerk's office and all the table officers and our pages and all the staff in this Chamber that make this Chamber work.

Also, we'd like to thank members' allowances, building maintenance. We know that Todd does just an amazing job with his staff. Certainly appreciate the fact that during Take Your Child to Work, we got a special tour, and I'd like to thank him for that. Certainly, the Hansard department, we had an opportunity to visit them during that same time and see what it is that the Hansard department does. I'd like to see—thank them. Then there's the security, and they certainly play a very important role, and

whether it's those individuals that clean the offices or those individuals that keep us safe. In all respects, we'd like to thank all of you for what you do here.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to the Throne Speech—"Throne Speech" is an interesting term for—in a lot of countries it's called sort of state of the union. This one is not the first one that I've participated in. The first one that I heard was in 1999. So I've actually had the opportunity to address many of the Throne Speeches over the last 10 years, and basically, it's supposed to be a state of the union. It's supposed to be sort of a blueprint of where the government would like to see the province go.

Over the years I have gotten up, whether it's been on Throne Speeches or budget speeches and have indicated to the government in power, the NDP government under then the leadership of Gary Doer, that the kind of spending that was taking place, the kind of reliance on welfare or transfer payments from the federal government, was probably not the healthiest thing to do—that they were spending an exorbitant amount of money and relying on a continuous increase in the economy, a continuous increase of federal transfer payments, and that it really wasn't sustainable, what they were doing with their expenditures.

Well, I can remember over the last couple years, especially during the, the budget debate, I was pointing out that the storm clouds, you could already see them on the horizon. You could see that that the economic storm clouds were starting to build and grow and that we were going to be facing uncertain times. It simply wasn't reasonable to think that North America and the world would continue to have this outrageous increase in absolutely everything—that the markets would reach new levels on a continuous basis, that houses would increase in value 15, 20, 30 percent every year, and that you could just borrow and live. And I know stories that I heard about in the United States where individuals could write off the interest on their mortgage payment, were taking huge loans on their homes to buy boats and cars and holidays, new furniture, clothing. And, at some point in time, you had to know that that kind of an economy was going to face difficulty, and sure enough it did.

The storm clouds now aren't any longer on the horizon. The storm clouds are now covering our sky and, if you will, covering the clear, sunny days that economically we were used to. And what I find surprising about this Throne Speech, it's really how

negative it was, in that it didn't just point out that there were difficult times, which we knew. And interesting when it was Gary Doer in the Premier's office, he was talking about, we were the—how did he put it?—we were the economic tiger of Canada. We were the beacon light of the country.

We were—we were showing greatness in the rest of the nation, and what we find out from this particular Premier (Mr. Selinger), who's been the Finance Minister for the last 10 years, that we are not the economic tiger of Canada. In fact, we look, are starting to look more and more like a skinned cat. And that's what this kind of irresponsible spending, kind of irresponsible financial, economic behaviour, that's what's gotten us to this point where we aren't an economic tiger. We're not the leading economy in the country, but we are akin to a skinned cat, Mr. Speaker.

And that's unfortunate because when you listen, when you listen to the Throne Speech, you would have thought that at least there would have been a blueprint. You would have thought that a new Premier coming in, and certainly we congratulate the member for St. Boniface winning the leadership campaign. And you would have thought that he would have embraced this new job with a lot, a lot of thought, and he would have had the opportunity to come up with a real exciting kind of state of the union address. And it would have talked about where he wanted to see this province to go. It would have been this visionary document, because he had 10 years to prepare for his leadership race. Certainly, we knew that Gary Doer wasn't going to stay here forever. He would have known that as well, but, instead, really we had a speech that landed with a dull thud.

The new Premier, instead of taking the opportunity to show what he's made of, to take the opportunity to show where he would like to lead this province, basically said, a flat economy is—

* (16:50)

An Honourable Member: Flat is the new up.

Mr. Schuler: Flat is the new up, like if you haven't heard anything more appalling than that. That's not vision; that's not excitement; that's not giving hope and trying to lead this economic tiger of the past.

I mean, it was appalling really, and when you looked around the room, those people who weren't absolutely aghast at what they were hearing were actually almost bored stiff to what was being

presented because the speech had nothing new. It was—it was at best a retread of everything that Gary Doer had promised and was currently building, and certainly there was nothing new or innovative or exciting.

You would think with an NDP government, with the minions of staff that they have hired now, with the kind of offices stacked full of employees, that they could have come up with some original thought, with some terminology that maybe would have shown a bit of a passion, that maybe would have shown that, you know, there's a new sheriff in town, a new individual who's going to put his stamp on the province. And, you know, I've said to a lot of people, it's sort of like when Duff Roblin left for the federal Conservative leadership, the Conservatives ended up electing Walter Weir, and Walter Weir was a very stand pat Conservative, you know, don't-make-a-lot-of-waves kind of a premier, and that's really what we have in the member from St. Boniface. We really have a Walter Weir style of government. After 10 years of Gary Doer, we have a me too, or yes, I will too, or however you want to do it or, in more modern vernacular, a ditto kind of a premier. Whatever—whatever was done the last 10 years, he gets up and says, well, yeah, we're just going to do that too.

And that isn't what the province needs right now. We need to have leadership that takes us forward. We must have leadership that looks at new economies, that looks at new dichotomies coming forward. I told many of my colleagues that I was complaining to my children the other day that I e-mail them and they don't seem to e-mail back, and my 14-year-old daughter and my 12-year-old son smiled at me knowingly and said, oh, but, dad, e-mail is for old people. And that took me three days to get over, and I mean, they're into text messaging; they're into Facebook; they're into Twitter.

They've moved on, and you know, most of us here still are trying to chase this new-fangled thing called e-mail, and you know, the younger generations are looking beyond where we are today, and I've been to international conferences and I've asked, you know, how many in this room (a) could tell me what *RuneScape* is, and (a) would know what to do with it. I could probably find it. I wouldn't have much to do with it. Now, my nine-year-old has all kinds of other sites, and I won't embarrass myself by trying to recite them. I just—I just—I just go and look and make sure that it's something that isn't—I ask him,

is that something good or bad, and they tell me it's good and then that's about the extent of it.

But really society is moving so much quicker and we were at an international conference in Ontario, the CPA, and I was trying to explain to individuals that it doesn't matter if it's in Canada, United States, or Europe, I mean, voter turnout is decreasing. Young people are not engaged because leadership and political leadership is not tapping into those young people.

I mean, they're not tapping into the new kinds of thinking, the new kinds of ways of doing things, and the Throne Speech, with a new Premier having come in—you know, he's been able to get himself ready for this for 10 years, and what did he do? He did the Walter Weir thing, the ditto approach, instead of breaking new ground and talking about a, you know, moving our economy from where it is right now. And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) got up, and he said, oh, but that's okay about the 500 jobs that we're losing today, oh, because you know the economy's changing. Okay, well, you know, we could, I guess, accept that, except that he should have actually been more engaged in the process, but that having been said, so what are you going to replace it with?

What's your vision? I mean, what are you going to do? Just, you know, give a kind of a answer for, oh, well, they're going, well, that was a, you know, buggy-whip kind of a company and that went, oh well, you know, that's going too. That's going too. Right. What are you going to replace it with? Where are you going to take the economy? And we know full well that there's a shift coming in the economy, and the problem is is that we don't have leadership that's on board. I mean, the only thing that we saw this Premier do is shuffle the chairs on the deck of the *Titanic*, add another one on, and then a Throne Speech that landed on every desk with a thud.

Folks, if we're going to do better with this province, we're going to have to reach out to the young people. We're going to have to reach out to individuals who want to have a say. But we don't go out to them; we don't talk to them. I've got a group of young people who want to talk to me about a project in their community, and in my community, and they're just so excited about this. They said—oh yeah, by the way, we're in the meeting and they snapped a picture on their cellphone and a couple minutes later, one of the guys says, oh, yeah, I already put that on my Facebook and I've got 20-some comments to it.

Well, that's the kind of thing that we have to look at. That's what young people are interested in, and it's fast, and it's creative.

You would have thought that out of this new Premier, we would have had a speech that would have just, you know, raised things up to a different level, and how disappointing that speech was. How disappointing to hear that there was nothing new. There was some terrible lines—the line again, flat, flat lining is the new heartbeat. I don't know. I mean, coming from, coming from a government that you would have looked to and thought, you know, perhaps they're going to morph themselves into something a little bit more dynamic. Well, clearly that was a disappointment. And I asked a couple young individuals if they would join me for the speech, and might as well hear it from them, find out what they think the speech is about and the best they could come up with is, boy, is that ever a nice Chamber. That was when I said, well, what about the speech? What do you think about the speech? They said, well, it doesn't really say anything.

Like, we're not even communicating with our young people. There was, there really wasn't a lot of hope, and I would suggest to members opposite, you gotta do better. With every, with every hardship comes an opportunity. This was an opportunity to put forward some real dynamic thoughts and ideas, and frankly, this Throne Speech failed in that regard. It was a Walter Weir style, very small "c" conservative, very small "c" conservative, made no waves, made no bold statements and really shows that we have a government that is floundering, that is basically there only for its own self-preservation, that wants to see power retained at whatever cost it takes. But in so far as innovating, as far as engaging the next generation and the generation after that, they're not interested any more—and that is very unfortunate.

When I look at the kind of announcements that were made in education, no mention of improving graduation rates, no update on how students are faring compared to the rest of the country, and it goes on and on and on. It was very, very poor. Even the announcements made on education, it was, by and large, an announcement of a reannouncement of an announcement of a reannouncement. And that is really, really unfortunate.

We would have loved to have heard from this Premier a new and dynamic strategy for education, a new and dynamic strategy perhaps for technology

and for post-secondary education. The list goes on and on. It wasn't there. It's a terrible disappointment, and you know, this NDP government and the member for St. Boniface, the new Premier, had an opportunity and frankly, Mr. Speaker, that opportunity was squandered. It was an opportunity to reach out to young people, to engage young people who do want to be part of the process, but are tuned out because of these kinds of speeches that leave them cold.

This Throne Speech is not worthy of being supported, and I would strongly recommend that the amendment to the Throne Speech by the Leader of the Opposition be accepted and agreed to in this House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to take part in this debate, and I'd like to begin by congratulating the new leader of my party and the new Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba, and I'm happy to say that I've had a long association with the Premier going back to 1980. And the first time I met him—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

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