

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

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 Legal Aid Manitoba Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister for Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 8, The Legal Aid Manitoba Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'aide juridique du Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Legal Aid Manitoba has reported an increasing trend of parents with financial resources refusing to obtain lawyers for their children in youth court cases. In such cases, Legal Aid then provides counsel because the Youth Criminal Justice Act allows courts to require that legal counsel be provided to children. This consumes Legal Aid resources that should be directed to those with the fewest resources of their own.

This bill will provide that parents who have the means will have a responsibility to pay for the cost of their child's legal defence. When parents with means refuse to pay for counsel, this bill will make those costs a debt due and owing to Legal Aid Manitoba and allow it to recover the cost from the parents by registering a statement against land owned by them.

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

Bill 203—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), that Bill 203, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill requires the government to develop formal procedures to make the process for enacting regulations more transparent. It also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government procedures and department plans must be made public. This bill does not call for no regulation, as regulation in health and safety are critical, but it does call for smart regulation to reduce the red tape burden for business. Thank you very much.

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

Bill 204—The Consumer Rights Day Act

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): I move, seconded by the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), that Bill 204, The Consumer Rights Day Act; Loi sur la journée des Droits du consommateur, be now read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Selby: This bill would proclaim March 15th of each year as Consumer Rights Day in Manitoba.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

And this petition is signed by G. Kuyp, D. Nugent, S. Ehr and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by A. Pawlowicz, T. Pawlowicz and J. Stekler and many, many other Manitobans.

Bipole III Project

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable and cost taxpayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

* (13:40)

Since the current provincial government has come into power, Manitoba–hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with a shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by B. Webb, D. Dujardin, R. Dujardin and many, many more Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeded with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable, and cost taxpayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with the shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to assure a more reliable electricity system.

And this is signed by K. Coubrough, B. Coubrough, P. Price and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Rapid City Reservoir and Catwalk

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

And this is the reason for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has a role to—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 recreation 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 released.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And to request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider replacing the Rapid City catwalk structure as soon as possible.

This petition's signed by L. Ballegeer, M. Harder, A. Christie and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Second Report

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on November 23, 2010.

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009*

- *Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010*
- *Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations—A Review dated March 2010*

Committee Membership

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mrs. DRIEDGER*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Ms. SELBY*
- *Mr. STEFANSON*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Officials Speaking on Record

- *Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Mr. John Clarkson, Deputy Minister of Innovation, Energy & Mines*
- *Mr. Jeff Parr, Deputy Minister of Labour & Immigration*
- *Mr. Doug Sexsmith, President and CEO of the Workers Compensation Board*
- *Mr. Milton Sussman, Deputy Minister of Health*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009*
- *Auditor General's Report—Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations—A Review dated March 2010*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Auditor General's Report—Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010*

Mr. Derkach: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

H5 Avian Influenza

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I do have a statement for the House.

I rise today to inform the House that a case of H5 avian influenza has been confirmed at a turkey farm in Manitoba. I want to assure members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the agricultural community that the affected farm site has been quarantined and the multidepartmental federal-provincial response plan has been put into action in co-ordination with local officials.

I want to publicly commend the early response team comprised of staff from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives; and Manitoba Health for being on top of this situation and in place within three hours of learning about the potential H5 avian influenza case.

Avian influenza is a federally reported disease, and provincial officials are working closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to contain it and limit its potential impact on human and animal health. As a precautionary measure, all people who were in contact with the poultry have been identified and contacted by public officials. Public Health will continue to monitor these individuals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I want to thank the minister for his ministerial statement and the update of the—for the House. I, too, want to commend the staff and the department of CFIA, as well, on the job well done in being on the top of the situation, and we look forward to more updates in the future.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture for being prompt in informing the House about this case of H1 avian influenza. I look forward to updates, and I presume that, in view of the fact that this is H5, I look forward to updates, and I presume the minister has alerted turkey farmers

throughout the province to take appropriate precautions to make sure that potential for spread of this infection to other turkey farms or other poultry farms is minimized. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have His Worship Glen McKenzie, mayor for the Town of Swan River, along with councillors from the Rural Municipality of Swan River, who are the guests of the honourable Minister for Finance (Ms. Wowchuk).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today, we have from Kildonan East Collegiate, we have 40 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Janice Bigourdan and Mr. Lawrence Sangster. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Public Health Concerns

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): We're very happy that today in Winnipeg are gathered hundreds of municipal leaders from across the province of Manitoba, people who are working very hard each and every day to do a great job on behalf of the people that they represent.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, one of the resolutions debated and carried at this week's meeting is a resolution dealing with the Premier's directive on the long west bipole route, and in that resolution, in addition to identifying incredible waste and mismanagement, the AMM also raises health concerns associated with the large population close to the west-side bipole.

I want to ask the Premier: Is he prepared to address the concerns raised by the AMM, or is he simply digging in on this important issue for the next generation of Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, any issues related to the health of a transmission line through an area have been canvassed in the past by the Clean Environment Commission. They've put a report out on that, and that's available for public

consumption. Hydro, I'm sure, would be happy to make that information available if it's raised by local residents, and some of them have asked questions about it. They should get the information they need. They should get the accurate information they need, and I'm sure that they will do that and receive that as requested.

An Honourable Member: It's now been three years—

Mr. Speaker: I have not—I did—I have not recognized—there's some talking going on back and forth, and we need some decorum in this House here.

Mr. McFadyen: It's now over three years since the directive and it's obvious to everybody that there was no due diligence done before the Premier's directive and the mismanagement of the project, which started as a \$388-million project. It's now 10 times that amount, roughly \$4 billion according to Mr. Brennan. In addition to that we have AMM raising health concerns.

I just want to ask the Premier: I know that AMM doesn't host receptions and give awards for his decisions, but notwithstanding that, is he prepared to listen to their concerns, or is he simply going to listen to the concerns of out-of-province lobby groups?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we listen to the concerns of all Manitobans, including the Manitobans that live on the east side of Lake Winnipeg when we conducted the 82 public meetings with officials—with residents of that area. We also listened to the concerns of the AMM. We also listened to the concerns of local environmental groups. The one thing I was pleased about today in the resolution debated by the AMM, they recognized the converters are needed regardless of which side of the province the bipole goes down.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, seems to be the only person who thinks that we do not need converters regardless of which side the bipole goes down. So I commend the AMM for at least getting part of their facts more accurate than the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. McFadyen: Bob Brennan thinks they're optional. Bob Brennan said that they weren't introduced until after the west-side directive as CEO. But, obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Premier thinks he knows more than Bob Brennan. He knows more than the former CEO Len Bateman, who actually built the

first two bipole lines. But that's okay. Yes, he's got a degree from the London school of histrionics.

And I want to ask the Premier if he can just—with all of his expertise on matters related to hydro transmission: Will he listen to Bob Brennan? Will he listen to Len Bateman? Will he listen to the AMM about their concerns about this—the health issues, and will he sit down and address the very serious issues that've been raised by experts, by Manitobans, by many others who have concerns, including Chief George Kemp and many east-side First Nations communities who see this as an incredible mistake for the next generation of Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question. Again, the AMM was very clear that in the resolution they showed the gap between both sides as being in the range of \$400 million. They recognized the need for converter stations on either side depending on which route one would prefer. That's—that leaves the Leader of the Opposition isolated as the only person that thinks that the converter stations should be cancelled.

I tabled a document yesterday in the Legislature where the president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro made it very clear that the converter stations are needed, that it's incredibly important when 75 per cent of your energy presently goes to one converter station at Dorsey, that we have increased reliability in this province. The members opposite in the '90s had the opportunity to do that. They had the information to do that. They chose to carry on with their agenda to privatizing the telephone system. They ignored the need to increase reliability for Manitoba Hydro. Now it is well down the road, and we have to provide that reliability, and Hydro agrees with that.

Manitoba Hydro Bipole III Cost Estimates Update

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Bipole III will become the most expensive capital project ever to be undertaken in the province of Manitoba. In November, historically, Manitoba Hydro updates its capital cost projections for all major projects and provides that information to Hydro executives, the Public Utilities Board and government.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Has she been made aware of the adjusted capital cost estimate for Bipole III and, if not, why is she being kept out of the loop?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I thank the member for the question; it's one that we have had much discussion on. We had the discussion when we had Public Accounts, and the CEO of Manitoba Hydro was there. He provided the information, and he also indicated that there would be updates and when those were—updates were available, he would provide them for us and he said once the route was—the Clean Environment Commission—filed for a licence with the Clean Environment Commission, that there would be additional work done.

I know the member opposite is really disappointed. He thought that he was able to convince all of AMM to revote against this resolution. I can tell you I was up there; there is not unanimous support. In fact, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister would focus, just focus on the question. The question was simple: it's about a capital cost projection for Bipole III.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this minister and the NDP government know only too well that their cost estimates aren't that credible, never have been credible. Who can forget the \$75-million Hydro building that eventually cost \$283 million or the \$800-million Wuskwatim project that ended up being \$1.6 billion for the Wuskwatim project? Who can forget the bungled, mismanaged stadium deal which started off at 115 and is now 160 and going up?

Mr. Speaker, Bob Brennan has the numbers for the new capital cost. Why does the minister not have them? Why won't she not share them with this House right now?

Ms. Wowchuk: You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand the member opposite. Manitoba Hydro is a crown jewel for Manitoba, and all the member opposite can do is criticize. He's criticized the building; he's criticized Wuskwatim, but if I don't—I'm not surprised he criticizes Wuskwatim because when they were in government, they mothballed everything. They never built one dam. They never negotiated one sale, and they never addressed the very serious issue that we needed another line for security of supply. And now they don't—they refuse to recognize that we also need converters for security of supply. And somewhere these people have to

start to realize that Manitoba Hydro is in the best financial shape it has ever been—in the best financial shape it has been, and they still—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, for Manitoba Hydro, they've made less money in the last three years than the previous year. That is not a good business plan. What's not a good business plan is projecting capital costs for Bipole III based on 2007 estimates.

Bob Brennan—Bob Brennan, the CEO of Manitoba Hydro, is on record right now as saying that the original estimate of \$2.2 billion could double in cost—double. Manitoba Hydro has shared the information with the minister. Mr. Speaker, maybe she was too busy on her Blackberry and she missed that particular email that came from Bob Brennan. Two billion—\$2.2 billion doubled is \$4.4-billion capital cost for Manitoba Hydro. That's wasteful, Madam Minister. It's wasteful because it's the wrong way to go. It should be on the east line. We can save a lot of money.

What is the capital cost? Tell us right now in this House. What is the capital cost?

*(14:00)

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable minister, I remind members that questions and answers be put through the Chair, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: I would encourage the member to go back and read *Hansard*. We had discussed these issues at Public Accounts, and the chair, CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Brennan, said that there would—could be some changes in the price. He said some things could go up in price; some things could go down in price, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly what he said.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, this member from Brandon West would do anything to discredit Manitoba Hydro, and I am completely—I just don't understand why he would want to run down a Crown corporation that generates revenue for our province, is in the best financial situation it has been, and has negotiated term sheets for sales that will pay all of the costs of building this line. The member opposite does not want sales.

Impaired Driving Government Reduction Strategy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And on a new subject, only slightly

removed from that answer, since the end of October, Mr. Speaker, five Manitobans have died because of people mixing alcohol with driving on Manitoba streets and highways. That leaves five devastated families here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at the expenditures and the priorities of this government and MPI for the 2009-10 fiscal year, there was about \$588,000 budgeted to make Manitobans aware of the dangers of impaired driving. At the same time as the government was spending money on its enhanced driver's licence fiasco, it was underspending in the area of raising concern and awareness about drinking and driving.

I want to ask: Where are their priorities? Why so much spending on the enhanced driver's licence fiasco and so little attention to the important issue of drunk driving?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): And, certainly, impaired driving is a—involves tragedies across this province, and all too often in the past couple of weeks we've learned about more cases that may very well result from impaired driving.

Moving ahead on impaired driving requires action on a number of different fronts. That's where our government has been a loud voice at the federal table working with the federal government. That's where our government has been a leader at bringing in provincial measures, which we can do because of our own control over driving licensing in the province. That's why I was very pleased that Mothers Against Drunk Driving awarded Manitoba the first ever A grade in its tri-annual awards in 2006. I was very pleased that Manitoba kept that rating of A-

We're continuing to work on all those fronts trying to stop people from drinking—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the former Attorney General may have made it a priority, which is why the award was presented, but we've seen under this Attorney General a big focus on other areas including the enhanced driver's licence fiasco. They've—of all the areas in government, they've overspent virtually every line and every budget except this one.

It's obviously a serious issue. Five families in this province, today, dealing with the grief of having lost loved ones as a result of this behaviour. And I

want to ask the minister if he'll undertake to give emphasis to this important issue and provide reassurance that his government is taking both the rise in the actual numbers and the very sad and specific cases more seriously than they currently are.

Mr. Swan: Well, then, to finish the response from before, we work closely with the groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which look at each province and territory, and look, overall, all of their efforts whether its legislative, whether its policy, whether its education. There's always more that we can do.

In the last rating Manitoba received a grade of A-. We're one of the two top provinces in Canada. We're continuing to move on education, we're continuing to move on making sure we've the strongest possible provincial legislation and policies.

We also have put more police officers on the street, which we know is very important to stopping people from drinking and driving, first of all, to prevent them from driving in the first place, but from catching them if they do. We also know that we've added 48 Crown attorneys since 1999, every single one of which has been voted against by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, in addition to not making this issue a priority by underspending their budget, there was no reference to this serious issue in the Speech from the Throne, which came very soon after some of these tragic incidents.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the opposition amendment to the Throne Speech comes forward. That amendment calls on the government to take serious action against impaired driver.

Will the minister indicate today that they will support that amendment or will they vote against our plan to deal with the very serious issue of impaired driving?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated, Manitoba's recognized as one of the two strongest provinces in the entire country at dealing with impaired driving. But we know that it's not just about education, it's not just about the legal framework, it's actually having the resources out there.

And again, I already mentioned we've added 48 additional Crown attorneys. We have committed to adding another 53 Crown attorneys over the next six years. We put resources in place for the City of Winnipeg, for the RCMP and for the municipal

governments to make sure we have more police officers out there. We've partnered, of course, with Operation Red Nose run by Safety Services of Manitoba.

I know the Minister for Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) and I will be out there actually driving to assist people getting home safely. We partner with CAA. We partner with different organizations out there to try and get the message across to Manitobans that drinking and driving is not acceptable.

Football Stadium Cost and Funding Options

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question. It's now been 238 days since the stadium photo op, Mr. Speaker. The mayor indicated the other day that he was hoping to see an announcement within a week or two. The Premier was asked about it this morning.

Can he just brief the House on when he intends to pick a road in terms of the future direction for the stadium project?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): When the partners are ready to make an announcement they will, and regardless of when they make that announcement, we know the members opposite will oppose the project, just like they opposed the MTS Centre, just like they opposed safe-safety for working people in Manitoba, health and safety laws, just like they opposed clean water legislation in Manitoba, just like they oppose any further development of hydroelectricity in Manitoba, and on it goes.

So, the reality is, the project will be announced when all the partners are comfortable to do that and the member opposite will continue to oppose it, just like he did when we built the arena with the private partners at that time.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier said this morning on radio when asked the question about when Manitobans could expect an announcement, and, obviously, for Bomber fans, for taxpayers, for everybody with an interest in the future of the city and province, it's been a long, long time since we've had any clarity.

I want to ask the Premier: He said this morning on the radio that he didn't want to raise expectations—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Some members are very interested in hearing the question the honourable member is trying to raise, and I ask, in respect of all honourable members, to whoever has the floor, to be allowed to be heard. That's what question period is all about.

And the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, in addition to saying this morning that he didn't want to raise expectations, he said that he wanted to do some due diligence before they made an announcement.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Premier is serious when he says that expectations, which are already lower than that pit at the University of Manitoba, if he's actually concerned about low expectations or if it's just a matter that he just can't seem to get the deal done.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that the members opposite and, in particularly, the opposition who has opposed to this project from day one, will continue his opposition to it. He will continue, just like—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

*(14:10)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Instead of repeating what I said, it works for—also for the person that has the floor that's answering a question. We have guests in the gallery, and they've come from a long ways, and they come here to hear the questions and the answers. And, also, I need to hear the questions and the answers in case there's a breach of a rule and, rightfully, you would expect me to rule on it, but if I can't hear it, I would not be able to rule. So I think we have to have some decorum in this House. We're fortunate to be in this great institution and we should have respect for that. So I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, as I said earlier, when all the partners have completed their work, an announcement will occur in due course.

We know that the member opposite vigorously opposes this project, as he did the MTS Centre. We know that the member opposite opposes protecting the boreal forest. We know that the member opposite opposes protecting water resources in Manitoba. We

know that the member opposite is opposed to safety legislation with respect to working people in Manitoba. We know the member opposite opposes the minimum wage. This just adds to a long litany of things that the member opposite is opposed to.

And it's our job on this side of the House to make sure Manitoba moves forward, not backward, as the member opposite would like to take us.

Mr. McFadyen: And lining up all of his statements on this deal over the last 238 days, Mr. Speaker, is more confusing than a traffic circle.

And I want to just ask the Premier if he can—he's been driving around the stadium deal traffic circle now for 238 days. I wonder if he can just let us know when he's going to pick a road, come off the traffic circle, pick a road and let Manitobans know which one it is.

Mr. Selinger: I'll tell you right now that the road we will pick on the stadium will be the same road we picked on the arena, a road that will get it built and move it forward in Manitoba. And it will be the same road that we pick when it comes to protecting water resources in Manitoba. We won't gut The Water Protection Act like the member opposite has promised to do. And it'll be the same road that we're taking forward on minimum wage. We will make sure that it has purchasing power, not roll it back like the member opposite will do. And it'll be the same road that we have on protecting the boreal forest as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will move forward on that. The member opposite would roll it back.

The road forward in Manitoba starts on this side of the House. The road to the past starts on that side of the House.

Phoenix Sinclair Death Commissioner Appointment for Inquiry

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: Nanny McPhee chirping away.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum here and respect for one another, please.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's now been over five years since the death of Phoenix Sinclair.

I want to ask the Premier: Why does his government continue to drag its feet on the appointment of a commissioner which was promised by the elected premier, Mr. Doer, four years ago?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Since the inception, we have said we will do nothing to compromise the criminal proceedings that are under way. The criminal proceedings have moved to the stage where there's an appeal. We will do nothing to compromise that. We have said that once all of those judicial processes are concluded we will do a public inquiry and we will look at the broad range of issues which arise out of that case.

If the members opposite want to compromise the ability of the aggrieved parties to get justice, that is their reckless approach. Our approach is to make sure that the criminal proceedings come to their conclusion, a full conclusion, at that point, a public inquiry will be launched.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his Attorney General know better. The passage of time is what compromises evidence and compromises the effectiveness and the purpose of an inquiry. If you're going to allow time to pass, you need to have a very, very good reason. They've run out of those reasons.

The director of Legal Aid said the other day that the chances of the appeal to the Supreme Court succeeding are extremely remote and that the appeal application is without merit and that they're not planning to fund it.

They can, today, Mr. Speaker, appoint the commissioner, allow that commissioner to begin the work of assembling the inquiry, allow that commissioner to make judgments about what's appropriate in terms of how that inquiry proceeds, including taking into account what may be happening in the criminal proceedings.

Why are they dragging their feet? Time is passing. They're compromising the purpose and quality of this important inquiry. Why are they playing political games with Child and Family Services?

Mr. Selinger: The member opposite may wish to second-guess the judicial process; that's entirely his discretion if he wishes to do that. We do not want

anything to compromise the criminal proceedings, which have moved down the road to a conviction and now a possibility of an appeal. He may wish—he may think he can second-guess the Supreme Court; that is not the—what we think is the best course of action here.

The best course of action is to ensure that the existing criminal proceedings take their full course without any compromise. At that point—and we have said this from day one—at that point the public inquiry will be launched with a broad mandate to review all of the players and all of the actions that have taken place in this tragic case, and at that point it will unfold as we have promised.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the passage of time, as he well knows, compromises both the purpose and the effectiveness of the inquiry. Evidence—memories fade, evidence can be compromised. It's now been over five years since this tragedy, four years since the former elected premier made the promise to have an inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, they've got the ability to appoint a commissioner today who can look at all of those issues. It would be months before any evidence is called. By that time, the issues will be resolved and the commissioner can make judgments.

This is nothing but a series of political excuses. It's clear that it's not in their political interest to have an inquiry. I know his Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) has been very busy and distracted with other things.

But will they now focus on the issue of setting up this inquiry, appointing the commissioner and allowing them to get on with their work, taking into account the fact that this last-ditch effort—after one appeal failed at the Court of Appeal—the last-ditch effort at the Supreme Court works its way through to resolution?

Mr. Selinger: And again, Mr. Speaker, the member may wish to pre-empt the criminal proceedings which have not run their course yet. That's him second-guessing the judicial system now, just like he second-guesses everybody else's decisions that are made in government.

The reality is, from the very inception of this tragic case we have said the inquiry will only occur once the criminal proceedings are concluded. They may well be in their latter stages; we do not know that—they may well be within their latter stages, but we do not know that. Once they are concluded and

these proceedings are finalized, the public inquiry will unfold.

It will look at issues of accountability on behalf of the family, the community and the various levels of government, including the authorities. It will take a broad review of this case and its implications for how the child welfare system can be run. There will be ample opportunity to assemble and bring forward evidence.

But at no time has this government ever said they will compromise the existing criminal proceedings, which have not yet concluded.

Foster Care Child Removal Policies

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): More than five years after Phoenix Sinclair's horrific death, children are still being moved from safe, loving foster homes in the hopes of reuniting them with their parents, parents who we later learn are not fit to be parents.

That's what happened to four-year-old Dillon Breana Belanger. She lived most of her short life with a foster family who was very concerned to see her go when Child and Family Services decided she should live with her mother. That decision proved fatal for Breana, who died at the hands of her mother last month.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister continuing to fail children under his watch by still allowing them to be moved from safe, stable, long-term foster families only to be put in harm's way?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Certainly, I know everybody in this House, whenever a child is put at risk, whenever a child is injured or, in this tragic circumstance, dies, I know that everybody in this House feels the pain of that. And I know all of us as a society feel the responsibility and the accountability to create a world where children don't face that kind of danger in their homes.

My understanding on this case is that the Children's Advocate has launched an automatic external investigation of the case. I understand that the RCMP is doing a criminal investigation, and the authorities involved are also doing investigations. And my understanding is that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) has asked that this review be 'prioritized' and the Children's Advocate has agreed to that request.

* (14:20)

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I'm glad it's a top priority for the government after Breana is dead, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, its been more than five years and yet children are still being moved from safe foster families. In Breana's case, her mother had a criminal record but someone deemed this a safe place for Breana to live.

Mr. Speaker, the minister and the government have a solution that they could pursue. They could place a moratorium on moving children from safe, long-term foster homes. Why won't they do it?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think, as I've said, everybody in this House feels the pain of this case. And I know for the member opposite, when she was the minister responsible and it came to her attention that children had been killed in the system, that she would've also felt that kind of pain. It's a rare opportunity, I think, to serve in this portfolio, and it's a very difficult portfolio because you deal with that kind of tragedy on a day in and day out basis.

I would say, in terms of child welfare, there have been historic changes that this government has been involved in, transforming the child welfare system that was in need of repair for a very long time. The Changes for Children program and plan of action that is in place has accounted for millions of dollars to hire new social workers and improve the system.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And a very simple question to the government, to the Minister of Family Services: Will they place a moratorium on moving children from safe, long-term foster placement until a transparent system-wide public review of the Child and Family Services system is carried out?

Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix Sinclair review could do just that. Why won't they act?

Ms. Howard: And I think, as has been answered before in terms of the Phoenix Sinclair review, this government certainly would not want to do anything that would jeopardize the criminal proceedings. We would certainly not want to do anything that would result in putting those people who have been found guilty today—of hurting that child—if their approach is that we should put that proceeding at risk, if their approach is that we should take the risk that those people who hurt that child should be free on the streets, then they're free to take that approach, Mr. Speaker. I think it's reckless. I think it's irresponsible.

The tremendous changes that have gone forward in child welfare, as a result of the reviews that have been done in that system, include things like changing The Child and Family Services Act to reinforce the principle that child safety is paramount when determining the best interests of a child.

Elder Abuse Prevention Government Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in a press release issued this morning the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors made another announcement which showed the government is unaccountable when dealing with Manitoba's elderly where there's been allegations of abuse in personal care homes.

While it's important that these—those impacted have the ability to report these horrible acts, Mr. Speaker, the minister made no reference in his release as to what will be done to prevent the abuse in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister more concerned with smoke-and-mirrors politics rather than ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society are protected?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): I was pleased today to actually offer a helpline that was 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which is dealing with people who can get information, can present ideas, can talk to a person who's qualified and trained in the whole area and who can offer good advice.

I'm also pleased to be one of the best provinces in the world, as far as age friendly, which has a whole compendium of services, regardless of age, to make sure all people have a good, solid life and live and thrive in our province.

And I'm also pleased to be the province that moved forward on an abuse strategy and actually have taken action, and that action was voted for by this part of the government and voted against by you. And I think that it's really important to have the services for the most vulnerable, and that's what our government will continue to do.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions and answers should not be personalized, and all questions and answers should come through the Chair. I'm asking for co-operation again.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, when I learn about all the abuse that is going on for elders in this province, I get sick to my stomach. This is a government which has stopped caring. In 2001, there were 460 reports of elder abuse under the NDP's watch. That number has skyrocketed to more than 1,200 recently. I table this information. That's a staggering increase, from 460 to more than 1,200.

Mr. Speaker, when the grandmothers and grandfathers of Manitoba are suffering under the NDP's care, why is the minister more interested in creating an extra buffer to protect himself rather than preventing this awful abuse in the first place?

Mr. Rondeau: This government chooses to not put our heads in the stand. Our government chooses to have a whole variety of programs that assist people. Whether it's the expansion of the SafetyAid program, which is going in and helping seniors across the province, whether it's a program where we actually have been working with new Canadians and seniors groups to talk about abuse, to bring it out of the closet and deal effectively with it, that's a positive proactive action. And I'm pleased to be part of a government that's talking about abuse and having appropriate solutions, and solutions that are all across the province.

And Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we have three safe suites for people who have been abused. I'm pleased that we have the facilities that are going to treat this, to take it out of the closets and deal appropriately with this. And I'm sad that the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the extraordinary fact is that the amount of abuse has gone up more than 200 per cent, but the actual follow-through and investigation has gone down by 65 per cent. The math shows that this is an indifferent government, a government that has no interest in properly following up allegations of abuse. It is appalling that the minister is getting everyday Manitobans' hope up, but has no interest in following through. Enough of this spin. There were 1,200 complaints and only 39 investigations.

I want the minister to explain why he doesn't care enough about physical abuse against Manitoba grandparents to prevent this problem in the first place.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, we've had an elders abuse strategy since 2002. We've had \$200,000 that

go to partners who talk about it, hold workshops and deal with it. These link—these programs link the RCMP and other facilities and other organizations together to deal with abuse, whether it's physical, financial or emotional. We now have safe suites which—where people who are suffering abuse can go and live in a safe environment. We now have places where people can go to get advice and support. We now have multiple organizations working together to detect abuse and deal with it quickly. That's—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Highway Infrastructure 2011 Projects

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker—

An Honourable Member: Time's expired.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member was recognized before the time had expired so he's allowed to ask his question and the minister to answer the question.

Mr. Jennissen: Mr. Speaker, rural and northern Manitobans were thrilled to see the 2011 construction schedule laid out by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). Since 2007, this government has seen over 5,000 kilometres of highway renovated, and that's from Winnipeg to Vancouver and back.

* (14:30)

Can the Acting Minister for Transportation inform the House how government's responsible approach to highways investment is making this province a better place for rural and northern Manitobans? And also, can the minister provide some highlights to the House on what we can expect in the upcoming construction year?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Acting Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased that Manitoba continues to renew our highway infrastructure. Today the Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced that we'll be working with Manitoba municipalities and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to look at their municipal bridge program. And, indeed, at the end of this construction season we'll have spent and invested over \$2 billion in highway renewal and bridge renewal.

You know, Mr. Speaker, members opposite, if you listened to their statements last spring, they would have sliced, diced, hacked, slashed and whacked the budget with regard to infrastructure in

this province. And they go to the AMM meetings and they say of how they're going to be doing all kinds of things in infrastructure, where, indeed, there would have been cuts—cuts—to the highways budget and other budgets in this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

* (14:30)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Family Doctor Week

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, family doctors are an integral part of our health-care system. Having been trained as a nurse and worked with many qualified medical professionals, I know the role family doctors play in bringing quality care to their patients, which is why I'm standing today to recognize Family Doctor Week, which occurred October the 11th to 16th of this year. Family Doctor Week aims to increase awareness of family doctors and to celebrate the important role that family physicians play in Canadians' lives.

This year, the annual Family Medicine Forum was held in Vancouver, with over 2,000 family physicians in attendance. It is also a forum for medical students to gain more knowledge about family practice.

It is my privilege to recognize Dr. Anne Durcan from Winnipeg, who was awarded the Reg L. Perkin Award for Canada's Family Physician of the Year.

I encourage members of the Legislature to join me in thanking our family doctors for their hard work, dedication and care for all—and care of all family doctors in this province and throughout the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good Neighbours Active Living Centre

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, given the important contributions that all seniors make to our society, it is important that they have the resources they need to remain as healthy as possible. With that in mind, I would like to take a moment to highlight the wonderful work of the Good Neighbours Active Living Centre and the contributions it makes to the lives of seniors and the greater community.

The Good Neighbours Active Living Centre is a community gathering place which provides a wide variety of programs and services that support and enhance the well-being, dignity and independence of persons aged 55 and older. One of the ways they ensure they meet the needs of the seniors in their community is by hosting luncheons in seniors apartment blocks.

I recently had the pleasure of experiencing first-hand how these luncheons provide an opportunity for Good Neighbours, through their Supports to Seniors program, to connect with the seniors in the seniors community while also promoting the programs they offer at their Good Neighbours Active Living Centre. The Supports to Seniors program is co-ordinated by two very dedicated and resourceful women, Leza Evenson and Megan Wallace. Together they organize programs that help their members maintain an active, healthy lifestyle physically, socially, spiritually and intellectually.

In order to meet the growing demand of their services, Good Neighbours recently moved to a larger location in the Bronx community centre. This has enabled them to broaden their programming, which includes workshops, group outings, events and fundraisers to help keep the centre's resources available for all to enjoy.

Good Neighbours also publishes a newsletter every two months. This keeps the membership informed about all the current and upcoming workshops, events and programs being offered by the Good Neighbours Active Living Centre. The newsletter also provides important health-related information from the healthy living resource team about support groups, clinics and healthy living workshops.

The Good Neighbours Active Living Centre is an excellent example of how community-based programs and resources can help seniors of all ages lead healthy and active lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Newdale 125th Anniversary

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I rise today to congratulate a community for celebrating its 125th anniversary this past summer. The community of Newdale celebrated its 125th anniversary at the end of July.

Former residents and families of Newdale travelled from far and near to join in the celebration. Some families came from as far as New Zealand to

join in the celebration. It was a weekend to remember. The union—the reunion brought together former neighbours and classmates, and a number of families from the Newdale area even organized their own reunions during that weekend.

An entertaining display of over 70 floats made its way through the streets of Newdale on Saturday following a huge and successfully delicious pancake breakfast. Music, games and colourful displays and fireworks were the order of the day. The activities went on throughout the whole weekend. Saturday evening saw a huge banquet attended by more than 560 people and the evening concluded with a dance featuring Bill and Sue-On Hillman, both of whom came from the—or had deep roots in the Newdale community.

I would like to congratulate the organizers and volunteers of the Newdale community for the tremendous effort and sincerely wish them a wonderful year, Mr. Speaker.

Immigrant Community

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, over the past 50 years, the Filipino community has played a special part in Manitoban society.

This fall, I accompanied the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino) on Manitoba's Asia-Pacific Trade Delegation to help strengthen the already rich connections between Manitoba and the Philippines.

In Manila, many families gave us a warm welcome. It was particularly invigorating to visit the Antonio J. Villegas Vocational High School. The students there shared how excited they were at the thought of possibilities in Canada.

Education is crucial. Many overseas families come here to ensure their children get the best education possible. Currently, there are people of Filipino heritage working in areas such as health, agriculture, construction and hospitality. As we expand the Provincial Nominee Program, more people will be employed and buy homes. It is wonderful to see newcomers thriving in Manitoba.

As one of Winnipeg's most diverse constituencies, many people in The Maples know what it's like to transplant your family to another country. It takes courage and a strong vision for a better future. That's why it is so important to expand the resources available to newcomers in Manitoba who are looking to put down roots.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the new immigrant community. They continue to invest their hard work and good faith to benefit the whole province's future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and the need for FASD training for individuals working at community recreation centres in Winnipeg and around the province.

Jim Carson at the Crescentwood Community Centre drew this need to my attention as he was finding his and other community centres were having an important role on the front lines in helping these children.

As is generally known, children with FASD learn differently from most children, and improved knowledge of children with FASD is important for those helping at our community centres.

In response to Jim Carson's concerns, I hosted a forum on FASD last night at the Crescentwood Community Centre. I want to thank Sue Mozden, FASD specialist, for her valuable contribution as a panel member. I also want to thank Terri McNaughton-Wright, foster parent extraordinaire, for her contribution on the panel and her generous sharing of her personal experiences in order to help others.

The sharing by panel members and by members of the audience emphasized the need for special approaches toward children with FASD, approaches which emphasize: consistency in approach; keeping eyes on these vulnerable children; positive reinforcement for good actions; the potential to develop skills in athletics, dancing, music, art and other areas; the need to work closely with family, friends and community members; the need to watch for and prevent loneliness and depression; the need to be able, on occasion, to provide quiet places for these children; the fact that community centres can be safe, positive places for children with FASD.

There was much, much more as well. I thank all those who participated. We need to have more such sessions to help the staff and volunteers at our community centres to help children better with FASD and their families.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen),

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 Fifth 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, standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Education, who has 27 minutes remaining.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank you for the opportunity to resume the remarks that I was making in regards to our government's Throne Speech.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the St. Vital community. It certainly is a privilege to be their MLA, and it's been an honour to represent them and to work with so many of the residents and citizens of St. Vital, and to work with so many community partner organizations as we continue to move St. Vital and Manitoba forward.

I would like to just make a few comments in regards to some of the organizations that I've had the opportunity to work with lately, and I would certainly like to thank the Salvation Army for their vision, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the Multicultural Family Centre in Winnipeg. We—I had the opportunity to be there with our Premier (Mr. Selinger) in June to announce the new Multicultural Family Centre that is being built in a very, very unique neighbourhood in St. Vital around the Morrow Avenue community and the St. Vital—the Salvation Army is critical.

They had a vision to create this Multicultural Family Centre in Winnipeg, and it's going to be a very, very exciting, unique facility. The Salvation Army provides programs and services to the residents and the newcomers in St. Vital, and they are going to be expanding these services because of this incredible facility that we are building. They're

going to be expanding services for children, students and adults for years to come and, also, it's going to be providing a-learning opportunities for young people so that they can get an education and go on to participate in careers and participate in our economy.

And it's because of these kinds of programs, Mr. Speaker, that we can continue to move Manitoba forward, and I really have to thank Wendi Park, who works at the Multicultural Family Centre. She's the director, and she is an absolute incredible person who loves her job so much that she actually moved her family into the neighbourhood so that she could be part of this incredible diverse community. And I just want to thank them all for their incredible contribution at the Salvation Army for making Manitoba and St. Vital a better place to live.

Our government contributed one and a half million dollars to this project and we are very, very excited to be part of this very exciting initiative in my community in St. Vital.

And I'd also like to talk about the incredible opportunity that we have in St. Vital, because we are going to be providing a new birthing centre in St. Vital, and it's—you can't miss it if you drive down St. Mary's Road or St. Anne's Road, you see this incredible structure being built and that is because of the vision of our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). She was approached by the Women's Health Centre in regards to having it for the first time in the country—a free-standing birthing centre that would complement hospital-based birthing services and St. Boniface and the women's hospitals, and to provide an opportunity for women to support natural childbirth outside of a hospital or the home.

And this is an incredible, exciting opportunity to have something like this right in the heart of Winnipeg, right in the heart of St. Vital. And this centre's going to include a primary care clinic, four birthing rooms; it's going to provide education resources; it's going to provide counselling services and it's going to handle up to 500 births a year. And it's going to provide a range of services for women and children, including birthing services; primary prenatal, postpartum and newborn care; parenting support and education; and breastfeeding support and education. And I just want to mention that this birthing centre will serve as the hub for the region's midwifery program and support midwifery education in Manitoba.

This is a state-of-the-art facility right here in Winnipeg that is on the cutting edge, leading edge,

state-of-the-art facility, that is really going to make a difference in maternal child health, and it also complements the other announcements that we've made in regards to the women's hospital at the Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg. And you know, we're committed to providing these kinds of services for women here in Manitoba, and I just wanted to say how pleased I am and how excited I am that we have this state-of-the-art facility right in the constituency of St. Vital.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to attend the 25th anniversary of Jocelyn House, and I really wanted to say that this really is an incredible facility in my constituency. It is one of the only hospices that—in Manitoba that provides end-of-life care for those individuals that quite often die alone and have no other place to go and this has been around for 25 years, and it started many years ago with the support of an incredible family that supported the vision that they believed—they lost their daughter to cancer and they believed that they should have an opportunity to provide this kind of a legacy in St. Vital for people who quite often have—or put in a situation, Mr. Speaker, where they don't have an opportunity to be surrounded by love in their final stages of life.

And I would like to thank Jocelyn's family—it's named after Jocelyn, but I would like to thank the Hutton family for their incredible contribution to this house, this home, this supportive environment where health—the health-care staff are there to support people in their final stages of life, and I really wanted to thank everyone involved for their contribution.

Twenty-five years the volunteers have been totally dedicated to Jocelyn House, and I wanted to thank them so much for their invitation. I was there representing the Premier, and it was certainly my pleasure to be there to congratulate them on the work that they have accomplished for the last 25 years.

I would like to just comment for a few moments in regards to the speech. I followed the MLA for—I'm following the MLA for Lac du Bonnet who spoke yesterday, and you know, I wasn't going to make some of these comments, but he did give me an opportunity to put some new material into my speech, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just have to mention that he was going on and on about some issues in his constituency and advocating for his constituency and, you know, he was talking about Woodlands, Manitoba.

Well, you know, he seemed to leave out some details about Woodlands, Manitoba, in regards to the Woodlands community. He forgot to mention that we're going to be building a new school in Woodlands and—[interjection] —oh, excuse me, I'm being corrected, it's the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler). I certainly want to put the right information on the record. Thank you very much to my colleagues across the way for that input. It's most appreciated. He forgot to mention, Mr. Speaker, that the Woodlands school is going to be built in his community, and I just wanted to put that on the record that we look forward to making that announcement in his constituency in regards to that new school that will be built in his constituency, and I certainly hope he doesn't vote against it when we announce it.

*(14:50)

The other thing I'd just like to mention is he talked about education taxes, Mr. Speaker. Well, that certainly is something that I couldn't—I didn't want to let go by that opportunity to talk about education taxes.

First of all, I'd like—just like to remind members opposite that we all remember what happened in the '90s when they were in government, and how they didn't support public education. They didn't believe, like we believe, that a sound economic strategy is a sound education strategy, and that we need to invest in our public education system because education is the equalizer. The most important gift that we can give a child is an education, and I just want to remind members opposite that the investments in the public education system that we have made over the course of our mandate are historic. The investments that we have made are 15 times the increase over the same period when they were in government; and that's not twice as much; that's not three times as much; that's not four times as much; it's not five times as much. It is 15 times the investments that they made in public education; we have made 15 times the increase in our public education system in regards to funding.

And, in regards to property taxes, Mr. Speaker, according to Statistics Canada—an arm's-length agency, Statistics Canada—we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has reduced property taxes, the only jurisdiction in Canada. We have completely eliminated the residential education support levy; we have completely eliminated it. We have increased the education property tax credit.

When we got into government in 1999, it was \$250. Well, it is now \$650, and that is money that goes back into the pockets of homeowners, and that is—that education property tax credit saves Manitobans \$265 million a year.

Then, three years ago, we introduced a tax incentive grant, money that we would provide to school divisions across this province, money above and beyond the money that we provide to them in the funding announcement, that is run through the formula that provides operating dollars to school divisions all across this province to run their schools and educate our students. We provided a tax incentive grant on top of that so that we could have school divisions freeze property taxes, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to say that that has been very, very successful. In fact, last year, during our funding announcement, we had 23 school divisions work with officials in my department so that they could take advantage of that funding so that they could freeze taxes.

So I appreciate, you know, the opportunity to have a moment to just reflect on the incredible investment that we have made in our public education system and the incredible investment that we have made to keep property taxes low, Mr. Speaker, because I just needed to set the record straight. I don't really believe that we need any lectures from members opposite about what happens in our public education system in regards to investing in it and making sure that we have an education strategy, because we know that we have to have that there for our students and for our parents and for our communities because it is part of an economic strategy for Manitoba.

I do want to just mention that we have been making some serious announcements in regards to our vision for public education, and one of the announcements that we made recently was that we are committed to having a new parent-friendly report card that is in plain language for the use in all of our public schools, Mr. Speaker, so that parents can get the information that they need and be full participants in understanding how their students—their children—can learn. And this is going to be something that is going to be rolled out in co-operation and in collaboration with our education partners, and we've had such a great working relationship with our education partners over the years and they are absolutely integral in regards to the announcements that we've been making recently because that's how we can build a strong public

education system, by working with our education partners.

It's unfortunate, you know, that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said in 2007 that he didn't think that the education budget would have to increase because, you know, enrolment was declining, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, that's not a vision that we share in Manitoba. We believe that we need to continue to invest. We need to continue to be innovative. Our graduation rate has increased from 72 per cent to 80.9 per cent and our pupil-teacher ratio is probably among the best in Canada, and we're going to continue to look at innovative education strategies, so that we can continue to have a public education system that meets the needs of all of our students and all of our parents and all of our stakeholders here in Manitoba.

And, of course, one of the most exciting initiatives that I—that we've talked about lately and announced is the new compulsory age—moving the compulsory age for students from 16 to 18 in our public education system. And this is a very, very forward looking, modern approach to education in Manitoba. The last time the compulsory school age was raised in Manitoba was in 1965 when Premier Duff Roblin was the education visionary in Manitoba, and we're taking that next step, and we believe that this reflects an initiative that will give us an opportunity to prepare youth here in Manitoba for the modern, knowledge-based economy.

We believe that this is about making sure that young people have an education, that they get that diploma and not just get that diploma, but they move on to careers and post-secondary education so that they can be successful, they can move into jobs, and they can participate in our economy.

So I'd just like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words about the Throne Speech. You know, we're going to continue. My colleagues and I get up every day and we put both feet on the ground and work hard for Manitobans. And we're going to continue to work hard to move Manitoba forward because we believe that they deserve the best representatives possible.

And we've laid out our vision in our Throne Speech in regards to what we want to accomplish, and we're going to continue to advocate and work with all of our partners and all of our stakeholders and all of our communities across this province to make Manitoba one of the best jurisdictions to live in in Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity today to address the Legislature in terms of our debate on this most recent Speech from the Throne.

First of all, I want to welcome you back to the Chair, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you here and looking good, in fine form. You know, as we witnessed today in question period, obviously as we get closer to an election here in Manitoba the debate in the Chamber heats up, and I see you were called on a few times to make sure we had decorum in the Chamber today. And, as I say, as we get closer to a provincial election, I'm sure the discussions both in the Chamber and outside of the Chamber will continue to heat up.

Certainly, we've seen the government of the day putting out some advertising on our televisions and on our radio stations, so it looks more and more like the provincial election is just around the corner. And I'm sure Manitobans will be eagerly awaiting what the Progressive Conservatives, as the current opposition, are going to lay out in terms of their vision for the province. And I know they're waiting quite eagerly because they are looking for someone to fill in some of the gaps that have been expressed by the provincial government.

And I know in terms of this Speech from the Throne there was quite a few issues that weren't addressed, and I certainly will like to talk about some of those issues today in my presentation. And, in fact, if you look back—and, hopefully, people will look at the amendment to the government's Speech from the Throne and, clearly, there's a number of areas that we as opposition feel that should be addressed here by the government of the day.

* (15:00)

Before I get into the speech too far though, Mr. Speaker, I do want to make a couple of mentions. I do want to again say hello to our Clerk and the Clerk's office, the table officers, there, for the work they continue to do and the good work and the advice that they provide us on an ongoing basis.

I also want to recognize the staff in the Chamber and out the—outside of the Chamber who work every day to keep the decorum both in the Chamber and in the gallery. Certainly, it's not always exciting for them to have to spend a few hours here every day listening to us debate policy. I know it probably makes for long days, sometimes, but I'm sure there's

some entertainment at other times during the day. So we thank them for their time and dedication.

And I also want to acknowledge, certainly, the pages that are with us here in this particular session. I know there are some good young individuals from across Manitoba that are doing some great work for us, and I'm sure it's a very valuable learning experience for them.

I also want to mention the interns that have been assigned to both the government side and the opposition side. We have six interns that are working for us this year, and it was interesting for me to actually sit on the selection committee this year with the member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun). This was my first opportunity to work that closely with the interns, and in terms of sitting through the selection process, and it's amazing to see the degree of education these kids have and the degree of competence they bring to the table. Certainly, it was a demanding job to choose only six out of the, you know, approximately 50 or so that made application. We have a great field of very qualified individuals, and I've heard nothing but positive comments from both the government side and opposition side in terms of the work that those individuals are doing. So I welcome the interns and hope they have a good year working within their respective caucuses this year.

It's indeed a pleasure for me to represent the great constituents of the Turtle Mountain constituency. Obviously, you know, we have a lot of different issues in rural Manitoba that we're facing, and that's part of the fun as being a real MLA. You're just never sure what the next issue is going to be when the phone rings and, as rural MLAs, we deal with a lot of different issues. So it certainly keeps us on our toes. We certainly have to know a lot of—about different issues pertaining to rural Manitoba.

I do want to mention, as well, you know we just had the recent municipal elections here in the province of Manitoba, and there was about a 38 per cent turnover in terms of municipal councillors and reeves. So it—attending at AMM the last couple of days, it's pretty significant the new faces you see over at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention and conference. You know, obviously, I want to say these are a really important group of dedicated individuals that spend a lot of time on our behalf, on taxpayers' behalf, working behind the scenes. And these—for me these people are a tremendous resource because these people are dealing on a daily basis with constituents

with their local concerns. And sometimes I think municipal councillors have even a tougher job than what we have as MLAs because a lot of the people that are phoning them with municipal issues are their neighbours, their friends and neighbours. And not all people will express their opinions on a level playing field, an open—have an open dialogue and then be able to—you'll be friends and neighbours again the next day. So they face unique challenges as municipal councillors and reeves. So I just want to say, my hats are off to those people that were successful in their election, both those that were re-elected and those 38 per cent that are actually new councillors and reeves.

Certainly, I look forward to working with my councils over the next few years if everything works out well next October. And, as a rural MLA, I have 14 municipal bodies in my riding. So, certainly, when we talk about 100 elected officials, it does take some time to get to know them and understand exactly what their issues are. But that's part of the fun as a rural MLA.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, this particular Speech from the Throne, although it was fairly a long speech versus what it was in other years, there was lots of gaps in there, and I think our amendment here that we put forward addresses a lot of those amendments. I will be watching very closely for the vote tomorrow on the opposition amendment. I'm hoping the government will recognize some of the positive ideas that we have laid out for the government. And it would be interesting to see if the government actually votes against some of those very positive amendments that we are bringing forward.

I know we as opposition always get accused from the government that we are not voting for their Speech from the Throne or their budget debate. But I think there's an opportunity for the government of the day to look in the mirror and have a look at some of the very positive ideas that have been put forward here in terms of these amendments, because we're signalling to the government that there is holes. There's gaps in their Speech from the Throne and there's some big holes that Manitobans are very concerned about. And, when we go through our list of amendments, we think we are addressing many of those issues that the government of the day has simply not addressed in their Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just necessarily my opinion in terms of the government's Speech from

the Throne, but we're hearing the same thing from others across Manitoba, and I look at the *Brandon Sun*, the editorial just following the Speech from the Throne. And I'm going to quote this particular editorial, this line from it. The headline reads: Actions more important. The article says: As always, it's a little weird to see the Lieutenant-Governor of the province delivering the Throne Speech. The speech was long on self-congratulation and short on planning as Lieutenant-Governor Philip Lee laid out the government's agenda.

And I think that's exactly the essence of what we, as opposition, have been trying to tell Manitobans and tell the NDP government. It really comes down to actions. Are you prepared as a government to carry out some of the promises that you've made?

Now, we recognize the government is big on making announcements. They love photo ops and press releases but they send them out to give the province of Manitoba, the people in the province of Manitoba, a feeling that things are good and warm and fuzzy here in the province of Manitoba.

But the reality is, and as this—the article points out, the actions are more important than just the words, and that's our job as opposition, is try to point out to them where their actions are failing Manitobans. And that's what I want to do in addressing you today, Mr. Speaker, in terms of my Speech from the Throne.

It was interesting to follow the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) this afternoon. As the Education critic, I know that the minister has come in and she's made some pretty strong statements as the new minister. It certainly will be interesting to see if the government can actually fulfill some of the statements that they have made. Obviously, they are trying to signal that education is important here in the province, and certainly we as opposition, as Progressive Conservatives, we fully believe that education is very important for us in the province of Manitoba and will be very important moving our province forward.

But we do have some apprehension about some of the announcements they're making and how they're actually going to fulfill those announcements. And it goes back to some of the other ideas we talked about in the Chamber here. Has the government actually done their due diligence? Have they done their homework prior to making the announcements?

I would offer to you, Mr. Speaker, that there has been very little due diligence done. A lot of these announcements have been put forward for political reasons. So we're simply asking the government, you know, have you taken the time to go out and actually consult? It sounds to me by the minister's comments today that they've made the announcements. Now they're going to go and consult with Manitobans.

On their various announcements as they made, you know, in terms of report cards, school report cards, and that's an interesting point. I think Manitobans and Manitoba parents would like to have a report card that comes home so they can understand exactly how their children are doing in school. It looks like the government's gone even one step further where they want to have a standard report card all across Manitoba. But, from what I understand, there's been very little consultation with the school board superintendents who are actually going to have to make this plan work. So I'm not sure the minister has thought that plan out to the fullest.

*(15:10)

We know the minister has talked about the so-called no-fail policy within the school system. It will certainly be interesting to see how this all unfolds in the near future as well. You know, the minister goes on and talks about her investment in education in the province of Manitoba. We certainly would like to see those numbers that she talked about. But the fact remains we still have the second highest school dropout rates in Canada. The minister can talk about increased graduation rates, but the reality is we are the second-worst in Canada. So there is a lot of money going into the system, but, again, it's about actions and getting results with the money that's being invested in the system.

Now, we know we have a lot of great teachers involved in the system in education. We recognize that. We want to make sure that those teachers have the tools in the classroom to be able to address, you know, their concerns. And we go back to the Manitoba Teachers' Society report back just a few months ago. They highlighted some of the problems they're having in classrooms, some of the resource issues they're having. You know, we think there's some logical ways to work with teachers and administration to make sure that those issues are addressed and that they do have the resources there to properly educate our children, because, in fact, that is the future of Manitoba.

It's certainly encouraging for the minister to recognize former Premier Duff Roblin in his vision for education here in Manitoba, and we certainly would like that particular legacy to continue, the legacy that Premier Roblin left. We certainly will be, in the near future, making announcements in terms of our vision for education in Manitoba as well, and I know the government will be looking forward to that. They'll certainly be willing to pick holes in what our—our vision and how some of our policies might work out. But, again, at the end of the day, 10 months from now, Manitobans will have the opportunity to judge, judge either the actions or inactions of the current government and what we as opposition see as a vision and policies for the government going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned I represent the constituency of Turtle Mountain, and the constituency of Turtle Mountain is primarily a rural riding. And with a rural riding there's a lot of issues pertaining to agriculture and the rural economic activities in that particular area.

It was unfortunate that very little reference was made in the Speech from the Throne to the area of agriculture, and again I go back to the comments made in the *Brandon Sun*, and we're talking about Westman in particular. The article says: Westman residents who watched yesterday's Throne Speech can be forgiven if they feel forgotten. The region was only mentioned twice. The city of Brandon was mentioned just three times, and each time the government merely patted itself on the back touting achievements it had already accomplished or begun. Unfortunately, there was precious little in the way of specifics for Brandon or for Westman.

Now, we can see there's been a trend by this government to ignore rural Manitoba, and it's pretty clear and I can—I can take the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), the minister from Swan River, over to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and if we engage in discussion with some of those council members—most of those council members—I would think that you will find, Mr. Speaker, a lot of those members over there would agree that this government is ignoring rural Manitoba, and I suggest they're ignoring rural Manitoba at their own peril. We've seen the government provide legislation; they provide policy direction purely because of political votes. This is what they've done. There's a pattern developed there. There's a sense there certainly from AMM that that's what happened.

Now, we have great people working in the Department of Manitoba Agriculture and Rural Initiatives, great people working in that particular department, but the sense is, by the policy and the legislation that's there, their hands have been tied by trying to move rural Manitoba forward. There is tremendous potential in rural Manitoba for economic development, and that economic development will help drive the economy of the province of Manitoba. With one out of 11 jobs related directly to agriculture here in the province, it's too big of an industry to be ignored.

And the government has to recognize the changes in agriculture. I'll just point out for you, Mr. Speaker, my wife, being a teacher, had a grade 5 and 6 class last year; 28 students in that classroom, living in Glenboro, Manitoba. We think we're rural, a rural area of the province, and we are. But only two kids out of those 28 kids actually resided on a farm.

That's the kind of changes that have occurred in agriculture over the last few years. So the government has to recognize that there is changes happening in rural Manitoba. So we're asking the government to recognize those changes and they've completely ignored a vision for rural Manitoba in this particular Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of questions receiving—received at my constituency office regarding water stewardship and water issues. Certainly, drainage issues, given the wet couple of years we've had, are very important to Manitobans, and there's a—really a sense of frustration on behalf of producers who want to do some drainage on their particular property.

Unfortunately, the department has so backlogged in terms of their licensing procedures, that the producers are waiting months and months for approval for this particular applications. Now, the government was quick to say, about a year ago, that, you know, we're going to expedite this process; we're going to speed it along. Well, the fact of the matter is, the delays are actually longer now than they were before. So they haven't been able to address the problem of backlogs and drainage.

The other thing they haven't provided to Manitobans is a long-term vision of the water strategy here in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, we've had a couple of really wet years the last little while, so we're dealing with excess moisture. Well, we all know in Manitoba, sooner or later we're going to be coming into drier conditions or drought conditions.

The government has not laid out a plan how they're going to deal with conditions of drought. We have very little in terms of reservoir capacity, in terms of a lot of the rural areas, so this impacts not just agriculture, but it can impact industry and drinking water supplies as well.

Now, talking to municipal councillors this morning, they want to move ahead on some new infrastructure in south central Manitoba. They need resources to put together a strategy for dealing with drinking water within their communities, and what they're finding is a reluctance on behalf of government to work with them to move those particular projects forward. And that's the frustration that's out there.

And I would suggest part of the government's reluctance to move forward is, is because they're not addressing financial resources to deal with these very significant infrastructure issues. So, instead of coming to the table to try to work to resolve some of these issues, they keep throwing up roadblocks for municipalities. And, as a result, municipalities are forced to hire more engineers, more consultants, and we're not moving the projects forward. So it's certainly very frustrating from the municipal perspective in trying to move these issues forward.

Mr. Speaker, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, just yesterday, a resolution was passed which, I think, is very important and the resolution has to do with Bipole III. And, as we know, there was reference to Bipole III in the Speech from the Throne and it certainly appears the government has dug their heels in on their decision—not Manitoba Hydro's decision, but the government's decision to locate Bipole III on the west side of the province. Now, as we move forward from the decision that the NDP made, many more Manitobans are becoming engaged in the process and they're having a better understanding of what the implications are for them and for their families and for future generations of Manitobans.

You know, initially, the capital cost appears to be about \$7,000 more for each individual family in Manitoba. But, Mr. Speaker, that particular capital cost figure goes back over three years now. The government of the day has not been forthcoming with Manitobans in terms of what is the new capital cost for Bipole III, and, in fact, the government has no idea what the right-of-way acquisition costs are going to be for the longer route on western Manitoba because those acquisition costs are not associated

with capital costs. Those are actually going to be not capital costs, but straight cash operating costs. So those costs, which could be very substantial, will not even show up or be reflected in the capital costs, which, I think, is a deception on behalf of this particular government.

*(15:20)

Mr. Speaker, I want to just read out the resolution as it reads and that was passed by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. And it states: Therefore be it resolved that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities lobby the Province of Manitoba to oppose any construction routes of Bipole III along the west side of Lake Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it appears in question period today where the Premier (Mr. Selinger) now has certainly dug in his heels and he's not listening to the comments, he's not listening to the will of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. Now, we have several hundred delegates representing constituents across all of Manitoba at the association meeting this week. The resolution was passed to ask the government to rethink their position on a west-side route. To me, that's democracy in action. You know, sometimes the government doesn't believe that, you know, we should listen to democratic votes. And so we're just simply asking the minister and the Premier to have a sober second look at this decision we're making, because it has a huge bearing on Manitobans today and Manitobans for generations to come.

Now, we get—we had the Manitoba Hydro committee meeting just a couple of weeks ago. You know, we had concerned producers from across Manitoba who were going to be directly impacted by the hydro line there. You know, as we know, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day decided that they were not going to let only one representative of that maybe hundred landowners that were there, they would not let that one representative speak at the meeting. All we were asking was for a 10-minute presentation on behalf of the landowners. The government of the day said, no, you cannot speak to us.

The other thing they turned down, which was quite ironic, Mr. Speaker, was an individual who is a former chairman and chief executive officer of Manitoba Hydro from 1972 to 1979. Now, Mr. Bateman certainly understands hydro and he understands hydro development and he understands hydro transmission lines. And in a copy of his letter,

and I'm going to quote this: "It is my firm belief that the decision should be made on the basis of efficiencies and benefits to future generations rather than the ego needs of the current generation. The government has overruled the act without passing the necessary legislation to impose the longer, more expensive route on the utility and its customers."

That letter is signed by L.A. Bateman. The government of the day wouldn't let this individual come and present at committee either. So, as Manitobans get to hear the real issue of Bipole III, we will hope they will be sending a very strong message to the government that they are headed down the wrong direction.

I can hear the themes coming from the government already. Their thought is that we're moving Manitoba forward, but I think Manitobans are on to the government. There's announcements being made, there's media campaigns on; it's a real sign of a desperate government. It's a sign of a desperate government that's failed Manitobans—failed Manitobans in a number of ways.

And that's why I want the ministers and the backbenchers of government to have a long, hard look at the amendments that we have put forward. In those amendments, it's pretty glaring, the holes that were left in your Speech from the Throne.

Winnipeg has become the violent crime capital of Canada. And we've had 11 years for the government to come up with some plans that actually would work, but they haven't worked.

We have some of the highest taxes in Canada. Eleven years in government, and it looks like five more years of budget overspending, or spending more than the government's going to take in for the next five years. We simply ask, how is the government going to finance that? Who is going to pay for that, as we as taxpayers will have to fill that gap in somewhere along the way?

Manitoba is not competitive any longer. You know, we failed to be at the table when the New West Partnership Agreement was signed. In fact, we weren't even invited to the table, which is very unfortunate.

We know there's huge issues in health care and their promises of ending health-hallway medicine have not materialized. But we do hear that the government is thinking about bringing in legislation to reduce bureaucracy within health care. Why does the government need to introduce legislation to do

that? If they were an effective government, those types of things would be done. Manitobans rely on the government to provide effective leadership in terms of reducing bureaucracy.

You know, Manitobans are looking for, you know, the front-line resources, then, that should be available to all Manitobans in every corner of the province. Instead, we've seen the government close emergency rooms, 18 emergency rooms. More and more money is being put into health care, but we're not seeing the positive results that we should see.

Mr. Speaker, we see huge gaps in Child and Family Services. It's discouraging to see the situations that are—have been developing in that, you know, each week we pick up a paper and we hear another horror story in Child and Family Services, and just hope that the government will have a look at the issues there. But they don't seem to be willing to move that particular file forward.

Mr. Speaker, I think what we should just indicate to the government is that this current government has failed in its promises to Manitobans and as a result, it is now clearer than ever that it will require a new government to deliver positive results on crime reduction, fiscal responsibility, job creation, tax relief, protection from rate hikes, access to family physicians, support for farm families, the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg, better sports facilities and infrastructure, stability within Child and Family Services and other goals that are supported by all Manitobans.

So there's just some areas that I wanted to touch on that—there's some opportunities for the government to have a look at their particular Speech from the Throne and hope that they will have a really serious consideration—tomorrow's vote in terms of the amendments being made from the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today in the Manitoba Legislature and put a few words on the record with regard to the 2010 Speech from the Throne. I'm mindful of the fact that, after listening to the member's speech that preceded my own remarks, just how different the two parties contesting for power here in Manitoba are.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we're engaged in building the province. On the other side of the House members are engaged in tearing down

the province. Their initiative for funding the Province this year was a \$500-million cut in resources allocated to the people of the province of Manitoba by the government. A \$500-million cut would represent significant damage done to the health-care system in Manitoba, significant damage done to the education system in the province of Manitoba, significant damage done to infrastructure projects throughout the province of Manitoba. Right through the gamut of undertakings that the Province is involved in, members opposite would have the provincial government be an obstacle to Manitobans seeking to improve the quality of life in this province. Government ought not to be an obstacle to the people in the province of Manitoba. Government ought to be a full partner in building this province and, in fact, that is what members on this side of the House are engaged in. We are working together with Manitobans to build this province while members opposite seek to, quite frankly, tear down this province.

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker, I want to put a few words on the record with regard to a couple of political changes, both very positive. The first, of course, is your return to this House and your return to the Chair. I have to say, despite the very, very good work of my colleague—or our colleague, the member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), I know she had a challenging time and acquitted herself very, very well in your chair—all of us missed you here. And we're all very glad to see you back in that chair and healthy as a horse, as they say. So it's good to see you, sir, and I'm glad that you're back.

The second political event that's transpired between this session and the previous adjournment of the House is in my home community of Brandon, the election of a new mayor. And this is a very historic occasion in Brandon for a number of reasons. In fact, it's a historic occasion, more broadly speaking, in Manitoba for a number of reasons.

I'll start with the fact that this is the first female mayor in Brandon's history. Brandon was incorporated in 1882 so it's taken a little while, Mr. Speaker, to have a female mayor. But those of us in Brandon who supported Mayor Shari Decter Hirst in her run were—are very, very proud to have that historic benchmark reached with our first female mayor.

We're also very pleased, those of us who believe in building Manitoba and are of the New Democratic

persuasion, that this is also the first mayor in recorded history to be a New Democratic mayor in Brandon. So I'm always very pleased when we can elect New Democrats to office in this province because, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats fundamentally believe in working with Manitobans, all Manitobans of whatever stripe, to build this province, and don't pick and choose between, you know, the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact to sell MTS off to or various business interests that can be supported through their work as individual interest groups. We work, in this side of the House, with all Manitobans and are very proud to do so.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, that event in Brandon where the new mayor was elected also signalled the first Jewish mayor in the city of Brandon, and we're very, very pleased with that as well. So it's a very historic election recently conducted in Brandon, and I wish the new mayor and council of Brandon very, very well.

They began their work very positively this last week, Mr. Speaker, when Brandon regained the hosting of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention, which rotates on an annual basis between the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon. That—the hosting of that convention had been jeopardized and I was very pleased to be part of a floor delegation, along with my colleague, the member from Brandon West, and a number of people from Brandon, including city councillors, members of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce, members of Brandon Tourism, Brandon First as well as the Keystone Centre and hospitality organizations, and lobbying on the floor of the AMM convention on Monday, with other municipal officials to ensure that Brandon—we continue to host the AMM convention, which is, as you can imagine, a very significant economic—it makes a very significant economic impact on Brandon whenever it is held there. So there's some early successes for the new council in Brandon that I'm very pleased to relate to members of the House here today.

Mr. Speaker, in 11 months Manitobans will be making a choice on what kind of government they want. We're going to the polls 11 months from now, next October, and we are engaged, at least on this side of the House, every single day in working to keep our jobs. We never take the people of the province of Manitoba for granted, our constituents for granted. Each and every day we get up and work diligently to improve the quality of life for all Manitobans, whatever their station in life, and

wherever they may live throughout this great province.

This Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, lays out, in broad strokes, many of the macro initiatives that we will be putting forth in the years to come and in next year's election campaign. We know on this side of the House that each and every day is a campaign. There's a quote attributed to Tommy-Stanley Knowles from—where the next election campaign begins the day after the vote, the previous election campaign. And, as I said, all of us on this side of the House work each and every day to the best of our abilities on behalf of Manitobans to keep our jobs, but, more importantly, to continue to build a great province along with so many other people in our communities.

So our campaign, Mr. Speaker, is one of boldness. It is one which is committed to the priorities of Manitobans, particularly in the field of health care and creating health-care excellence in this province but also in terms of education, in terms of taxation, in terms of infrastructure development and, broadly, to create a better, safer, more healthy province for all Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to touch upon a few points in this speech surrounding a couple of the major pledges of this Throne Speech. The first has to do with health care, which is always a major priority for Manitobans, certainly fundamental to the way that we govern. The Throne Speech 2010 continues our work on building health-care excellence in Manitoba. You know, in my home community, we've invested over a hundred million dollars in the Brandon Regional Health Centre over the last decade.

That includes the complete reconstruction of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, the former Brandon Hospital, the implementation of Manitoba's first MRI suite outside of the city of Winnipeg, a complete renewal of the ambulance fleet, a redevelopment of the Westman Laboratory, and a project that I'm very, very pleased is nearing completion in Brandon, the \$25-million development of the CancerCare treatment facility for western Manitoba, a treatment facility that will aid tens of thousands of Manitobans over the years in achieving closer-to-home health-care services that they currently have to travel to the city of Winnipeg for, for cancer treatment, specifically, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and the like. That's going to be a huge, huge benefit for Manitobans in my part of the

province, a benefit that will aid families in dealing with health concerns that are very trying at the best of times, let alone when you're forced to travel many hours to and from Winnipeg to get treatment. We will be eliminating that drive and that hardship in the years ahead and I'm very, very much looking forward to cutting the ribbon and opening that particular project in the months ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we also introduced in this budget specifically, a long-range plan to ensure that Manitobans have access to family doctors, to ensure that Manitobans have access to quick-care clinics staffed by nurse practitioners in order that doctors may be freed up to take on more serious cases that are presented to them. The Throne Speech 2010 commits to a new ambulance helicopter that will save dozens of lives a year. Lives that, in the absence of a rapid response to our more remote regions of the province, are affected.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be introducing legislation to cap health administrative costs. Manitoba remains one of the lowest jurisdictions—lowest administrative costing jurisdictions in Canada. We're very proud of that in Manitoba, but we feel it's important to put into legislation so that benchmarks are respected and understood at all times.

Mr. Speaker, we're—in this Throne Speech, in education, we're also undertaking a fairly significant—in fact, an historic change in the way that reporting is done for our public schools. We're introducing plain-language report cards and co-ordinated in-service days to help parents better understand how their children are performing at school, as well as to create greater efficiencies in the training of teachers, the professional development of teachers throughout their career.

Mr. Speaker, we're also going to make it easier for students to move between high school, trades, colleges, and universities, and are undertaking initiatives to improve school attendance. Child care is also a focus of this particular Throne Speech, recognizing that child care and early childhood education should go hand in glove so that there are benefits, real benefits that are associated with the care of children preschool.

*(15:40)

We also are continuing, with this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, to continue our Safer Communities initiatives by hiring more

community-based police, establishing a new mental health court. We're also working with Ottawa on tougher federal laws with regard to home invasions, carjackings, and crimes committed with the assistance of weapons such as knives. We're developing new programs to keep youth in schools and out of gangs. We're planning for new correctional facilities in the future. We're initiating a new strategy to combat human trafficking, developing a strategy to stop cyberstalking, and expanding the SafetyAid program into more communities throughout the province of Manitoba. All of these initiatives go a long way to improving community safety in—throughout the province, and I'm very, very pleased that it continues a long-standing record of this government in enhancing community safety in the province.

Mr. Speaker, incidentally, it's important to note that all of these initiatives and, in fact, every single initiative for the past 11 years, the funding for all of these initiatives have been supported to a penny—sorry, opposed to a penny by members opposite, which is ironic given some of the language that we hear both in the House during question period and during debate coming from members opposite. The demands to do more are combined with their commitments to spend less, which, of course, places in clear relief the fact that members opposite are long on talk and very, very short on results.

You cannot, Mr. Speaker, build a province by refusing to support initiatives in health care. You cannot build a province by refusing to support initiatives in education. You cannot build a province by refusing to support investments in infrastructure. But, day in and day out, members opposite come into this Chamber and oppose, oppose, oppose investment in health care, education, infrastructure, communities, community safety.

Members opposite are not interested in building this government; members opposite are only concerned about a narrow partisan advantage to maintain their jobs in this House. They're not interested in building the province. Every vote—every vote, Mr. Speaker—in this House has seen members opposite oppose funding for initiatives throughout this province, and that's a record that we will be taking to the polls when we go there next year.

Mr. Speaker, my home community—I'll just do a little run through. The hundred million dollars for the Brandon Regional Health Centre redevelopment, which includes the CancerCare treatment centre for western Manitoba, the MRI suite for western

Manitoba, the new ambulance fleet for western Manitoba: Every single penny of that investment was opposed by members opposite.

On the education front, Mr. Speaker, we've had the complete reconstruction of Assiniboine Community College that's ongoing, over \$60 million invested to date with tens of millions more to be invested in the future. At Brandon University, we've implemented new programs as well as new facilities. The physical plant at Brandon University, the Health Studies building, the Aboriginal counsellors program at Brandon University: all of those initiatives opposed to the penny by members opposite.

Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, in Brandon: the redevelopment of a waste-water treatment plant opposed by members opposite, a hundred-million-dollar investment opposed by members opposite. Infrastructure, the complete reconstruction of 1st Street, the complete reconstruction of 18th Street, the twinning of the Thompson bridges, the development of the Eastern Access route: approximately \$70-million worth of investment in our road and street infrastructure in Brandon, every single nickel opposed by members opposite.

There hasn't been a penny invested in Brandon that members opposite have supported in this House, Mr. Speaker. And we will be reminding people in Brandon about that lack of support for that—for my home community in the election to come. In fact, we'll be reminding people throughout the province of the recklessness of members opposite in all of their extreme positions that they take inside this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to conclude my remarks and allow others to speak, but this budget—or this Throne Speech is visionary in nature. It approaches Manitoba with a macro lens, with great policy initiatives that will have a tremendously positive impact on our health-care system, on our educational system, on each and every community throughout the province. And I'm very, very proud to stand with this government in supporting the Throne Speech and in supporting the investment that members opposite oppose day in and day out here, supporting the investment in Manitoba that this government is making and will continue to make for years into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable member for Arthur-Virden

(Mr. Maguire), I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery. We have with us Michele Martel, who is the mother, and Jeanette Gosselin, who is the grandmother of our page Karine Martel.

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

* * *

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to a Throne Speech. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that there wasn't more vision in it than there is. But, before I get to that, I just want to say how privileged and how happy I am to see you back in the Chair of the Chamber, and that your health is greatly improved from when we were here in the spring. I also know that the member from St. Norbert, there were many accolades about her handling of the situation in the House while you were gone, and all I can say is that her job would have been made so much easier if the Finance Minister had actually voted for her budget—created a little consternation amongst her colleague, I'm sure.

But I'd also like to welcome back the Clerks and the Sergeant-at-Arms and table officers here in the Legislature, the pages in the House. I'd also like to pay tribute to the staff that we have on our side of the Legislature that work so diligently on our behalf as well, Mr. Speaker, my staff and particularly my constituency administrator, Cheryl Porter, in Virden in my office there, as well as to my family members, particularly my wife, Beryl, in regards to support for the work that we do on a daily basis throughout our constituencies and across the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say, too, that what a privilege it is to represent the southwest corner of Manitoba, being up against Saskatchewan and the American border in Arthur-Virden, and the growing communities that we have in that region at the present time. You know, there's still a dual—I guess you could say—industry there if you—but I'm tentative in saying that it's just two because there's many others. But the main ones are, of course, agriculture and the oil industry, along with the tourism and other individual businesses that are in our representative. We have a very beautiful part of Manitoba that I have the privilege to represent from Virden and No. 1 Highway through the Assiniboine Valley, the Souris Valley and, of course, the Turtle Mountains with the Peace Gardens. And I think that it's important to mention the Peace Gardens in regards to

the work that's done by the CEO, Doug Hevenor, in that area and his staff at the Peace Gardens. There's been a great deal of work done there this year and particularly with a 9/11 venue that's there—

An Honourable Member: Memorial.

Mr. Maguire: —and memorial—thank you—my colleague from Steinbach there reminds me as well. We've had the privilege of being in attendance at that special ceremony that takes place there every year. But this year was particularly important, I believe, and the member from Brandon East was there as well as I this summer, and we had the privilege of being there when they turned the sod for that particular event to upgrade the 9/11 facility there, and the Rotary clubs and firemen, others that were involved in making sure that there was a priority made to expand that into a very glorious tribute to the victims of 9/11 back in September 2001, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say as well, though, that the work that has been ongoing in that whole venue and the plans for the future are one that I and many of my colleagues are proud to support this summer in writing supportive letters in regards to making sure that there are other levels of government—provincially, federally—working together to try to come up with a program to enhance the vision, I guess, of the use of the Peace Gardens to a conflict resolution centre that has been on the books and been on part of the plans of the board of directors under, I know, the mayor of Boissevain. Mr. Ed Anderson has been integral in that whole expansion of the use of the Peace Gardens because it is such a remarkable venue that could be used for conflict and resolution not only at the local level or provincially, but internationally as the theme that would be the backbone of the development, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, the future vision is to have eight languages be able to be used in that area for conflict resolution between parties around the world.

* (15:50)

And I think that this is a goal that we have in Manitoba that could be very—bring great notoriety to our province in regards to being seen as a neutral venue more—and where could it be more appropriate than on the Canadian-US border in regards to being able to attract the attention of the world in making—in settling disputes. Not only is it an opportunity to do that between the different areas that we have, but we know, we see all the time—I had the opportunity of being in Devils Lake myself this summer; that's only one issue that we need to deal with and there are

many others, Mr. Speaker, and I think these are reminders of how close to home some of these issues could be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that with the government in their Throne Speech—and I had the opportunity of reading through it. I just want to add, as well, that I want to thank my colleagues for the fine work that they did last week while I was away at my daughter's wedding, and had the opportunity to participate in this Throne Speech this week. But I—in reading through it, I get a sense of a lot of reannounced announcements, not a lot of vision in this particular document.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

But that's consistent with a number of areas that—particularly I want to start with the one on agriculture because the theme there is, as I said, is very important to the district that I represent, the constituency that I have in, Mr. Acting Speaker, in southwest Manitoba, in Arthur-Virden, and the grain side has had a particularly tough year in some of the areas, the normally drier portion of Manitoba, right down in the corner of Lyleton and Pierson and some of those communities has probably seen one of the wettest years they've ever faced, as well as other areas of Manitoba—the Interlake—that we've had that have more publicity on some of those areas, but there was a lot of lost crop in that area. Even though grain prices are holding well—have held well through the fall for many of these farmers that were able to grow a crop, that's fine, but if you can't—if you weren't—if you were drowned out to start out with, it doesn't matter how good the prices are if you don't have any grain to sell.

And I think our livestock producers have gone through tough times under this government since BSE in '03, and we certainly need to be cognizant of where we're at in that whole area as this government continues to bring in more stringent issues to deal with. And we're not against, you know, we want to make sure that—and I as—particularly as Conservation and Water Stewardship critic and no one knows better than I the importance of having clean air, clean water and clean land, Mr. Acting Speaker, as we move forward in the—in developing our province.

But I think the government has failed in regards to providing consistency in relation to some of the issues around the whole areas of water stewardship and—particularly—and I look forward to being able to work with the government on behalf of many groups

across the province of Manitoba to provide some consistency and greater co-ordination of those programs that they have announced but, Mr. Acting Speaker, have failed to have a plan to implement. And I think that's where a lot of people keep coming to me in my office now from all walks of life in Manitoba, saying, well, I just wish the government, if they have this plan, that they would provide some consistency in how they enforce the rules. In fact, in places they're telling me they don't enforce the rules.

So I say that with all of the people that have been hired by the government in relation to making sure that they try to implement some of these areas, I think one of the issues that they could use some advice on is to provide more education in some of the areas to let people know what it is they're trying to accomplish and just what their purpose is in some of the regulations that they've brought forward.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think, after 11 years, this government has had lots of time to be able to deal with those issues and put them forward in a succinct manner, and I think that's just a word of advice that they could have from our side. I also think that, you know, as I said, the livestock side of the industry has gone through tenuous circumstances. The prices may—future prices look a little bit better on the cattle side. Our cow numbers are way down. We've got—lost an auction mart in southwest Manitoba that's closed its doors this year as well. And, I think, as I warned the Agriculture Minister and others in this House some time ago, that it's a concern about them losing that—those cattle; cows, particularly. The people have chosen to get out of the industry. They've seen no support from this government in those areas and I think that—and I know that the auction marts that are left are concerned about the regulations that are being put on them and how a small auction mart has to comply with international—or with the national standards that they've got, even though they're not selling cattle out of the province or beef out of the province, slaughter opportunities. These are just auction marts that want to handle the product that the farmers have to sell and they're certainly expressing that concern to me.

And I think that the government has kind of fumbled the ball in regards to dealing with these people because they have not spoken to them. They haven't come out and said, what could we work together with you on to have as possible solutions to some of the concerns that we have just foisted upon you.

And so I think that that's a—definitely a concern, Mr. Acting Speaker, amongst the livestock and the grain producers of our province, and particularly those of the southwest corner that I have the opportunity to represent.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I also want to speak, before I move away from Arthur-Virden in regards to the discussion today, Mr. Speaker, on a more grand scale, is about—we've seen a few days ago the story—wonderful stories of the expansion of the oil industry and the drilling in southwest Manitoba. And I'm proud that virtually 99.9 per cent of all the oil drilling in Manitoba is taking place in Arthur-Virden because it has certainly allowed for greater home sales. There's a shortage of homes there, a shortage of housing facilities, as well, not only for our seniors in regards to low rental—or low-cost housing in some of those areas, but in relation to adequate housing for the workers that are needed in this area.

But it has led to expansion of a new hotel in Virden, particularly expansion on the one in Boissevain, full hotels in southwest Manitoba now, in relation to the workers that are coming in from other areas to work on the record levels of drilling that we will see.

And these are not as—the same as drilling the vertical wells that we've seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, but horizontal wells, with the new technology that go down into the veins of the oil and run some quarter of a mile to three-eighths of a mile right through the middle of a vein of oil. Science and technology today has allowed that to be even much more technically refined without making mistakes than there was even a few years ago.

And I think its imperative that we pay attention to some of the needs of this region and I only want to bring to the attention of the public the fact that the—a number of RMs, in particularly in the town of Waskada and Brenda and Arthur municipalities, along with Edward as well, I know that they've had a meeting—the RM of Edward has met in the Pierson area with—the minister tried to have a meeting. And they're all concerned about the expansion of the development of roads that are needed for infrastructure, to carry these heavy vehicles and this heavy oil through the province, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, there's a controversy but now a pipeline is going in to help alleviate some of that. But there's enough oil wells being drilled that it's not going to slow down the amount of trucks that are in that area.

And I certainly wanted to recommend that the government take a look at the—you know, the area around Waskada for the provincial roads that are there, notwithstanding the good work that's been done on No. 3 already and, you know, the twinning of No. 1 on the north side but there's very little oil that goes up and down No. 1 Highway; that's more commercial traffic and trade that we have with our provincial counterparts.

But this local area is having its roads beaten up. Waskada's been fortunate to have this oil there but they don't get the benefit that the province does in relation to the return of income in their particular area and at least not to keep up with the road developments that are required [*inaudible*] construction and other heavy vehicle movement.

And I know that the government has received great, you know, presentations from communities on this. And I know, particularly in relation to Mr. Gary Williams, of course, the mayor of Waskada, has personally contacted me in regards to this circumstance. And I know that there are others as well: Audrey Bird, the CAO of Edward municipality, and their reeve, Ralph Wang, and others have created a concern with the government. And I just urge the government to look at what they can do because I know that they are willing, as municipalities, and I do know that the oil companies who have—are working on these roads on a regular basis are also willing to put funds into those projects that—particularly a few bridges and that sort of thing that are needed.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I want to move, as well, to the concerns that have been inadequate in regards to the government around issues like water management. Now, this is a particularly high-water year, but this isn't to mean that this will be the last one we have. I think, if you look at the historic situation on Devils Lake, that water has risen 28 feet in the last 15, 17 years in the US and, in speaking with those people and our own weather people, this is a longer term, 25-, 30-year cycle that we're going through in weather right now that could even be wetter in the next few years. And I guess we have to prepare for that, and I think with the—it's unprecedented for me, at least, to see rivers—the Assiniboine, the Souris, the Red, the Qu'Appelle—coming into the area. The Shellmouth, as I understand it today, is receiving more water than is being discharged, even as we speak.

And so I think we need to look at—you know—and we've seen, of course, many other issues around the frazzle ice, and I think we're going to see more of it, Mr. Speaker. I'd certainly like to put that on the record here today. We will see more of that before freeze-up because these rivers are flowing so fast and so full that it's not like a normal situation of where their water is low and it just freezes because there's the first sign of cold weather because there's very little movement in that water. That's not the case we're seeing today, and I want to remind the government that the shortfall that they've had in regards to the Shellmouth is that they have not dealt with the situation of the flooded farmers, the activity that took place—man-made activity—that happened there last spring, artificial flooding, if you will, in that region. And I know it's been devastating for the farmers from the Shellmouth dam down to Millwood, and we need to find a solution.

And I'm not saying that the solution needs to be one solution for all, Mr. Speaker, because there may be other ways of dealing with this particular area, and I urge the government to come forward.

I was pleased to see the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) yesterday in question period indicate that soon he will have an answer and a solution for those farmers on the—the concerned farmers in the Assiniboine Valley, and I'm very glad to report that to them. And I believe that one of the areas would be to copy the program that they had while they're trying to get the Shellmouth compensation bill that they passed a few years ago actually implemented. They haven't implemented the bill yet, but in so doing at least come up with a more gracious payment to those individuals that have been artificially flooded—and not normally in the spring. This was done in July and late June, this flooding occurred. It occurred at a time when wheat was heading out in the valleys, when normally they'd be putting on fungicide for the crops, and this is not at a stage where the crop is—can't be seeded or is just in its initial stages. This is just, you know, in most cases this was within the month of harvesting, and that's pretty devastating when you've got all of your input costs tied up in this, and, then, because somebody made a mistake in regards to—in my estimation—the level that that water could have been held at, and certainly it was allowed to go beyond historic levels, that we aren't seeing the government follow up with any kind of compensation for these individuals. And I think that that's a failure on behalf of the government in relation to dealing with them.

But I guess when you only have no words of agriculture, the word not even in the spring budget, and only a few references to it in the Throne Speech, that agriculture is not a priority for this government and rural issues, rural development, is not, or they would have been dealing with some of these areas. And I think it's very consistent in that they don't care, Mr. Speaker. They're tired and desperate when it comes to how to deal with some of these issues of rural Manitoba because they—there's all kinds of opportunities for rural expansion and rural opportunities to make jobs in our rural communities, and, yet, this government wants to centralize everything.

And yet we know we do have great development here in the city of Winnipeg, Brandon. Some of our larger centres are growing in some areas, and if we could just pass the bill that the member from Morris had brought in in regards to getting rid of some of the red tape that we have in this province, we could even do better and much greater opportunities in this province. We could alleviate the fact that we're the—have some of the highest debt in the province's history—we do have the highest debt in the province's history—that we do have the highest taxation west of Québec amongst many of the levels of taxation in this province.

If we could deal with that after 11 years of failure by this government, then I think we could expand even more in this province. And the vision of our new energetic opposition that we have, Mr. Speaker, is looking at a—having a great opportunity to move forward in friendly Manitoba—because even I hear friendly Manitoba mentioned by the members opposite, not this spirited stuff that they continue to refer to.

So I think that, Mr. Speaker, one of these particular areas where this government has completely failed is in regards to Hydro. And that is because they continue to take the hydro line that the present finance—present, pardon me, Premier (Mr. Selinger), when he was Finance Minister and responsible for Hydro, in the fall of '07 writing the letter to the president of Hydro, Mr. Brennan, saying, there's already two lines coming between the lakes, and we want to maintain the boreal forest on the east side, and we're getting some pressure from out-of-province people so, therefore, the only way—you got to find another route and the only route left is western Manitoba so that's where you got to go. And they left Hydro no choice. And we've come out now and we've seen that Hydro has indicated that

after trying to build a hydro line in the east side for 30 years, planning it for at least that long, knowing that they would need a Bipole III at some time, that the government is right in the middle of the development, changed the path for this Crown corporation and led them to believe that there is only one option when, of course, that's just ludicrous.

I've had the opportunity to speak with power corporations in the United States. They want reliable power; they want it at a reasonable cost. Well, you know, I—that's another issue where the Premier says, well, we'll—don't worry about the extra \$1.75 billion that line's going to cost us as ratepayers here in Manitoba, we'll gather it up and we'll get it from our American neighbours who are going to buy this extra power from us. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're giving it away. At this time, the power to the United States is going at about a third of the cost that we're paying locally in our households.

This line is some 479 kilometres longer than it needs to be by going the west side. It does more damage to the environment. It does more damage in regards to emitting more greenhouse gases into the future of Manitoba—or the future of the world, because just from the extension, the 400—just that extra 479 kilometres of line alone, the line losses on that—the extra loss on that will be in the neighbourhood of \$30 million a year. And the damage that it's doing by not allowing our US neighbours to close down one of the coal plants—one of the coal-fired plants that they could close down if they didn't have to deal with this extra line—but if they could just bring it down the east side, have a government with enough vision, if they weren't so tired and desperate, they would bring it down the east side where Hydro has planned it for years, where the public says it should go.

I mean, the Premier tried to tell us today that he knows more than the public and AMM. We've got farmers all over Manitoba concerned about why this line has to come down through their area, down through St. Claude and across even the broadest area of Manitoba, the biggest flood plain that we have—the area across the south side of Winnipeg before it wraps itself around the east side of the city back up to the Springfield plant.

And so I have great concerns as a participant in Conservation and Water Stewardship because the government says, well, we have to come down the west side to protect the caribou. Well, I know full well that there's only one species of caribou on the

east side of Lake Winnipeg. That's what science tells us. Science also tells us there's five different species of caribou along the northern route between the area straight north of Kenora, where this line would originate, and The Pas, where they want it to go to before it ventures south along the west side of Lake Manitoba, down and across No. 2 Highway, crossing many major highways in Manitoba, across a flood plain, back up around, as I said before, wrapping around Winnipeg.

And so this is a, you know, a—very detrimental to the future of this province, and I guess the result of—is at least 40 megawatts of clean energy on a continuous basis is being lost and that increase—that'll increase greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of at least 40,000 cars, Mr. Speaker, and that's at a time when this government gives lip service to wanting to be clean and green. They're doing just the opposite and, of course, the national standards show that this is government—one of the worst governments in Canada for levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and that's not good for our future generations of young Manitobans to have to deal with in the future when we can deal with it so readily right now and save Manitobans \$1.75 billion in the process, tax—\$7,000 per household—that's going to be hoisted upon future generations of Manitobans to be paid for out of their pockets, while this government tries to deal with—basically gives up and fails by giving in to out-of-province whims all the time.

*(16:10)

We want to see a boreal forest intact, Mr. Speaker, as much as anybody else on this side of the House. I certainly do, from an environmental perspective. We want to have a UNESCO designation, and, of course, the United Nations has told us that having a hydro line—having that pencil on the map down through that area will not impede the ability to have a UNESCO designation, and we certainly would continue to fight for that area.

But there are also a great many individuals that are concerned about our natural resources in that area. Our mining industry today is concerned about where the line would go. And that's where the government has failed to consult. With a number of areas, they've been desperate to come up with announcements.

It's like the stadium. They pulled that one out of the hat a week after the budget last spring, got a hundred-and-some-million-dollar project and forgot to put it in the budget. And now, after 238 days or

whatever it is later, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today, even, can't even tell us who the partners are. He can't tell us what it's going to cost. The only thing he knows is he's got a hole in the ground and it's filling with snow as we speak today, Mr. Speaker, in the storm that's outside this building.

But, anyway, I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are new technologies in regards to lagoon management, in regards to waste manage in this province that this government isn't putting its finger on today as well. They come up with this, you know, and startling announcements.

I come back home last week to hear the one about—the one that nobody believes in this province is, well, everybody'll have a doctor, the Premier says, by 2015, I believe it was. And everybody remembers the failed promise of this government in 1999: 15—we're going to fix health care, not just hallway medicine, we're going to fix health care with \$15 million in six months. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's atrocious that the government today, 11 years later, has no more vision then than they—now than they did then about how to fix health care. In fact, it's gotten a lot worse under this government's approach.

And I just have to say that when you looking at a situation of—I just want to get the number here—more than 1,500 doctors, Mr. Speaker, have left Manitoba. And that's exactly what I indicated in reply to the Health Minister back in the summer of '07 when I held a health meeting in Virden in August that summer, and 600 people showed up; a hundred had to go home because they couldn't get in the hall. There was no vision from this government in regards to how they're going to keep even 10 per cent of the doctors that have left. If they'd have kept 10 per cent of the doctors that have left, we wouldn't be in a shortage today, but they haven't got any vision on how to do that.

And I look forward to having that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, because we will do it and it can be—it can certainly be done by remanaging the funds that are presently there in the health-care system today and being smarter and wiser with funds that are on the record.

Mr. Speaker, I just have to say, as well, before I close that this government needed—had so many holes in their Throne Speech that our leader brought forth, I think, a great amendment to the Throne Speech, and it lists a number of things. And I challenge the government, as others have, to vote for it, have some vision and vote for this, to help them

plug the holes in their own Throne Speech, because, you know, if they're voting against this, then they endorse large ongoing deficits and rising debt and will result in higher taxes for Manitobans.

And, if they're going to vote against this, it's because they will have failed to acknowledge the government's misguided plan to raise taxes on Manitoba families starting after the—October 2011. That's hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, to say that, well, we're going to wait until after the next election and then we're going to tax you, we're going to increase taxes greatly on you to provide the services that we've said we will have to have.

Mr. Speaker, if they don't vote for the amendment, they'll be voting to stay out of the New West Partnership, as they already are. And, of course, though, maybe that is their plan; they don't want to be a partner with Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan, the have provinces to the west. They don't want to be a part of that Ontario-Québec alliance that's there, the biggest trading partners. They want to, you know—and yet they don't want to rely on the Americans to the south, who are one of our biggest trading partners.

And I just really feel that there's missing the boat in so many areas, whether it's development in Churchill and the transportation corridors that they have—because here we are—and I was at the breakfast yesterday morning where the Transport Minister spoke about the great vision, about having a CentrePort. Well, I'm proud to say that I had the opportunity to put forth the foreign trade zone private member's resolution in this very House that they unanimously accepted, Mr. Speaker, to move forward with a more free trade zone, if you will, within that foreign trade area here at CentrePort. But you can't have CentrePort in isolation of our trading partners to the east, west, north or south, and I think that was what the member from Thompson tried to get across. And I also have to say that it's a great concern to all of us in the House about what's happened to Thompson with Vale in the last few days, but this government can't say they didn't know. I mean, that vision, that concern was expressed five years ago by the people in the region and by the company itself and by the people of Thompson.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I have a great concern for all of these issues around conservation, financial management, where the hydro line is going to go in the future and why it is necessary to cost \$1.75 billion down the road. I guess for those reasons

I will be voting in favour of the opposition's amendments to this particular bill, and I really believe that the government would be doing a disservice if they don't vote for it as well. And, of course, because of the holes in their own bill, their own Throne Speech, that's why I'll be voting against it as well.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to put a few words on the record with regard to the Throne Speech put forward by this very mature, experienced, innovative, passionate and enthusiastic NDP government.

Like the other Throne Speeches of the last decade under the NDP, it enshrines the vision of a fair and prosperous society that is shared by most Manitobans, while adapting the strategies that it has developed to realize this vision to the shifting economic, technological and environmental realities.

Our first Throne Speech in 1999 began by outlining this vision. Manitobans, it said, expect improvements to our health-care system. They expect our young people to be prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the new economy. They expect improved security in our homes, in our workplaces and in our communities.

The NDP has delivered on this vision and this year's Speech from the Throne shows how we will continue to pursue this vision with energy, ingenuity and due diligence.

Take for instance, our progress in education. Our government has ushered in numerous cutting-edge training programs in 3-D animation, e-business, information systems technology and biotechnology, for example, that target the growing sectors of the new economy and help attract and keep our young people in the province. We have boosted college and university enrolments by one-third, more than doubled the number of active apprentices and increased the number of high school graduates by nearly 10 per cent. The NDP has truly acted on the belief articulated in the 1999 Throne Speech that citizens who are skilled in learning will have the ability to adapt to an economy that is constantly changing.

Another area in which the NDP has held to its visions with great success is immigration. Looking back on the 1999 Throne Speech, our government pledged, and I quote: "to work with our multicultural communities, the federal government and the

business community to achieve a significant increase in immigration to Manitoba."

Once again, our government has exceeded expectations with our Provincial Nominee Program being acclaimed the most successful by far in Canada, attracting almost half of the provincial nominees coming to Canada between 1999 and 2008. Thanks to our program, 48,000 skilled workers who came here under our program are contributing to the growth of our economy and the richness of our social and cultural tapestry.

*(16:20)

Manitoba would not have as much of a competitive advantage as it does without these immigrants. Business leaders such as Jim Carr of the Business Council of Manitoba claim that the Nominee Program has transformed the province economically. Such is our program's success that the *New York Times* featured it in a front-page story on November 12, and quoted Manitoba's Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard). It echoed parka-clad diversity of Winnipeg, and referred admiringly to our experiment in designer immigration.

Because of the key role that provincial immigrants play in our society, I introduced the private member's resolution yesterday asking the Assembly to urge the federal government to agree to Manitoba's request that Ottawa increase the cap on the number of nominees in 2010 to 5,600, from the current 5,000. It further asks that the cap be removed entirely so that Manitoba can continue to plan on welcoming as many as 20,000 provincial nominees a year by 2011—or 2016.

I strongly endorse the decision announced in the Throne Speech to keep our young people in either school or a work-related training program until they either graduate or turn 18. This is a bold first step. We know that our government already does much to encourage them to do this in a variety of innovative ways, including steps to help students find programs that best suit their abilities, interests and family situation. I'm thinking, for example, of the new Bright Futures fund we created in 2008 to provide students with tutoring, better connections between their families and school, career mentoring and bursaries that will encourage them to graduate and move on to colleges, universities or apprenticeships.

Some people have said that keeping more of our kids in school until they graduate will run up more

costs. Just what are they saying? That we should let their potential go unfilled? Let the Province's economy suffer because they cannot contribute all that they might? That would be both callous and short-sighted. This spring, on the passing of Duff Roblin, our Premier credited the former premier with having modernized Manitoba's education system. And it reminded me of Duff Roblin's often quoted words of wisdom: Education is not a cost or a bill or expense but a wholesome investment in human life, growth and comprehension. And it was Roblin who also asked: Who can say what the monetary cost is of not building a road, a school or a hospital?

I'm not, by far, the first New Democrat to have quoted Roblin on this matter. In fact, I would go so far as to say that his thinking was often more in line with that of our own government than that of the current Tories. One of the most tired clichés of the members opposite is that the NDP tries to solve social problems by throwing money at them. It's as illogical as saying that parents address their kid's nutritional needs by throwing money at supermarkets. Professor Gregg Olsen at the University of Manitoba, who has studied the Nordic countries for over 20 years, came to the following conclusion: the Nordic nations demonstrate that expenditures on comprehensive and co-ordinated packages of income support programs, social services, education and other public preventive measures, along with protective social legislation, can greatly reduce poverty, social inequalities and other social problems inherent in capitalist society, and foster greater security and solidarity.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I visited my dentist and he asked me the question: How come the opposition is always negative, always criticizes, but they don't have their own vision?

So I told, possibly this is the party of the past and how they can have a vision.

So then he asked: What will happen to the reduction of poverty?

I said, for sure, they will reduce poverty for the richest. They will give them tax breaks, and then they will slash the budget by \$500 million and the services will suffer and ordinary Manitobans will suffer.

I'm glad to see that housing for seniors continues to be a priority on our government's agenda. Last spring, I introduced legislation encouraging municipalities to help homeowners develop

self-sufficient secondary, or granny suites. In support of this legislation, our government has stepped up to the table with forgivable loans up to \$35,000 for covering up to 50 per cent of the costs of constructing these suites.

A number of my constituents have wanted to add granny suites to their homes so that they can be there for their elderly parents, while still affording them some independence and privacy. This arrangement is particularly popular with The Maples' many immigrant families from India, the Philippines, Portugal and Italy, where grandparents commonly form households with their offspring.

The older generation benefits from the companionship of their kids and grandkids while receiving assistance with chores that would be beyond their capacity. With three generations under one roof there's always someone around to keep an eye on the grandparents' health and well-being. And the younger generations—and the younger generation benefits greatly from the presence of grandparents, particularly if both parents are working outside the home. They are also a plus environmentally, since the granny suites create no sprawl and take less energy to heat and cool than independent residences. A recent article in *The Globe and Mail* noted that Vancouver and other cities in British Columbia are catching on to the benefits of secondary residences, with the encouragement of city planners and environmentalists.

Last Saturday, Sikhs in Manitoba and around the world celebrated the birth of our religious leader Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who was born five centuries ago. He put forward the three basic principles for a prosperous society. One of these, Wand Chhakna, counsels those with good fortune to help those in need. I see this practised in Manitoba by NDP government, which believes that the Province's tax and other revenue should provide services in health and education to everyone according to their needs, not according to the depth of their pockets.

The Sikh holy book, The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, tells us that we should have such a society that all the people feel included and no one should be left out. This has been a theme of our government over the last decade, as well as of other NDP governments over the last four decades. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I have to say, first of all, that I'm honoured and privileged to speak in this Legislature on behalf of my constituents, the constituency—from the

constituency of Lac du Bonnet. I often say to residents and others alike that I have the most beautiful constituency in the province, a very varied constituency in the sense that it reflects the entire province itself. And I don't think there's any other constituency that can say that.

* (16:30)

And, just to highlight that point, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have six hydroelectric power dams within the constituency. We have two provincial parks within the constituency, the busiest provincial park in the province being the Whiteshell Provincial Park. Can't say very much for the roads in the Whiteshell Provincial Park because there isn't a lot to be said about them. They're in terrible condition, but in any event, it is the busiest park in the province by far. We also have agricultural land, rich agricultural land, and so we have a farming base within the constituency. We have some manufacturing. We also have a number of mines within the constituency, the Bissett gold mine in Bissett, as well as several quarries within the constituency. We have rivers and lakes for recreation. We have forests for tourism and, of course, for logging.

So we do have some urban areas and rural areas, and so we really are truly a reflection of the entire province itself and our economy is very diversified. So I feel very privileged and honoured to represent the people in the constituency, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that most of the issues that affect the province itself also affect the constituency of Lac du Bonnet.

So I'm pleased to put a few words on the record with respect to the Throne Speech and, of course, to the amendment that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) put forward. And I'd also want to acknowledge, I guess, at this time, all the hard work my constituency staff do within the constituency itself and also all of the volunteers that I have, because it would be difficult otherwise to be able to stand up in the Legislature and do my job here—not only in the constituency, but also here.

We have about 4,000 cottages within the constituency, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I deal with quite a lot of issues that they may have, whether it's in the constituency or without. A lot of them believe that, in fact, I am their MLA and so they'll contact me a lot of times before they'll contact their own MLA where they reside. So that's a bit of a challenge as well.

I'd also like to commend the staff here at the Legislature, both that we have—the staff that we have in caucus and, of course, the table officers and yourself, Mr. Speaker, who we welcome back from the personal issues that you had, and we're glad to see that you're back in the Chair. I know that the member from St. Norbert, I can tell you, she did a—she did quite a very good job in your absence but, of course, we're glad to see you back as well in this Chamber.

And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the municipal elections that we just had, and I've got quite a few municipalities within the constituency, a number of towns, being the town of Lac du Bonnet, town of Powerview-Pine Falls and the town—the LGD of Pinawa, sometimes known as the town of Pinawa, but not—that's not quite correct, it's an LGD—and the town of Beausejour, and the various municipalities that surround them. And I congratulate all of those who ran for municipal election and were successful, as well as all those who ran for school board election and were successful. Of course, we have to also acknowledge those who were not elected, whether it be school boards or municipal or town councils, and commend them for being part of the democratic process, putting their name forward and having the courage to go through an election. And I know that all of them want to make their community a better place to work, to live and to raise a family, and I want to make the constituency the same. I also want to make the constituency a better place to work, to live and to raise a family and, in that respect, we're partners in that. And so I work closely with my municipal councils and others in the school board as well to ensure that this happens.

But, nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, I'm here to debate the Throne Speech and specifically the Throne Speech amendment, and I must say that the amendment was very well written, and it highlights, I think, the failure of government over the last 11 years. And, quite frankly, there are many, many clauses within that amendment that—and perhaps even the whole amendment that members opposite ought to vote for.

Now, I can point to a number of things where we're asking for a credible plan to reduce violent crime. I'm not sure how anyone can vote against that. We're asking them to reduce waste and improve health care. If this amendment fails tomorrow at 4:30, well, the members opposite are voting against improving health care, they're voting against reducing waste, they're voting against reducing

violent crime, and I'm not sure how they're going to justify that to their constituents but the reality is that's what they'd be voting against.

In terms of improving health care we—I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there's been little to no improvement in health care in the last 11 years. We've spent, in the last 11 years, \$30 billion more—\$30 billion in health care over 11 years and during that time we've had 1,500 doctors which left the province. They left the province and they're not anywhere to be seen. They're out of the province. They're not coming back and that's a failure, I think, of government to deal with doctor retention within the province of Manitoba.

And we've seen—I've seen trouble within my own constituency. A few years ago we had the Powerview-Pine Falls hospital shut down between Christmas and New Year's. That's a very busy hospital, Mr. Speaker. It has very dedicated staff; however, what we found is that the recruitment policies at that time were to obtain physicians from outside the country, which isn't a problem in—from my perspective, but that's the type of physicians that we had within that hospital. And those physicians all decided they were going to take a holiday over Christmas, between Christmas and New Year's. So they had to shut down the emergency department of the hospital and that's a very busy hospital.

It's actually the first hospital that you arrive to when you're coming from the north, directly south along the east side of Lake Winnipeg. So it serves a lot of health needs for First Nations communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, as well as a very populated Sagkeeng First Nation, just outside of Powerview-Pine Falls, and, of course, Powerview-Pine Falls and the RM of Alexander. So it is a very busy hospital and it was really quite a disappointment to me and, I think, to the residents of the community that the hospital actually shut down for almost two weeks during that period of time.

The other issue is that—of course, is that there isn't really any plan to reduce violent crime in this province. We've had a lot of gang activity, increased gang activity over the last 11 years. It's not a safe place anymore within many of our communities, and many areas within our particular communities, and even gang activity in terms of the Hells Angels coming under the watch of the—of this government and increased gang activity throughout our entire province.

In terms of reducing waste, Mr. Speaker, there should be an acknowledgement that Bipole III—running Bipole III on the west side of Lake Winnipeg certainly will waste a lot of money, in my view. It's an issue that's near and dear, I think, to my heart and, I think, to many Manitobans who believe that we need to do all we can in these tough economic times to reduce costs. And that's one way to do it, by running the Bipole III line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that out of the 13 First Nations communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, 12 were in favour of running Bipole III on the east side and only one is not, although I don't think there's been a credible and a concerted effort by the government to negotiate with that one First Nation community to deal with that issue.

*(16:40)

People within my constituency—and I know that—had had several comments by members here in the Legislature about that. They asked me, well, would I want Bipole III running down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, since I represent a fair amount of that area as it comes down from the north And I simply say to them that, yes, our communities would welcome Bipole III going through our communities.

We had a devastating effect of the closure of the Tembec pulp and paper mill in Powerview-Pine Falls just about a year ago and it's—it had a tremendous impact on the community. And they're willing—they ask me on a weekly basis: Try to get Bipole III running down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It's going to mean jobs, construction jobs for our community. It's going to mean maintenance jobs after it's constructed.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, is that we already have, in my constituency, we already have probably more hydro transmission lines located within it than any other constituency in the province. We have those six hydroelectric dams that are on the Winnipeg River generating electricity and all of those dams have transmission lines going to them and going back to the city of Winnipeg. There already are hydro corridors that are existing within the constituency alongside those lines.

So I don't think there would be a lot of disruption by running—in my communities or in my constituency if we ran Bipole III down the east side of Lake Winnipeg. There certainly wouldn't be the

lack of support and the anger that we're seeing across the province by deciding to run Bipole III on the west side of Lake Winnipeg.

The speech also endorses—the Throne Speech endorses large ongoing deficits and rising debt. We've got \$23 billion of debt at this point in the Province and counting. Every day that goes by, an incredible amount of money is added to that debt load.

Now, we do have interest rates that are historically low at this period of time—in fact, have been historically low for the last eight or nine years—and by increasing our debt at such a rapid rate—and I—from what I recall, I think the budget increases the debt this particular fiscal year by another \$2 billion and \$2 billion thereafter as well—by increasing the debt, I think we're leaving ourselves open for a disaster here in Manitoba. An increase in interest rates of 1 per cent on a \$23-billion debt—an increase by simply 1 per cent will increase the debt-servicing costs by \$230 million. And that's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. I know what we can do with that money—if we had it in the constituency, we'd probably be able to pave—\$230 million, we'd probably be able to pave every road within the constituency in one year and still have money left over.

So that is a danger, a path I think that this government has been taking the province that I don't think is—first of all, it isn't sustainable, and secondly, I think what they're doing is saddling our children and our grandchildren to come with repayment of that debt, and where they're going to get that money from I'm not sure. Obviously, they're going to need to increase taxes to deal with that, that very issue itself.

And we also see that the government has a plan to raise taxes following the October 2011 election. There's absolutely no doubt when you look at—*[interjection]* If you have a point of order, bring it forward.

But in any event, the—they do have a plan to increase taxes. There's no possible way that they wouldn't have that plan, and I'll just lay it out for you, Mr. Speaker. What we've seen in the budget was increased expenses going forward for the next three years projected to be—expenditures projected to increase 5 per cent annually for each of the next three years.

What we see, though, in the economy is that—and knowing what's happening federally, and I think the

government knows this—that there's not going to be any increase in transfer payments. Transfer payments are going to remain flat over the next three years, and it's even projected to be so in the budget.

But also—what we also know, Mr. Speaker, is that revenue is going to be flat. I don't think there's anyone out there that believes that revenue to the government will increase by 5 or 10 per cent over the next three years. In fact, I think the government doesn't believe that, and the budget indicates that revenue will be flat over the next three years.

So when you have a stable amount of money, whether it's \$10 billion, or whatever, and every year expenditures go up by 5 per cent and you also have a stable amount of revenue coming in and you have a government that predicts that within the next three or four years we'll return to balanced budgets, what that means is that there's—it's got to come from somewhere, and it certainly isn't going to come from increased transfer payments. It's not going to come from things like extra revenue coming into the province during a recession, yet the expenditures are rising and a prediction that there's going to be balanced budgets within the next three years.

Well, it's got to come from somewhere. The only way that government can do that, to balance the budget therefore, would be to increase taxes. So it's not—and it can't be a small increase either. It's got to be a large increase in taxes, perhaps an increase to the provincial sales tax. I hope not, Mr. Speaker. It could be perhaps even a harmonized sales tax with the federal government.

We won't stand for that. If we're in government, we would not increase taxes and we would not also provide a new HST to the province. We know that's wrong, and there are other ways of dealing with it. We are committed to maintaining front-line services, and we are definitely in favour of that to make sure that the services are delivered to the people who elect us.

It's a failure as well that Manitoba has not improved its competitive position by seeking entry into the New West Partnership, Mr. Speaker. There's a failure as well by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in terms of his interference in Manitoba Hydro. Make no mistake about it, I remember at committee a number of years ago when Bob Brennan was testifying at Hydro committee, he was asked point blank, what's the preferred route of the experts at Manitoba Hydro? And the answer was—the answer was—the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Those were his

answers. It's in *Hansard*. It's still there today, east side of Lake Winnipeg.

So what caused him to change his mind, Mr. Speaker? Well, it's political interference. The government directed Manitoba Hydro to go to the west side. They forced them to take Bipole III down the west side against the advice of all the experts in Manitoba Hydro, and that's what's wrong. There shouldn't be political interference in a Crown corporation, especially a Crown corporation that has specialized expertise within it. They ought to know what's in the best interests of Manitoba Hydro.

This government has wasted money on bloated health-care bureaucracy and boardrooms at the expense of front-line care, Mr. Speaker. The bureaucracy, the cost of administration of our health authorities has skyrocketed over the years and all under this NDP.

We've had a shortage as well of personal care home beds in Manitoba, which is a direct result of the government's failure to plan for the needs of our seniors, and I speak from experience in this, Mr. Speaker. We have a personal care home in Lac du Bonnet that has—that I've been told, and the minister has said, has told the community, that is a priority. We're going to fast-track it, and we know that there's a need within the community for more personal care home beds. Pine Falls, the same thing. Powerview-Pine Falls personal care home as well, too small. There are many, many seniors within—from Lac du Bonnet and Powerview-Pine Falls that can't get into their personal care home and, instead, where do they go? They move away from the community, away from their family and their friends, away from their supports, and they're moving to Winnipeg where there may be more space. They're moving perhaps to Beausejour where there is more space and taking up beds there as well and creating a shortage of beds within Beausejour as well.

*(16:50)

So that's what's happening and we have to treat our seniors better, and the way to do it in my view is to put the personal care home beds where they're needed the most. There has to—and I'm glad to see that in Winkler that the government at least announced that they're going to build a new personal care home. Whether that's going to come forward, I don't know. Whether it's going to happen, I'm not sure. We've heard lots of promises from this government in the past and lots of promises that were never delivered, such as the hallway medicine

promise in 1999. We heard all kinds of other promises by this government and there's been very little action on lots of those files.

It seems as well and, you know, in speaking to constituents I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that many of my constituents are not happy with this government's policies that are really neglecting and penalizing rural Manitoba and rural communities. I can tell you that 15–10 to 15 years ago, as a lawyer practising in Beausejour at that time, as I have for the last 30 years, that in fact the cost of subdivisions, as an example, it—there's probably only 10 per cent of it—of what it is today. And that makes a huge difference to communities in terms of whether or not developers are willing to risk their money to actually create more economic development within their community. The cost of services—servicing a lot 15 years ago was about \$2,000 a lot; today, that same lot costs almost \$30,000 to develop due to the extra costs that this government has added—to a great extent, that it has added over the years.

And that's affecting our rural communities. We're finding in some of our communities no one is willing to create any building lots to allow expansion of homes. And I think what we're going to find is that the municipalities and the towns themselves may have to do that development to create some growth within the community. And growth is essential, Mr. Speaker. It's essential with all rural communities and without growth, there's very little progress; there's very little expansion of services for people within those communities. And what do they do? They move to other communities, larger communities, Winnipeg, Steinbach or Selkirk or other areas that have more services and more facilities.

There's a chaos in Manitoba's health—child welfare system, Mr. Speaker. Isn't—almost a day never goes by without hearing another disaster in that system. And they've had 11 years to correct that problem, but they—it just keeps going on and on and on, and who's hurting because of that? The children who are hurt. And something has to be done to deal with that issue.

It's a tired, desperate, weak government, Mr. Speaker. There's a—even in terms of management of different issues, and a case comes to mind is the new stadium—start digging the hole before the plans are finalized and before the costs are even known and before even knowing who is going to pay for it. I mean, nobody in business does business that way. I mean, nobody starts digging a hole before they even

know what the plan looks like, before the plan is finalized. No one starts digging a hole before they determine what the costs are. Affordability is a big issue. The reality is that taxpayers are going to be on the hook. Manitobans are going to be on the hook for all of those costs and, from one day to the next, we don't seem to know what is going on with the stadium. It's unbelievable in terms of the way this file was handled.

Crocus Fund—handled by the same individual who is also handling the stadium file. Millions of dollars of losses occurred over a number of years, and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) told Cabinet—at that time, he was, of course, the Finance minister—but the Premier now, who was the Finance minister at that time, told Cabinet a few years before those losses and before Crocus collapsed, that it was falling apart. He knew it. He even put it in a memo to the rest of Cabinet, but he kept it secret, Mr. Speaker, and the next two budgets following that meeting in Cabinet, he said Crocus was strong. It's right in the budget: Crocus was strong. He knew otherwise, but he wanted to assure Manitobans to continue to invest in Crocus at a time when he knew it was perhaps on the verge of collapse. He knew that. It's documented proof. We even have the memo. It was tabled here in this House.

And then following that for two more budgets, he said Crocus was strong. In the meantime, thousands of Manitobans looked at the budget—they looked at the budget. They didn't look at the memo because it was kept secretive. They looked at the budget and the Premier says, Crocus is strong; perhaps we'll put—sink some of our retirement funds, our RRSPs, into that fund. Thousands of Manitobans likely put money into it after that and they lost millions of dollars in the meantime.

I'd like to know, it would be interesting to know—but, of course, the Premier would never admit or he would never say anything—I would like to know whether or not the Premier himself put money in, after he gave that memo or provided that briefing to Cabinet. I would doubt whether he did so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he would have touched that investment.

The speech, though, Mr. Speaker, contains good ideas offered by members of the opposition. Sometimes they tend to—in fact, most time—in fact, all the time, if we have a good idea they'll snatch it up and claim it as their own. And I just point to a number of bills that were introduced by the member

from Steinbach. They saw it was a good idea, the public thought it was a good idea and the printing presses were going the next session and ensured that the same bill, pretty much word for word, gets introduced not by a member of the opposition—they'll never give credit to a member of the opposition for that—but by a member of government.

This speech also fails to acknowledge what the government's failures are, 11-year track record of failure by this government to keep other promises. They promised to end hallway medicine. They also failed to mention that the promises contained in this speech are unlikely to be kept. Hallway medicine is the icon of promises, Mr. Speaker, that—on which the—this NDP government ran an election in 1999 promising to end it, and they continued to press that during the election. And I believe—it was a close election and I believe had—people understood that it's likely not going to be ended for six months and \$15 million. They wouldn't be—it wouldn't have been in government.

Secondly, balanced budget legislation, Mr. Speaker, they promised to keep balanced budget legislation, and Premier Doer, at the time, in 1999, campaigned that he would keep balanced budget legislation. He said he would keep all the good ideas by government and promised Manitobans that he would keep that legislation. And we all know what happened there. Whenever the government got into trouble financially, they knew they were into trouble, well, what was the first thing they did? They went to Manitoba Hydro and forced a \$203-million dividend payment. And, get this, the Premier said it was out of the retained earnings account. Well, anyone who knows anything about accounting knows the retained earnings account is not a bank account. It doesn't have money in it; that's the reality. And what Manitoba Hydro had to do at the time was, of course, borrow more money to give the government \$203 million. A retained earnings account is really an accounting entry. It's got nothing to do with having \$203 million in an account. That's the reality. But, of course, the Premier wasn't interested in ensuring that Manitobans knew that. It sounded good, politically it sounded good, and he was able to sell it, obviously, to the public. But that's not what happened. But he also promised, as I said, to keep balanced budget legislation, and that promise wasn't fulfilled either.

What we found is that every time they were short of money they'd change the legislation, and then they changed the legislation three times to make

sure that they could comply. And why did they do that, Mr. Speaker? They did it so that they could protect their salaries. That's all the—that's the only reason why they did it. If they'd admitted they were wrong, if they had admitted that they mismanaged the finances of this Province, took that pay cut, I think Manitobans would have respected them more for that. But, instead, what they opted to do is introduce legislation and use the majority that they have here in this House to actually pass the legislation.

It's going to require a new government to deliver positive results, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Ten seconds.

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to

welcome you to the House. I know that your wonderful knowledge and our—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When the honourable—
[interjection]

Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have 30 minutes remaining.

The hour now being 5—

An Honourable Member: 30?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: How did you get 30?

Mr. Speaker: Well, 29 and a half, if you want to be technical.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

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