

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
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.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 24, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Provincial Road 313

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition. The background of this petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 313 to the east of Provincial Road 315 is the only road connecting Pointe du Bois with Lac du Bonnet to the west.

The 19 kilometres of Provincial Road 313 to the east of Provincial Road 315 is in very poor condition, has narrow shoulders and winds among granite outcroppings and through swamp, creating very dangerous and very treacherous conditions for residents who live in Pointe du Bois, for Hydro employees and others who work in Pointe du Bois, and for visitors and tourists who frequent the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services consider rebuilding and reconstructing the 19 kilometres of Provincial Road 313 east of Provincial Road 315 to Pointe du Bois at the earliest opportunity.

Signed by S. Stewner-Pruden, J. Duffield, Rick Armstrong and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Highway 32

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I wish to present the following petition. These are the reasons for this petition:

Rural highways are part of the mandate of the Province of Manitoba.

Under the previous commitment, the Province of Manitoba would be covering the costs of four-laning that portion of Highway 32 that runs through Winkler, Manitoba.

The Department of Transportation and Government Services has altered its position and will now undertake the project only if the City of Winkler will pay half of the total cost of construction. The provincial government's offloading of its previous commitment will cost the City of Winkler several million dollars.

The City of Winkler has now been informed that it will have to wait several years before this project could be undertaken.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider honouring the previous commitment and complete the four-laning of Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, absorbing all costs related to the construction as previously agreed.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Government Services for the construction of rural highways.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the significant and strategic importance of the completion of four-laning Highway 32 through the city of Winkler, especially as it relates to the economic growth and the development of the city of Winkler and its trading area.

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services to consider the valuable contribution of the city of Winkler and its trading area to the provincial economy and

reprioritize the four-laning of Highway 32 for the 2004 construction season.

These are submitted by Bill Unrau, Lloyd Groening, James Wall, Travis Friesen and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Co-op Program for Nursing Students

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. The background to the petition is as follows:

* (13:35)

A co-op program for nursing students at the University of Manitoba was approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors.

This program will provide the opportunity for students to apply their theoretical knowledge in the workplace through supervised work terms for which they are paid.

Students are hired by participating agencies under supervision of a workplace employee who serves as a mentor.

Students assume responsibilities suitable for their level of knowledge and expertise and will provide patients with much-needed nursing.

The co-op program will enable nursing students to acquire valuable experience by working with a seasoned mentor, become more proficient and better able to handle heavier workloads and increase their knowledge, skills and confidence.

This program will enable students to earn income to help reduce their debt load.

The Department of Health will benefit through reduced orientation costs for new graduates and an increased likelihood that new graduates will remain in the province.

Although the Honourable Dave Chomiak was unable to attend the round table held on

November 7, 2003, he graciously sent a representative who restated Mr. Chomiak's position to work with the students to reach a creative solution.

Several Canadian universities have successfully implemented nursing co-op programs. Several faculties within the University of Manitoba have such a program available to their students. Therefore, students within the Faculty of Nursing should have equal opportunity and access to a co-op program.

This program will offer students valuable experience and provide the confidence and strength they will need in the future.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly to consider supporting the proposed co-op program.

Signed by Ruth Dean, Carolyn Vogt, Marion McKay and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Walleye

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition. The background to this petition is as follows:

Fish stocks in Lake Winnipegosis began to decline in the 1960s. The walleye fishery on Lake Winnipegosis has been in serious trouble for many years.

A similar situation happened in Lake Erie, but it was handled much more effectively. In Lake Erie, a sound science-based management program was implemented and the stocks rebounded. As a result, production of walleye on Lake Erie for 1980 to 2001 averaged 182 percent of the estimated sustainable yield.

In contrast from 1980 to 2001, the average annual harvest of walleye on Lake Winnipegosis was about 14 percent of the estimated sustainable yield for the lake.

Much better management of a walleye fishery on Lake Erie shows that good management of a walleye fishery is possible.

The fishermen on Lake Winnipegosis have been deprived of an estimated 72 million of income between 1980 and 2001.

Economic models of the effects of such primary income loss usually estimate a significant multiplier effect and that may well mean a loss of several hundred million dollars in economic activity for the region.

*(13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Finance and the Auditor General to consider undertaking a thorough investigation of the provincial management of the walleye fishery on Lake Winnipegosis.

Signed by Ray J. Delaronde, George Munroe, Bruno Chartrand and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

Sales Tax Proposal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition:

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Mayor of Winnipeg is proposing a new deal which will result in new user fees and additional taxes for citizens of the city of Winnipeg.

One of these proposed changes requires the provincial government to approve an increase of the sales tax.

The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Accountability Act requires a referendum to take place before the provincial government can increase major taxes, including the retail sales tax.

The Doer government has been silent on whether they will make the necessary legislative changes required to give the City of Winnipeg additional taxing powers.

Taxpayers deserve to have a say before having any major new taxes imposed upon them.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) notify the City of Winnipeg that the provincial government will not allow an increase of the sales tax without a referendum being held as required under balanced-budget legislation.

This petition is signed by Brian Gainor, Joyce Gainor, Heather Morin and others.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our Rule 132(6), when a petition is read it is deemed to be received by the House.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), I am pleased to table the 2002-03 Annual Report for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

I am also pleased to table the 2002-03 Annual Report for Manitoba Health which includes the Annual Report of the Manitoba Health Services Insurance Plan.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Child and Family Services Authorities Act

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I have a statement for the House and I have copies.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Family Services and Housing I am extremely pleased to acknowledge the proclamation of The Child and Family Services Authorities Act.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to take this opportunity to remind our guests in the gallery there is to be no participation from our guests

and that is either through verbal or applauding. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Ms. Melnick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This legislation will strengthen the safety, security and well-being of children and families by honouring the recommendations made in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) in 1991. This act received the unanimous support of the House in August 2002. The act officially recognizes that parents, families, extended families and communities have a right and a responsibility to care for their children.

*(13:45)

This legislation makes Manitoba the first province in Canada to give First Nations and Métis people responsibility for child and family services throughout the province. This is a broad systemic change requested by a great many people who shared their views through the AJI process. After thoughtful consideration and the leadership shown by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Manitoba Métis Federation, our Government moved forward with legislation to promote greater empowerment within the child and family services system among the Aboriginal people of this province.

The Child and Family Services Authorities Act was created to ensure that the development and delivery of programs and services to First Nations and Métis people respect their values, beliefs, customs and traditional communities.

Aboriginal people who have voiced their concerns through the AJI have emphasized that any overhaul of the justice system in Manitoba must also include a re-examination of the child welfare system. They see the child welfare and justice systems as interwoven and interconnected. As they see it, the child welfare system is yet another outside institution that disrupts their lives and societies. If the views expressed by Aboriginal people are accurate, and our Government believes they are, then the restructuring of the child welfare system is a key strategy towards changing our relationship with Aboriginal peoples.

Prior to today's proclamation, Aboriginal people did not fully control their lives and destinies or the lives of their own children. This was wrong, and with this act we are addressing this injustice by returning to Aboriginal people more control over the ways their children are raised, taught and protected. This proposed legislation is born of many years of hard work, determination, compassion, foresight and shared concern for the future of Aboriginal people across our province. It reflects the vision and dedication of many people who recognized that bringing about systemic change was not easy but essential to the long-term success of Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our First Nations and Métis partners and community representatives in the public gallery.

Before I recognize the contributions of my present day colleagues, I would like to pay tribute to Len Evans, George Minaker and Muriel Smith who also share in this milestone for their work on behalf of the Aboriginal people around the province.

Now I would like to acknowledge my colleagues: the former ministers of Family Services and Housing, the honourable members from Fort Rouge and Brandon East, the honourable member from The Pas, and the former minister, the honourable member from Rupertsland, as well as the contributions of their ministerial and department staff. All staff in my Child and Family Services division and indeed in agencies across Manitoba have shown extraordinary patience and dedication through this transition as we have worked towards today's proclamation. Finally, I would like to recognize the support and contribution of the honourable member from Ste. Rose, who provided valuable insight as this bill was debated.

Mr. Speaker, for decades community leaders and social activists have worked tirelessly to develop proposed amendments to the system. Though enacted in good faith, those changes no longer meet the needs of our province's original peoples. The Child and Family Services Authorities Act builds on a commitment Manitoba made to the First Nations people in the early 1980s.

This act also includes child welfare services to the Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Family Services and Housing, I am proud to formally acknowledge the proclamation of The Child and Family Services Authorities Act. We believe it will introduce the systemic change that will best serve the needs of First Nations and Métis people across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the act establishes four child and family services authorities that will be responsible for the delivery of child and family services throughout the province. Three of these authorities will be controlled and operated by First Nations and Métis people and will control the design and delivery of these services to their community members. The fourth authority will serve all other Manitobans. In partnership with the authorities, the provincial government will continue to oversee the entire system and hold responsibility for legislation and setting standards and compliance for the new authorities. The Family Services minister also retains the power to take action if the health and safety of any child or family is threatened.

The urgency for effective change to the current child and family services system and the cooperation of many interested and concerned Manitobans resulted in the formation of this act. Together we have created legislation that will help ensure Aboriginal children and families have the opportunity to thrive in their own culture, language and traditions, a tremendous investment in the future of our province. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for the ministerial statement presented today. It certainly is a day of a milestone in this province. Providing Métis and Aboriginal people with the ability to manage their own family services is truly a milestone, acknowledged today by the presence of so many people here and celebrated today by so many people here at the proclamation of the act.

*(13:50)

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all the agencies that are involved in this initiative for the hard work that has taken a significant amount of time

to bring this day here, overseeing the placement and well-being of our Aboriginal and Métis children in this province.

The legislation, as the minister indicated, does make Manitoba the first province in Canada to give First Nations and Métis people responsibility for child and family services throughout the province, and this is a broad systemic change requested by a great many people who shared their views throughout the AJI process.

There was a lot of work, a lot of vision, a lot of passion put into this effort, I am sure by the many, many people involved in making this day come true.

The Child and Family Services Authorities Act was created to ensure that the development and delivery of programs and services to First Nations and Métis people respect their values, their beliefs, their customs and their traditional communities.

The Aboriginal and Métis people have worked very hard, feeling that the restructuring of the child welfare system is a key strategy towards changing relationships in this province, and today as I have indicated, Mr. Speaker, is truly a significant milestone for all of us in Manitoba.

This proposed legislation was born of years of hard work, determination, compassion, foresight and shared concerns for the future of Aboriginal people across the province. It does reflect vision and dedication of many people because changes like this do not come about easily, but many feel it is essential to the long-term success of Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, our caucus has been very supportive of this legislation and the intent behind it. I do have to indicate though I do have some disappointment with the Doer government that last fall when front-line social workers in our system were expressing concerns at that time with their views that children were falling through the cracks and we and they were asking for a comprehensive review of Winnipeg Child and Family Services, I am disappointed that at that time the Premier or the minister did not feel it prudent to investigate those challenges.

Our concern with that was that some of those challenges and problems that are inherent in the system are going to be transferred to the new agencies. I think that disadvantages the new agencies right from the beginning and that does not give them all of the positive abilities to move forward and, in fact, they could be inheriting some serious challenges in the system. I think the Doer government could have prevented that a year ago by doing as a lot of front-line social workers requested and that is deal with the current problems in the system right now. Do not transfer those problems on the new agencies. That is just not fair.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think this legislation as the minister did indicate, it was created and it will ensure that Aboriginal children and families do have the opportunity to thrive in their own culture, their own language and their own traditions. It is a tremendous investment in the future of our province.

Meegwetch.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River Heights, if you are rising to respond to the ministerial statement, you will need to seek leave.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I am asking for leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 5—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 5, The

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claimant Advisers); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (conseillers des demandeurs), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

*(13:55)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this Bill 5 provides for the establishment of an adviser office to assist claimants in the appeal of a decision of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation with respect to a bodily injury claim.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 200—The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended)

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), that Bill 200, The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act (Local Government Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, this bill gives municipalities the power to pass by-laws that prohibit or regulate businesses carried on by members or associates of a criminal organization if the business is used to advance the interests of the criminal organization.

The bill also allows municipalities to pass zoning by-laws to deal with places used as residences or meeting places for members of a criminal organization.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us Mr. Harry Enns, who is the former Member for Lakeside.

Also in the public gallery from Shore Elementary School we have 23 Grade 5 students

under the direction of Mrs. Sandy Rosenberg. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Also in the public gallery we have from St. Paul's Collegiate 16 Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Earl. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today David Chartrand, who is the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation; Grand Chief Sydney Garrioch, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak—if that was in Inuktitut I would have done a lot better, so I apologize for that—Grand Chief Dennis White Bird, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs; Elva McCorrister, executive director of the Southern Chiefs Office; Rosemarie McPherson, spokesperson for the Métis Women of Manitoba, Manitoba Métis Federation; and Judy Mayer, vice-president of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

Also in the Speaker's Gallery we have Chief Larry Soldier of Swan Lake First Nation, and Nelson James from Rouseau River and Bobbi Pampana of Sioux Valley Dakota Nation.

Also present in the public gallery are representatives of the First Nations and Métis communities across Manitoba, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

City of Winnipeg Revenue/Tax Proposal

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, after we launched our petition campaign in support of a referendum being held before taxes are raised in the province, the Premier stuck to his standard line, he "was not elected to raise taxes."

*(14:00)

Well, he also was not elected to do things like rob Hydro blind, force school divisions to amalgamate or start closing rural hospitals. So Manitobans know all too well how reliable this Premier's word is. He has a credibility gap.

While the Premier says he was not elected to raise taxes, will he now admit that he also was not elected to give the mayor new powers to increase taxes?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the interesting discussion last Friday was of course the reminder to people in Manitoba after members opposite feigned interest on the property tax side, a reminder to the people of Manitoba that the largest increases in the property taxes took place in the 1990s when members opposite, without any regard to the citizens of Winnipeg, systematically reduced the property tax credit that was subtracted from your taxes, adding \$75 a year to every tax bill in Manitoba and \$75 a year to the people of Winnipeg.

The members opposite also forgot to tell the people of Manitoba that their pattern on funding education was minus 2 percent after an election, minus 2 the second year after an election, zero one year before the election, and plus 2 the year of the election campaign, resulting in a cumulative impact of 68% increase on the education portions of property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we said on Friday, the minister said it on Friday, we will say it again. We do not have to waste money on a referendum, because we are not elected to raise the taxes indicated by the member opposite. We are not raising the sales tax.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I remind the First Minister that we campaigned hard in the last election to eliminate the education tax off residential property and farmland, something that is the right thing to do and he should do it today.

The fact remains that this Premier did not tell Manitobans during the last election that it was not his plan either to give the mayor new powers to raise new taxes. It is something Manitobans want to know, what position the Premier takes on this. It is shameful that with Manitoba

again being named the child poverty capital of Canada that this Premier continues to be silent on the mayor's new tax increase deal that is going to hit the working poor the hardest.

Will the Premier stand up for our kids, the ones that are most in need and commit today that before granting the mayor any new powers to increase their parents' taxes and take needed money out of their pockets that he will first give all Winnipeggers their say on a matter through a binding referendum?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, there was no referendum in this province for an irreversible decision to sell the phone company, which has shafted all Manitobans since it has been sold. Not one vote. There was no referendum in this province when members opposite spread the sales tax over many items and also reduced \$75 out of the Manitoba education property tax. That increased the taxes for low-income people more so than any other group in society. Obviously that \$75 was worth a lot more in the inner city of Winnipeg or in some of our communities across Manitoba than taking that money away from somebody in Tuxedo. We need no lectures from members opposite who clawed back the child benefit. We have returned that money to low-income families with four budgets and, in 2004, that clawback will be over that they initiated some seven years ago.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, but with that ranting and raving by the Premier, it sounds like he is trying to prepare the public for an increase in the sales tax.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members when a Speaker stands that all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I do not know about members, but I am eager to hear the question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I knew you would be.

Since legislation will be required to grant any new taxing authority to the City of Winnipeg, the Premier and his Government will be

directly responsible and have to be held accountable for any tax increases. Will the Premier today stand up for the taxpayers, for the hardworking men and women, for seniors and for the disabled and say that sales tax increases are not on, period? Will he say no to legislation that will enable the City of Winnipeg to raise the sales tax?

Mr. Doer: We said no to the increase in sales tax. We reiterated the position that we did not get elected to raise taxes. We have a referendum, it is called the provincial election. People in Winnipeg and in other communities across Manitoba endorse our straight-ahead approach on trying to reduce property taxes and telling people where we are going to get the money. I recall with members opposite that one day they would get it out of phys ed, the next day they were going to get the money out of band programs, the next day they were going to get the money out of health care, the next day they were going to get a 0% increase for justice. They were going to get the money here, there, everywhere else.

I would point out though that there are public hearings taking place in Winnipeg. There is a plan on housing that is before the City Council of Brandon. There is a municipal plan that is before the people of The Pas. There are many other municipal plans across the province. There is a Capital Region report. We are not trying to practice the policies of the past where taxes were increased across all municipalities. Public money was used in some parts of the Capital Region as a subsidy from the provincial government at competition with the City of Winnipeg.

Members opposite, who raised property taxes on the education side by some 68 percent in their nine years between 1990 and 1999, we need no lectures from members opposite. We have flattened that tax with the measures we have taken. We reduced the ESL by some 27 percent. We increased the property tax credit by \$150. We have brought meaningful tax treatment in all municipalities of Manitoba, not the 68 percent on average increase we saw under the Tories.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The Premier continues to sit on the fence on this one. There is a credibility gap. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has

said he is not sure whether they are going to bring in legislation or not, but the Premier continues to say: No new taxes.

There will be a requirement for legislation for the City to have a sales tax or increase the sales tax, yes or no? A simple question: Will the Premier allow, through legislation, increases to sales tax?

Mr. Doer: The proposed rate increase from 7 percent to 8 percent in the province we have said no to. The idea that maybe the cities and municipalities could get a portion of the GST tax back, we have not closed any doors. Members opposite would know from the federal tax. I do not know exactly. The members opposite would know because they brought the GST into Canada through their national party.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members there are only 40 minutes for Question Period. We would like to try and get as many questions in as possible. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members once again.

Mr. Doer: I appear to have hit a sensitive spot. I apologize, but I will try to do it again.

There is another example, and I think it is worthy of the debate that is taking place in Winnipeg and other debates that are taking place in other municipalities across this province. We should not have Perimeter-vision about various proposals coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, for example, the fact that we raise our \$165 million of GST tax, it is gathered and sent to Ottawa and less than 4 percent is returned to the provinces, to the municipalities, I think is instructive as part of the debate. We believe all the gasoline tax we collect is returned and is accountable. We are going to bring it and make it even more accountable to the users.

We believe the users pay \$165 million in tax to Ottawa with very little coming back. That is a useful part of this debate, unlike members opposite who told us to go further on red-light cameras. Remember their advice there. They seem to

change their mind on powers for the mayor depending on the issue.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The Premier is all over the map and he has not answered the question.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier does stand by his word that he was not elected to raise taxes and he commits his word that he will not indeed give authority to any other level of government to raise the sales tax, will he stand beside the many, many constituents in our mutual River East constituency who have signed the referendum not wanting taxes? Will he stand up as a proud resident of River East and sign the referendum?

*(14:10)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I will stand with the member opposite and all four New Democratic members in northeast Winnipeg to continually work—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River East, on a point of order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I do know there was a referendum in River East during the last election campaign. Despite the fact that several members of the New Democratic Party live in River East constituency, the people of River East still chose to ensure that government was held accountable.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before ruling on the point of order, I would just like to remind all honourable members that a point of order should be to point out to the Speaker a departure of the rules or practices of our Manitoba practice and not to be used for a debate.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River East, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I have already stated that we are not going to raise the provincial sales

tax from 7 percent to 8 percent. We do not need a referendum to do that. We have already stated that a number of times, and if the members opposite choose not to listen for their own political purposes, that is, I think, a real unfortunate factor. I think it does a disservice to democracy, but obviously they are so desperate to try to find an issue that they have to create one. We are after a real debate.

Mr. Speaker, one of the proposals that Mr. Martin has made—the new Prime Minister, not elect, but Prime Minister designate, is to return some more gas tax money, potentially. He made that in a speech in Hamilton last year. He made it again in Winnipeg during the middle of our election. We are passing a law. We are bringing forward a law to make it a legal requirement that if there are greater revenues from Ottawa returned to the users they will go directly for infrastructure renewal, for new infrastructure. It will go directly to the municipalities. I think that is a legislative service to the people of this province. I think it is a responsible thing to do in the middle of an irresponsible question.

Hells Angels Associates Trial Stay of Proceedings

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Hells Angels are making a mockery of the Doer government's justice system, and there is a very real possibility that five accused members charged with a number of serious offences, including conspiracy to commit murder and extortion, could walk free this week due to the Premier's inaction.

What we believe the Doer government should have first determined, if these members of a multi-million-dollar criminal organization were even eligible for legal aid, they failed to do that and now we are in a situation that, if lawyers are not in place by Wednesday, a stay of proceedings is possible.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier please advise the House if lawyers have been found to ensure the case proceeds and that these accused do not walk?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, leadership is not about fearmongering for partisan purposes. It is not about creating hysteria. It is

about sure-footed action. That is the action that we are committed to and we are delivering. I find it passing strange that the Opposition would now be interested in the Hells Angels. It was under their watch when the Hells Angels came into Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, that is shameful, and I think the Doer government should say that directly to those victims. The Hells Angels we know were established under this Premier's watch, and since then the Premier has done nothing to run them out of the province.

The Premier knows that these five Hells Angels were given copies of witnesses' statements, videotapes and some 250 000 wire taps. As a result of the Doer government's incompetence, they have compromised the safety and security of the victims, the witnesses and their families.

The deadline for a possible stay of proceedings is drawing dangerously close. Manitobans are now, more than ever, fearing for the safety of themselves and their families because these five accused may be free in 48 hours, Mr. Speaker. How many times must an innocent victim be punished under the Doer government? What assurances can the Premier give the victims and their families that this trial will proceed and that these five Hells Angels will not walk away without justice being served?

Mr. Mackintosh: If the Conservative Party was interested in victims, as they say today they are, why did they slash or eliminate 16 victim compensation benefits when they were in office?

Mr. Speaker, in the new book by Julian Sher; it is over at the bookstore, you probably can get it through the Legislative Library, he says: and in Manitoba the Angels were blessed. Politicians had done little to put up roadblocks against the incursions the bikers had been making in the province throughout the 1990s. Shame on them.

Gang Activity Reduction Strategy

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Last November the Justice Minister passed The Civil

Remedies Against Organized Crime Act and in the process he touted that legislation as groundbreaking legislation against gangs and criminal organizations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, after a full year, all we see is 12 charges, not convictions, but 12 charges for wearing the wrong clothing in bars. Is this the tough legislation that the minister believes will take on the gangs and the criminal organizations in this province?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): And Julian Sher in his book goes on to say, Mr. Speaker—

To the credit of this Government we moved quickly with legislation, we moved quickly with organizational changes. I think Manitobans have had enough from members opposite who are prepared to denigrate and undermine the hard work of our Crown prosecutors and our police. The member knows full well that that legislation is triggered by complaints and court applications by the police.

Mr. Hawranik: The only time this minister moves quickly is toward a camera and another useless press conference.

Bill 200 Minister's Support

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): A year has passed, and because this minister does not have the courage to do his duty by standing up to the gangs and the criminal organizations in this province, today we introduced for first reading a private member's bill, The Criminal Organizations Deterrence Act.

Mr. Speaker, we want the minister to sit up and take notice and see how gangs and criminals and criminal organizations can be run out of town. Will this minister do the right thing and exceed the boundary of petty politics and support this legislation or will he oppose this legislation simply because it was not his idea?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that legislation just refers to municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I also note the *Toronto Star* from January 25 saying the following: The Manitoba Angels have struggled to hold their membership at 12, losing manpower to prison, cocaine addiction and deportation. In contrast, the Ontario Angels have shot up from 168 members in December 2000 to about 270 members today. Ontario accounts for almost half the gang membership.

Mr. Speaker, the *Toronto Star* goes on to note that Manitoba has the toughest anti-gang legislation in this country. We are not done yet.

*(14:20)

Education System Funding Levels

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Last week in the Throne Speech, it was evident that this Government has absolutely no plan to improve upon the quality of education for children in our province.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Government has decreased the level of provincial funding from 60.9 percent when they took office in 1999 to 56.7 percent, the lowest it has ever been in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the new Minister of Education: Why is his Government, once again, offloading the responsibility for the education system in our province onto the taxpayers and into the local community?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): As someone who has spent 13 years in the classroom, I was painfully familiar with the actions of members opposite in terms of funding where we saw an increase in the funding on the shoulders of the local school boards, an increase of 68 percent. We have now been funding education at historic levels and are continuing to do so.

Mrs. Stefanson: Grade 3 assessment tests over the past two years have shown some shocking results in regard to Grade 3 students not meeting acceptable standards in a number of basic areas of education. Sixty-three percent of Grade 3 students did not meet expectations in subtraction

facts to 10. Forty-eight percent of Grade 3 students did not meet expectations in extending and describing mathematical patterns. And the list goes on. How can this Government justify this funding decrease when our kids are not meeting expectations in basic areas of education in our province?

Mr. Bjornson: With respect to the Grade 3 assessment, this is a process that we have been engaged in with the teachers, consulting with the teachers on an ongoing basis, and we have since moved the requirement for the assessment to take place at the beginning of the year to bridge the gaps that might be evident through the diagnostic assessment that we are pursuing. Assessment is a means of improving outcome for students. We are committed to working with our teachers on an ongoing basis, and we are going to continue to work with the teachers and the students for what is best for our students. Thank you.

Mrs. Stefanson: Clearly, the education of our young people is not a priority for this Government, and the Premier's Grade 3 guarantee was nothing more in the election campaign than a sham. Our young people are not meeting expectations in a number of basic areas as shown in their own assessments. Shame on them. I ask the minister: When will his Government make the quality of our education system a priority in this province?

Mr. Bjornson: Quality of education has indeed been a very high priority for this Government, and we have shown that in programs that extend beyond the public school system. Start with the Healthy Child Initiative and carry on to post-secondary initiatives that deal with making post-secondary education affordable for Manitoba students. This is something that starts with the first of its kind of program to allow for prenatal care and goes all the way through to our support for post-secondary. We are committed to life-long learning. We are committed to improving the quality of education in Manitoba and we have been working hard to do so. We will continue to work hard to do so.

Livestock Industry Slaughter Assistance Program

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the federal Agriculture

Minister announced a slaughter assistance program with the intention to help livestock producers deal with the mature animals on their farms stricken by BSE. This program is very similar to earlier ones giving virtually no financial benefit to Manitoba producers of livestock in this province. Has the minister this time negotiated a guarantee that our share of the 10 percent to 12 percent of that \$120 million federal program will end up with the disaster-stricken Manitoba farmers?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): The situation with BSE in this province has certainly been one that our Government has put a lot of attention to, and it was the Province of Manitoba that asked the federal government since early August to bring into play a cull-cow program. The federal government has now put that program in place, and I can tell the member that one of the issues that Manitoba has raised with the federal government is that we have assurances that Manitobans will have equitable access to slaughter.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the member will get on board with Manitoba farmers who are trying to create a slaughter facility in this province so that equitable access to market will not be the kind of issue that it is now. If we have a slaughter facility in this province to deal with cull cows, we will not have the concerns about getting the product to slaughter facilities in other provinces.

Mr. Maguire: Manitoba producers' skepticism arises from the fact that they have been told falsely that this Government has provided \$180 million to those farmers decimated by the BSE issue. Yet few have seen any significant funding. The Throne Speech itself stated that only a fraction of these funds have reached the farmers' hands, by the Government's own admission.

Will the minister assure Manitoba producers that they will receive their fair share of this program to help feed these large herds of cattle that will be existing on farms this winter because of the BSE issue?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, when we announced our programs we said there was up to \$180 million available for support for the

livestock industry. The members opposite were critical of our loan program. They said it would not work. I can tell you over 900 producers have taken out the loan. Even though the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) recommended that we put in place a low-interest loan program, they then flipped and wanted a cash advance.

Mr. Speaker, our programs are working. There is cash flowing. Whether it be through the low-interest loan program, whether it be through the drought assistance or through the slaughter program, the number of animals that are slaughtered in this province is close to 80 000, and we will continue to work with our producers.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, in reference to an earlier question, the Premier (Mr. Doer) only has to turn to his Minister of Agriculture to find the biggest disaster ever to hit the livestock industry in this province, when her assurances provide false security for Manitoba farmers as these farmers have been stiffed by this Government before.

Examples: three-month feed programs that have been cut back to two months, a slaughter program changed to a feed program, a transportation program with no significant feed program.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that last Friday's program is the best she can get for a special deal for signing on to the federal Agriculture Policy Framework?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure about how the Opposition works because they have no results, but I can tell you this Government works very closely with the industry.

It was the Manitoba Cattle Producers, who represent the cattle industry, who came to us and said, change the slaughter program to the feed program. It was the Manitoba Cattle Producers who also said, we need to extend the slaughter program and our Government did it.

It was our Government that called on the federal government to put in place a cull-cow program. They have a program in place and we will review that program with the industry. That is what we are doing.

Cataract Surgery Out-of-Province Patients

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, many in Manitoba are wondering why the present NDP government is continuing discredited Tory policies, for example, running a province so that we continue to be the child poverty capital of Canada.

*(14:30)

My question to the Premier (Mr. Doer) is related. Why does the Government have Manitobans with cataracts wait at the back of the line? Why should the wife of Mr. Johns, who is here in the gallery in the Legislature, go to the doctor and be told: If you were from Ontario with an Ontario health card we would get you in right away, but because you are a Manitoban you will have to wait six to eight months?

The doctor also told him that this policy was introduced under the Tories and has not been changed under the NDP.

When is the Government going to end this discriminatory Tory policy which puts Manitobans last?

Hon. Tim Sale (Acting Minister of Health): It was this Government that reduced the waiting list for cataract surgery from two years to the six months the member is referencing.

We have reduced waiting lists for cancer, Mr. Speaker. We have made health more accessible to Manitobans with new MRIs in Brandon. With the improvement of our diagnostic materials, our waiting lists in critical areas are going down. We are proud of that.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister pointedly avoided the question.

The minister may protest but the reality is that here is Mrs. Johns. She has severe cataracts. She cannot watch TV, she cannot read books. She has to wait six to eight months when somebody from Ontario can walk up and get it right away here in Manitoba.

I would suggest to the Government that this is not acceptable. I would ask: When is the

Government going to get rid of discredited Tory policies and start treating seniors promptly and with respect?

Mr. Sale: It is always instructive when a member rises who was a member of a federal cabinet which made the biggest single cut to Canada's health care system ever in history and he berates governments that have made the single biggest improvement in our health care system in Manitoba's history. It is very instructive, and I am sure the viewers will understand the irony of the question. The particulars of this specific case are now, I understand, before the department for their consideration, and I understand that the department is reviewing the issue as we speak.

Trans-Canada Highway Speed Limit

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the minister of highways. In Alberta on the No. 1 highway, people are entitled to travel 110 kilometres per hour. In fact, Saskatchewan now has upgraded, and they have indicated that they also can have their citizens travel 110 kilometres an hour on the No. 1 highway. My question is a fairly simple one for a government that has a tough time taking any kind of action. We see that in the Throne Speech. It is a fairly simple question. Is this Government prepared to increase our speed limits from 100 to 110 on the No. 1 highway and possibly even do it before the end of the year?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Excuse me, the simple answer to the question is no. This member from Inkster, if he is so concerned about safety, he would certainly be more responsible with regard to his questions.

Traffic Lights Winkler, Manitoba

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): My question is to the new minister of highways. On Saturday, November 22, 2003, the minister said on Radio Southern Manitoba, and I quote, "I really get somewhat annoyed by my colleagues across the floor when they raise issues like referring to roads in southern Manitoba because we have

done so many things, whether it is, you know, lights in Winkler." Could the minister please inform this House and my constituents which lights his Government has installed in the city of Winkler, the fastest growing community in southern Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, there is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lemieux: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to attempt to answer that question. I can say that our Government throughout our first mandate and also going into this mandate has taken care of highways and had a lot of energy towards looking at all parts of the province, not just a few selected constituencies but northern Manitoba, western Manitoba, eastern Manitoba and southern Manitoba with the new twinning of Highway 59.

Mr. Dyck: This minister has no idea what he is talking about. Seeing that he has misled Manitobans and the citizens of Winkler, is he prepared to do the right thing and do another interview and inform the community that indeed his statements have misled them?

Mr. Lemieux: We have increased the capital budget by about 16 percent over what the previous government did. For the first time, historic numbers with regard to finance have been put towards highways and highway infrastructure in this province and, as others have commented on with regard to the monies gained through gas taxes, we dedicate every cent towards highway infrastructure and so on. We are going to be entering into this Legislature a new law that will also certainly direct finances towards highway infrastructure.

So, Mr. Speaker, with regard to overall highway infrastructure, the previous colleagues, the MLA for Thompson, the MLA from Brandon West, throughout all of our Government, we have looked at increasing finances and the amount of money towards highway infrastructure. We are very proud of our record.

Mr. Dyck: Mr. Speaker, obviously the lights have not gone on. I would like this minister to please inform this House and my citizens which lights he is referring to in his interview on Radio Southern Manitoba. Please, we would like to know.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have certainly paved the Winkler main street and we have done a lot of work in southern Manitoba, which members opposite do not seem to want to acknowledge. That is fair, because I think the people of Manitoba also see the work that is being done throughout the province, not just in certain particular constituencies, if I might add.

Northern Manitoba, western Manitoba, eastern Manitoba, southern Manitoba have gained with regard to all the finances and the dollars we have put towards highway infrastructure. We are very proud of our record, increasing the amount of capital infrastructure by 16 percent, far greater than what the members opposite did during the 1990s.

*(14:40)

Healthy Living Ministry Budget

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the new Minister of Healthy Living publicly claims his department is the fourth largest in government. We know this Government has a penchant for expensive advertising campaigns. Can the minister tell this House what his budget is and how much he plans to spend on an advertising campaign?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be a new Minister of Healthy Living. I think not only do we have health and healthy living as part of every government, we have it throughout each department. We have it in Education, where you talk about proper nutrition and proper health care. You have it in Family Services, where you create healthy families. You have it in the Healthy Baby and Healthy Child programs, which are unique national programs that really invest in the young child. We have it in Seniors. We have it throughout our entire Government.

I am proud to be part of a government that does not put it in one small part of government

but has it as an extensive comprehensive plan through all governments. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Grand Chief Phil Fontaine

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, today I had the honour of attending the investiture into the Order of Manitoba of a prominent Manitoban, Grand Chief Larry Phillip (Phil) Fontaine. This is an opportune occasion to remind members of the Legislative Assembly about Grand Chief Phil Fontaine's dedication and commitment.

For over three decades, Phil has been an articulate and effective spokesperson for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Phil is an Anishinaabe, born on the Sagkeeng First Nation. In 1973 he became Chief of the Sagkeeng First Nation at the age of 27. As chief, he spearheaded massive improvements to the educational system on the reserve. This later became a model for other reserve communities. After two consecutive terms as chief, he took a position with the federal government as a regional director general in the Yukon.

In 1980, Mr. Speaker, he returned to Manitoba to complete a degree in political science at the University of Manitoba. After graduation he worked for the Southeast Tribal Council as a special adviser and was the deputy co-ordinator of the Native Economic Program, eventually becoming Manitoba vice-chief for the Assembly of First Nations.

In 1991, Phil was elected Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and served three consecutive terms in that role. In that position he was involved in the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord, in the development of the Manitoba Framework Agreement Initiative and in the signing of an employment equity agreement with 39 federal agencies.

Phil became Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in 1997, succeeding Ovide Mcredi, a position he held for three years.

During this term he negotiated the founding and funding of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

In 2002, Phil was appointed as the Chief Commissioner of the Indian Claims Commission, an independent body responsible for land claim settlements. He resigned from this position last May to run for election as national chief. He won this election and is again national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. He continues to be commissioner of the Specific Claims Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Phil Fontaine has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada to improve their dignity, housing, education and medical care. He contributes personally, professionally and materially to every good cause.

I congratulate Mr. Fontaine on his investiture into the Order of Manitoba and for his record of effectively improving the lives of Aboriginal peoples.

Phil, we are proud of you. Meegwetch.

Spirit of Tuxedo Award

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to pay tribute to the Spirit of Tuxedo Award nominees. The Spirit of Tuxedo Award is meant to recognize those volunteers who have contributed their time and energy to make our community in Tuxedo a better place in which to live.

Nominees this year were selected by a variety of different organizations. Each of these organizations relayed to my office that their particular volunteer had gone beyond the normal call of duty and pursued with a unique passion their volunteer task at hand.

Mr. Speaker, truly our nominees' accomplishments were impressive, Mr. Speaker. On November 17, 2003, an evening reception organized by my office was held in Room 255 of the Manitoba Legislature to celebrate the nominations of Annette Bell, Kellen Blower, Izzy Elerby, Larysa Fitkowsky, Iris Maurstad, Peggy May, Lydia MacKenzie, Andrew McPherson, Jan Taylor, Dale Willson and Kevin Wirth.

Family and friends of the nominees also attended which resulted in an audience of approximately 50 people who witnessed the nominees receive a certificate and sign our Spirit of Tuxedo registry. Mr. Speaker, it was truly an honour and very enjoyable as well to meet these individuals who have contributed so much to our community of Tuxedo. Today I express again my gratitude and respect for their accomplishments. Thank you.

Concordia Hospital

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I would like to report that this year marks the 75th anniversary of Concordia Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this vibrant and well-respected institution has a proud tradition of caring for Manitobans. As part of the festivities marking its anniversary, Concordia Hospital held an Anniversary Symposium and the Canadian Mennonite Health Assembly Annual Conference this fall.

In 1927, a group of community leaders, recent Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba from Russia, met to form the Concordia Society and began discussing the development of a faith-based medical facility.

Today, as visitors enter the hospital, the core principles of the hospital remain evident as illustrated in a passage from Menno Simons that appears in the entranceway: True evangelical faith cannot be dormant. It clothes the naked. It feeds the hungry. It comforts the sorrowful. It shelters the destitute. It serves those that harm it. It binds up that which is wounded. It has become all things to all people.

The hospital began as a maternity hospital on Machray Avenue in north Winnipeg and admitted its first patient on July 29, 1928. It moved two more times in the 1930s over to Elmwood. Finally in 1974 the hospital moved to its present location on Concordia Avenue.

Throughout its history, Concordia has worked hard to focus on the changing needs of the community. This hospital has anticipated and adapted to change while maintaining quality care as their first priority.

Concordia is expanding a hip and knee joint replacement program. It will grow into a centre of excellence in this field. As well, two state-of-the-art operating rooms with modern technology are being constructed. Finally, a Centre for Research and Education continues the hospital's teaching program with surgery and anaesthesia residents.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) joins me today in congratulating the CEO at the Concordia Hospital, Henry Tessmann, the board of directors, the dedicated staff and the volunteers who have made the Concordia Hospital an outstanding centre of medical care in our community. Thank you.

Dr. Mary Pankiw

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate one of my constituents, Dr. Mary Pankiw, for the recognition she recently received from Conservatory Canada. I would like to share their tribute to her.

Conservatory Canada is proud of its students and their accomplishments. Once in awhile a story emerges that motivates and inspires us. The next time a student tells you that their life is too busy for music enrichment or they are too old to learn, this story about Mary Pankiw offers a different perspective.

On the day before Christmas, in 1968, Dr. Mary Pankiw lost her husband at the age of 46. Left with five children, the youngest being three, Mrs. Pankiw continued her education and received a Bachelor of Education degree in May 1969. You can see from the qualifications listed under her photograph that continuing her education has been paramount to her success, all the while raising a family who in themselves are each high achievers. The first Canadian-born woman to earn a PhD at Ukrainian Free University in Munich, Germany, in 1978, Mary was elected president of the Council of Women, Winnipeg, at their 109th annual general meeting in April 2003. She was profiled in *Chatelaine's* 1998 and 1999 editions of who's who of Canadian women.

What has all this to do with Conservatory Canada? At 80 years of age, Dr. Mary Pankiw

just completed the first half of the Associate Teacher's Examination in Voice with an honours mark. We congratulate her.

* (14:50)

Emergency Preparedness (Selkirk)

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the City of Selkirk for its efforts in leadership in being the first community to ensure its emergency preparedness program is updated and in fact exceeds the minimum requirements of the enhanced Emergency Measures Act. I was joined last week in Selkirk by the Minister responsible for EMO where he presented to the mayor and council a certificate of this recognition.

Mr. Speaker, we encourage all communities to continue working on their plans and be prepared to respond to emergency situations. All municipalities are to meet the new guidelines by April 2005. Programs must be approved by Manitoba EMO. Emergency programs would typically include response and recovery plans, training exercises and general awareness. The Association of Manitoba Municipalities participated in the development of the 60 basic requirements for the emergency program, approved by the EMO, the additional requirements to achieve certificate status and the compliance timeline. The new requirement will also help keep elected officials updated on the subject of emergency preparedness since programs must be reviewed and passed by councils annually.

I would like to congratulate the City of Selkirk and the city manager, Jim Fenski, for showing great leadership in an effort to improve the public safety in Manitoba. I hope that other communities will follow Selkirk's lead and ensure that Manitobans will continue to have an excellent emergency preparedness program in their communities.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume 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 Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of Manitoba. The debate is open.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): It again is an honour for me to rise in this Assembly as the Leader of the Official Opposition and respond to the Speech from the Throne.

On behalf of all Manitobans, I can understand why they would be dispirited and discouraged. It was a most perfidious attempt to reach out to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) had every opportunity to hit a home run, but instead he stood there with the bat on his shoulders. There was just no vision in this speech. In other words, our Premier managed to turn a rose into a thorn.

One of the Premier's closest friends was quoted recently as saying there is no pretentiousness as it applies to the Premier. After four years in the job and following this rather vacuous Throne Speech it is sadly becoming obvious to more and more Manitobans that this Premier has nothing to be pretentious about. His failures are mounting and his Government is now clearly showing some cracks and decay, broken promise after broken promise.

What is alarming is that no premier has ever set the bar lower as a measure of success for our province. It is unprecedented. His vision for Manitoba is limited to bigger government and the attempt of building a personal legacy. Quite frankly, he is a wind surfer out there surfing with no wind.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

When the Premier came to office, Mr. Acting Speaker, he had inherited the best macroeconomic situation in Manitoba since the mid-1970s. The hard work had all been done.

Manitobans had suffered through the recessions of the eighties and the nineties. They had endured economic hardships and cut their services and they had contributed their fair share. The only thing this Premier had to do was to keep his simple promises, provide responsible management and reward Manitobans for their contributions. In other words, the advice was do not go back on the old spending ways of the NDP.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Manitobans remember the simplest promise of them all. It was in 1999. The Premier said he would end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. Instead, since then, 11 Manitobans have died waiting for heart surgery. Waiting lists are hurting our sick and our elderly, and the nursing shortage in Manitoba has grown to over 1000 nurses.

Since this Premier was elected, not only has he not provided an effective plan to improve health care in Manitoba, he even failed to include a mere mention of the issue in the Throne Speech in 2002. The Premier likes to talk about quality of life in rural Manitoba. Mr. Acting Speaker, how can he honestly even make that reference at the same time that he is dismantling rural hospitals one brick at a time?

At a time when the performance of regional health authorities should be reviewed, there is also a great need for a more transparent and accountable health care system. It must be restructured based on existing public-private collaboration. Mr. Acting Speaker, it is interesting, public-private collaboration is something that the Doer government talks about with education and when it comes to tourism. Yet they have no courage to do the right thing for Manitoba patients and explore a public-private collaboration when it comes to health care.

This is the kind of vision, Mr. Acting Speaker, that Manitobans want to see from their Premier. They want to explore those opportunities because they are the right things to do. The Premier did not use the Throne Speech to provide direction for Manitobans in the area of health or in any other area for that matter. I must remind Manitobans that the previous four throne speeches under the Premier have only added to his failed commitments.

In last year's Throne Speech, the Premier unveiled an action strategy for economic growth that clearly has not worked, and while he promised to revitalize Winnipeg, simply he has failed.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Premier promised affordable government, but instead of providing responsible management, he has taken hundreds of millions of dollars from the rainy day fund and from Manitoba Hydro in an attempt to hide the fact that his Government is running a deficit and trying to hide it. It is deceitful, it is wrong, and he should apologize to Manitobans.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in last year's Throne Speech, this Premier promised to improve accountability in lotteries and gaming. Yet he has done nothing to achieve this and instead has focussed on increased gambling and gaming revenue.

The Premier also promised action on public safety, yet he did not follow through with his promised Safe Schools Charter or his legislation that promised to shut down businesses being operated by organized crime. It has not led to a single closure. Instead, gang activity has escalated and criminals simply experience the Doer government's revolving door on crime. They are back on the street faster that you can say the Doer government is soft on crime.

The Premier said in last year's Throne Speech that his top priority was to rebuild and improve health care. Mr. Acting Speaker, this Premier really does think he can say anything and get away with it. You do, do you not?

Mr. Acting Speaker, his Throne Speech is a history lesson. As I said earlier, highlights broken, promise after broken promise, failure after failure. The Throne Speech is a concern for all Manitobans. We all need to take a close look at all the signs and realize that the Doer government is just not listening. Nor is it acting to stop Manitobans who are leaving our province in growing numbers. People in business in our province have been signaling for some time and have now taken to outright criticism of the Doer government's efforts to get the attention of the Premier and make him realize that serious reform is required to make us more competitive.

Mr. Acting Speaker, individual businesses, small, medium and large, of the Chambers of Commerce are asking the Doer government to significantly lower taxes to help draw private investment into the province of Manitoba. A recent study by the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba says the quality of life in our province is lacklustre compared to other provinces and that it is lagging behind every other western province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, amidst these warnings of concern, the Premier displayed an arrogance that was, to say the least, embarrassing. With the audacity of only someone who thinks he knows it all, he labelled our Chambers of Commerce as "one-trick ponies" who know nothing about how to run a business. That is absolutely brazen, even for this Premier.

This Premier is an old union boss whose only experience with business is to encourage labour to work against management. As a Premier, he has taken that experience one step further. Now he is running businesses out of the province. Instead of insulting small-business people, he should be opening up our Government's resources to all small business. This Premier should be turning Manitoba into the small-business capital of Canada, a place where investment is welcome, a wealth-creating opportunity. That is what they expect from a Throne Speech.

* (15:00)

Whatever else the Premier is doing or not doing, it is abundantly clear that he has little respect for the hardworking men and women that are the backbone of our economy. The Premier has simply tuned them out.

This Throne Speech did nothing for business, nor did it address our increasingly serious economic issues.

In 2003, this Premier failed to create any new jobs, and that is his job. The Premier must lead. He must set the tone and ensure that the Government is a catalyst and a facilitator for economic development. It must set the climate to assist all sectors of business and industry so that they can create those new jobs in Manitoba.

The engine of any healthy economy is clearly job creation. That is a fact. Since that is the case, it is clear that the NDP government and this Premier have clearly run out of gas.

We did not see anything in the Throne Speech to address one of the issues that is the most important issue facing Manitoba. We did not see anything about job creation in that Throne Speech. In fact, all we heard about job creation was zilch, which is about the number of new jobs that have been created in Manitoba.

The Premier decided that he was going to dismiss alarming statistical data and says, trust me, everything is fine. Well, everything is not fine, and this Premier knows it. The bottom line is that we are not creating jobs and our job market is not in good shape. Again, I repeat, the Premier had a golden opportunity to lay out a vision for Manitobans, a vision that would include a plan for strong, sound economic growth. Instead, our Premier outlined a framework for spending more and more of Manitobans' money without any plan of how to grow the economy.

Instead of providing leadership and displaying the courage required to make tough decisions, this Premier continues to overspend in an effort to please the special interests of the Doer government while at the same time ignores Manitobans that are clearly in desperate need. It simply is a recipe for disaster. I will come back to that point in a few minutes.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the credibility gap of this Premier has widened further with a Throne Speech from a government that refuses to get tough on crime. The Hells Angels, which set up shop in December of 2000 under this Premier's watch, are taking control of our streets and preying on our kids. Crime has increased to the point that we are now the murder capital of Canada. Legal Aid is in a crisis, yet criminals who prey on our most vulnerable, our seniors and our children, are getting away with a slap on the wrist.

Rather than cut deals with criminals, this Premier had an opportunity to show a vision for a better deal for victims and a real plan to make Manitoba safer, one that would include tougher

punishment and a public-defender-style system to put an end to costly delays and unacceptable stays of proceedings.

Manitoba will never reach its economic potential. We will not retain nor will we draw workers and their families if we allow the gangs to control our streets. Again, this Premier failed miserably when it comes to safety in our communities during this Throne Speech.

If the Premier's goal in the Throne Speech was to aim lower and achieve less, we will have no argument from this side of the House. He has excited no one except for his ideologues, his party's special interest groups and membership. There is no vision inclusive to all Manitobans. The priorities are askew and incomplete.

No better example exists in the approach to responsible management between the Official Opposition and the Government. Responsible management filters its way through all issues important to all Manitobans. For instance, we know that the Doer government is planning on spending billions of dollars for known and potential Manitoba Hydro projects. These are megaprojects. There are important questions that have to be asked before they proceed.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Throne Speech provided an excellent opportunity for the Premier to present his vision for our public resource and to assure Manitobans that all initiatives will undergo the scrutiny of the Public Utilities Board. This is an important process that must be followed and cannot be ignored. The concern for all Manitobans is that this Premier has been in the media with attempts to intimidate the PUB regarding the Hydro initiatives. That is simply unacceptable. Government must be respectful of both process and responsible management. Before the Doer government leaves Manitobans with a huge tab for these projects, an analysis must be completed. Is there a guaranteed market for the energy? Is the timing right? Is the debt load manageable? What public input evaluation process will be used? That is the proper approach, a step-by-step, responsible approach.

As the leader of our party, it is my commitment to the people of Manitoba as to the way

we will manage our province's affairs. We will protect the interests of taxpayers. Many times under the Doer government, it has just been the taxpayer-be-damned approach. That is just simply wrong. It is consistent with the Premier's tax-and-spend mentality. It is certainly consistent with the out-of-control Pawley administration that he was a leading part of during the late 1980s. I guess the question always is: Who funded that Headingley report? But I will let the Premier answer that in due course.

The facts do not lie. The \$150 million taken from the rainy day fund to balance the Budget was never replenished last year. The so-called \$202-million special dividend taken from Manitoba Hydro in 2002 has placed the Crown corporation in an extremely difficult situation, especially with the low water levels this year. The draw on the rainy day fund has grown every year from \$15 million to \$60 million to \$93 million. It has simply become another way to augment program spending, which, under the Doer government, is at an all-time high. The growth in new spending estimates outpaces the growth in new revenue estimates.

While there are many other examples, it is clear that this NDP government, like the NDP governments previous, are spending Manitobans into a corner. Protection for the taxpayer is basic and fundamental to responsible management. In Manitoba the Public Utilities Board ensures the protection on major projects like the ones being contemplated by the Doer government for Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Acting Speaker, my colleagues and I on this side of the House are concerned by the attitude and demeanor of the Premier towards the Public Utilities Board. The lack of respect shown by the Premier for the board is unwarranted, but it does appear to be calculated. Manitobans should not be surprised at the lengths to which this Premier will go to drive his Hydro initiatives.

Manitobans must remember that this Premier has openly questioned the PUB process and that he has attempted to circumvent its examination of Manitoba Hydro initiatives, so that he can put them on the fast track, Mr.

Acting Speaker. This is an example of the worst kind of public management.

It follows, then, if the PUB holds firm in its desire to follow due process, that the Premier would simply disband the PUB in favour of a process over which he would have more control. He has the power, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (15:10)

The approach to economic development issues, whether it is to energy issues like Manitoba Hydro, Kyoto or ethanol or any other important issue must again be based on a responsible management approach. Whether it is feasible or not seldom enters into the equation, no thought about strategic planning, action plans or critical paths. In laymen's language, Mr. Acting Speaker, this Premier and his Government care very little about getting their ducks in a row.

For example, with Kyoto, the Premier supported the initiative before any details were known about the cost of implementation, and in typical NDP fashion, his own minister stated we must implement the Kyoto accord. Costs to taxpayers are irrelevant.

It was a buzzword that fit very nicely into their special interest framework and they were all for it, Mr. Acting Speaker. Not to be totally flippant, but the more we see of the way the Doer NDP operate, the more one realizes that it is all sizzle and no steak.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is relentless in support of his party's special interests. Outside of those interests, it is much harder to get his attention. Just ask Manitoba cattle producers and other farm families stricken by the mad cow crisis and the drought or small businesspeople throughout our province.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The BSE crisis is an example of where a special interest of this Premier is not involved. Just think, he is willing to intimidate the PUB to get his way for billions of dollars in projects, yet he will do little to help the 12 000 cattle farmers struggling through this BSE crisis.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech provided the Premier with his best opportunity to show compassion on this issue, but, again, he came up short. For months, my colleagues and I have urged and pressured the Premier to provide substantive support to the producers in the form of an interest-free cash advance, similar to the support requested by the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association.

The MCPA itself has projected that such a program would involve about a \$350-million cash advance. Since the money would be repaid upon the sale of the cattle, the only true cost to the Province would be the cost to carry the interest charges. Based on the MCPA's own numbers, even if every cattle producer took part in this program, the interest costs to government would be less than \$20 million, Mr. Speaker.

Considering that the cattle industry is worth over half a billion dollars to the Manitoba economy, it is a minimal investment to make to save that industry. I am astounded that on the six-month anniversary since this crisis began, that the Premier would not have seized the opportunity and used the Speech from the Throne to lend a helping hand to our farm families. Mr. Speaker, I can only recall sitting at a kitchen table in Souris and listening to young children say why is it that we might be able to feed the world but we cannot feed our families? It is unfair, it is uncompassionate and it is wrong-headed.

Mr. Speaker, it is the same producers who cannot pay their property taxes. It has come to the point where many of our communities, rural municipalities were forced to consider drastic measures including non-payment of their property taxes. In fact, the president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, Mr. Stuart Briese, was openly critical of what was not in the recent Throne Speech. I quote Mr. Briese: I was very disappointed. I did not hear much reference to education tax on property, and that is a huge issue with us. Education costs go up every year and as long as the Province does not fund the full increases of education, it reverts back to property, and that is unsustainable. We are holding the line on the municipal part of our budget, but 50 percent or more of our budget goes to education. It keeps going up every year,

and we cannot keep doing that. It just keeps growing and growing and growing on us, and frustrations are rising not only with municipalities but with the general public as well, said Mr. Briese.

As I said earlier, this Premier (Mr. Doer) clearly is not listening. Property taxes in Manitoba are among the highest in Canada. Middle-income Manitobans are the highest taxed west of New Brunswick. The leadership that is required in Manitoba is clear. Manitobans need a government that will tear apart the tax system, deliver a plan that is fair, simple and competitive. Most importantly, Manitobans need their Government to act now and eliminate all education taxes off residential property and farmland, reducing their property tax bill by one half.

It is the right thing to do. This Premier has the opportunity to do it, to do it on behalf of all Manitobans, and all renters can still retain their Manitoba Property Tax Credit. It cannot, however, be a short-term fix. Legislation must accompany the elimination of education taxes to prohibit any government from re-introducing those same taxes back on residential property and farmland.

The time has come when the Government of Manitoba must stand up and accept the operating costs of public education. Only two provinces continue to offload the funding of education onto the backs of property owners. It is not surprising that both those provinces are led by NDP premiers. We can no longer place that burden on property taxpayers. Again, the Premier missed an opportunity to provide substance in this most recent Throne Speech. He failed to listen to Manitobans like the president of the AMM and many others.

I cannot help but look across the way at the new Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and wonder if he has the courage to move forward on this initiative. He is the third Minister of Education in three years, and he has inherited a department in chaos, not of his making but of the Premier's making. The failure of the Premier's Grade 3 guarantee and the gerrymandering of a deal in the Sunrise School Division top that list that the new Minister of Education is going to have to try to wrestle to the ground.

There must be a set of core values at the base of any vision, and this Throne Speech is void of any. There is no mention of a goal to control our own destiny. There is no sense of being self-reliant. There is no talk of how do we move Manitoba from a have-not province that spends, spends, spends, into a have province that controls our own destiny. As a province, Manitoba must be working on initiatives to move us from a have-not to a have province, just as the previous Progressive Conservative government had done in the late 1990s.

Ms. Theresa Oswald, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Manitobans through their efforts and their energy had created unprecedented economic success that is stagnating under this Premier and the Doer government. There is no pride in having their hand out. Manitoba must be proactive in creating the right economic environment. We must, as I said earlier, reward those who are willing to invest and create wealth in the province of Manitoba.

In order to successfully create the environment, we must focus on existing families and businesses and encourage them to stay and grow here. We must develop our Ambassador Program and those who promote our province to new heights, seeking opportunities in all sectors and all jurisdictions across this country. We must support Manitoba's very special and dynamic sense of family, community and belonging. Our youth, they need to know, they need to know and believe that they have a future in the province of Manitoba. We must also provide the motivation and rewards to create service excellence throughout our civil service and within business and industry.

The Throne Speech, as it applies to the City of Winnipeg's proposed new deal, is a major concern, more from the standpoint of what it did not say as opposed to what it did say. While the Premier (Mr. Doer) said he was not elected to raise taxes, the fact that he has been so silent on the mayor's tax increase plan is cause for significant concern. The reality is that the mayor wants to increase the sales tax, but Manitoba's balanced budget legislation requires a public referendum before that happens. To quell this

concern, the Premier need only tell Manitobans that, should he decide to grant the mayor his wish of a higher sales tax, it will be on the condition that it goes before a binding public referendum. Manitobans must remain vigilant and make sure that the Premier does not enact a hidden agenda to weaken balanced budget legislation. I call on this Premier to show leadership and tell Manitobans where he stands on the issue.

* (15:20)

Today, Madam Acting Speaker, we heard the Premier say that if the new Prime Minister, Mr. Martin, wants to put money from the federal sales tax into the Province of Manitoba, we applaud that; we think that it is about time that that takes place. That is the right way to go about doing it. But what the Premier is not saying he will not allow is to allow the mayor to increase new taxes. Either he is in favour of it or he is opposed to it. You cannot sit on the fence forever.

I call on the Premier to be clear as it applies to the Capital Region report, especially as it applies to the report regarding forced amalgamations. The Premier must be clear that his Government is not looking at any forced amalgamations, as it did, Madam Acting Speaker, with school boards, and I remind the Premier that it was his words that resonated throughout the hallowed halls of meetings around this province, that forced school division amalgamations, when asked, said it is not going to happen, not under his watch. Why? Because it is not the Manitoba way. As he turned around, what happened? Wham, forced school division amalgamations.

It is interesting, because what we heard from the Premier at that point was, well, you know, I know that I said we were not going to do it, but now that we have done it, wow, we are going to put \$10 million of savings into the classroom.

What a crock. It is not happening. It is going the other way. It is costing taxpayers money because of the forced school division amalgamations. So the question now becomes: What is he going to do with respect to the Capital Region report? What is it that he is going to do?

The responsibility of the Province in the Capital Region is extremely clear. The provincial government must act as a catalyst to foster a strong relationship between the City and the Capital Region and municipalities. The Province must facilitate a co-operative approach to economic development in the Capital Region. That same approach must be used when examining opportunities for cost-sharing in the areas of services and infrastructure. The provincial government under the Doer government must work smart and work hard to form partnerships to achieve a strong Capital Region.

Madam Acting Speaker, this is the Doer government's fifth Throne Speech, and there are a number of observations and conclusions I would like to put on the record.

The Premier's (Mr. Doer) credibility gap is widening. It is widening because Manitobans can clearly see that he does not keep his promises. In other words, although he would like to be the pony express, he simply cannot deliver the mail.

As usual, the Premier is big on political spin but small on detail. Nothing in the speech provides any confidence regarding meaningful tax relief. There is nothing to assure us of efforts to grow our economy, to attract new business and create real jobs in Manitoba. There is no strategy to make our communities safer. In fact, the reality is that one of the biggest threats to public safety in Manitoba is the Hells Angels, and let us not forget that it was under this Premier's watch that the Hells Angels were established in the province of Manitoba, yet no mention was made of an action to deal with them in this Throne Speech.

The speech attempts to misinform Manitobans and claim that the health care system is stable and no longer in crisis. That may be the biggest surprise in the Throne Speech. There was no real financial assistance for our farm families, only a few kind words. The Throne Speech continues to ignore the needs of rural Manitobans. Incentives and efforts to create sustainable economic development have all but disappeared, Madam Acting Speaker. The Premier may talk about the need to govern fairly and avoid policies that benefit one region at the

expense of another, but that is exactly what he does and it is exactly why he is at the root of his credibility gap.

Manitobans deserve better. They deserve a leader that will take a fresh look and apply new dedication and renewed energy in solving old problems. Manitobans deserve leadership that will pursue and uncover sustainable economic opportunities to rebuild our job markets and employment opportunities and congratulate those wealth creators. Manitobans deserve leadership that will provide safe communities and leadership that will be tough on crime, not just put out press release after press release and have the potential of having five Hells Angels associates walk because of the bungling of the Doer government. Manitobans deserve leadership that will treat all aspects of our province with respect and dignity.

We have an opportunity in the Throne Speech, an opportunity where the premier of the day can provide a vision, that lofty goal of where he wants to see the province go, not so much a history lesson, but a vision of standing and looking down the path into the years 2010, 2012, so that young people, when they hear this Throne Speech say: I want to stay in Manitoba. I have an opportunity to stay in Manitoba because I know where this Government is going.

We saw none of that in the Throne Speech. They had an opportunity to put words on a piece of paper that could be lifted onto an empty canvas that those in Manitoba could see hope and opportunity and wonderment about why it is that they should maintain their families in this province. When it came to that we got nothing, zilch, nada.

Working together, striving to reach our potential, that is the kind of Manitoba that a Progressive Conservative Party believes in. That is the kind of Manitoba that a Progressive Conservative Party will build, with people, with Manitobans, to make this a stronger province, to create wealth and jobs and ensure that Manitobans stand proud and talk about what a great province this is every single day.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I would like to move, seconded by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

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

But this House regrets

(a) the Government's inability to fulfil the promises outlined in its Throne Speech of November 27, 2002, including the following failures: failing to build the economy; failing to enhance health care; failing to open 1000 new cottage lots and 1000 new camp sites; and

(b) the Government's failure to meaningfully address the growing concerns related to organized crime including the fact that since November 2000 Manitoba has been the scene of 37 biker-related murders and attempted murders; and

(c) the Government's failure to develop a long-term economic strategy to address an anemic job growth; and

(d) the Government's failure to adequately address the BSE crisis and to provide workable programs for producers, thereby threatening not only the stability of the livestock sector, but all of those other sectors in Manitoba's economy that are so reliant on well-being; and

(e) the Province's failure to recognize and encourage the important role private sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy; and

(f) the Government's failure to acknowledge that balanced budgets have only been achieved through significant raids of Manitoba Hydro and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund; and

(g) the Government's failure to initiate a review of health care regionalization; and

(h) the Government's failure to develop a long-term economic and taxation strategy to address Manitoban's uncompetitive personal and business tax levels; and

(i) the Government's failure to provide a strategy ensuring two thirds of all nursing positions in Manitoba are full time by the spring of 2004 as previously committed; and

(j) the Government's failure to follow through on their commitment to ensure access to education for special needs students.

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on your amendment (e) where it says "the Government's failure." You said "the Province's failure to recognize." Which word would you like in there?

Mr. Murray: The Government's.

Mr. Speaker: So (e) will read: The Government's failure to recognize and encourage the important role private sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy; and.

* (15:30)

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I believe that you are correct that the wording that I understood I heard was "Province," and—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I inadvertently called the Leader of the Official Opposition. So I am recognizing the First Minister.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could not hear over the razzing across the way. I do take your clarification properly.

If the motion was moved, it is a formal motion. It is not an informal motion. It was moved and seconded in such a way, I believe, that it would need unanimous consent of the House to amend it. I think that is the rule of the House. You cannot amend a motion that has already been moved and properly seconded.

Mr. Speaker: What I was doing I was trying to clarify from the honourable member if he misspoke and if he meant to say "Government" over "Province" because, if it is changed, the honourable First Minister is correct. You would

need unanimous consent of the House to change a wording in the amendment. I was trying to clarify from the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) if he misspoke and said "Province" instead of "Government." I was only trying to clarify that.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to help me get this clarified.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, clearly as indicated in here it says "the Government's", and my intent was to say the "Government's."

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition for the clarification. That should end the matter.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I will read the motion.

It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), seconded by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson),

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

But this House regrets

(a) the Government's inability to fulfil the promises outlined in its Throne Speech of November 27, 2002, including the following failures: failing to build the economy, failing to enhance health care and failing to open 1000 new cottage lots and 1000 new campsites;

(b) the Government's failure to meaningfully address the growing concerns related to organized crime including the fact that since November 2000 Manitoba has been the scene of 37 biker-related murders and attempted murders; and that Government's failure to provide a long-term economic strategy to address anemic job growth; and

(c) the Government's failure to develop a long-term economic strategy to address anemic job growth; and

(d) the Government's failure to adequately address the BSE crisis and to provide workable programs for producers, thereby threatening not only the stability of the livestock sector but all those other sectors in Manitoba's economy that are so reliant on well-being; and

(e) the Government's failure to recognize and encourage the important role private sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy; and

(f) the Government's failure to acknowledge that balanced budgets have only been achieved through significant raids of Manitoba Hydro and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund; and

(g) the Government's failure to initiate a review of health care regionalization; and

(h) the Government's failure to develop a long-term economic and taxation strategy to address Manitoba's uncompetitive personal and business tax levels; and

(i) the Government's failure to provide a strategy ensuring two thirds of all nursing positions in Manitoba are full time by the spring of 2004 as previously committed; and

(j) the Government's failure to follow through on their commitment to ensure access to education for special needs students.

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

This amendment is in order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): It is a great pleasure to rise again to speak to another Throne Speech. I always consider this to be one of the great opportunities we have in this Legislature, to discuss our collective vision for this province, certainly our partisan vision, our vision as parties and caucuses and, quite frankly, our constituents' and our personal visions as well. Before I do it, I want to put on the record that I want to thank the people of the Thompson constituency for once again giving me the honour to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature.

I was asked about my majority in the House. I want to put on the record that when I was first elected by a majority of 72 votes, I felt fully qualified to speak for the people of the Thompson constituency. Notwithstanding the fact that it was slightly higher in the last election, I feel the same kind of strength coming from that mandate. I particularly want to thank each and every community in my constituency. I want to thank Wabowden, I want to thank Nelson House, Split Lake, York Landing. I want to thank Ilford. I want to thank Thompson itself. I want to thank each and every community in Thompson constituency, Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei, because I will represent each and every one of those communities every day that I have the honour to be a member of the Manitoba Legislature.

I must admit too that I consider it to be quite fortunate that I am following the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), because I really believe that you can truly tell a lot about the results of an election, not so much by the speeches of the victorious caucus. You know, usually victorious caucuses have a certain optimistic edge to their comments. It is not hard to be optimistic when you have been re-elected, in this case with an increased majority, in our case, with members of the Legislature in constituencies that we have never represented before.

You can also judge a lot by the comments of the parties that have had less success. I have had opportunity to be on both sides. I have been in the first party in standings, the second party, and I have been in the third party as well too, so some of us have that, I do not know if you would call it a luxury, but we have been through that experience. I have always believed that one thing you can say about the people of this province, anywhere with a democracy, the people are always right. When you are not fortunate to be elected to the Legislature or to government, the bottom line is the people are right.

What I would have expected from the Leader of the Opposition is some recognition of that. I want to put it in context. What I heard was the equivalent of somebody getting hit by a semi-trailer in an electoral sense and then getting themselves up, brushing themselves off and pretending nothing happened. They got defeated

in the last election. I say this because the Leader of the Opposition's speech was really—I wish I was Minister of Conservation, because I have never seen so much recycling in my life. He recycled each and every item of the election campaign despite the fact that on June 3 the people of Manitoba spoke. I did not hear a single word, I did not hear one word from the member of the Opposition that recognized that yes, the people were right and that maybe, just maybe, the Conservative Party in this province misread the people of this province, that maybe, just maybe, their message, their vision, or, I might suggest, lack of vision just did not find the kind of support that they traditionally found, because even for their results, if you look at where they are at, they slipped from where they were in the 1999 election.

I am a great believer that, once the ballots were in the election ballot booth and they had been cast and counted, you move on. I always say that you have to earn the support of the people of this province, the people of your constituency each and every day that you are in the Legislature, but, I tell you, there is a party in this House that just simply has not gotten it.

* (15:40)

Now, I sort of was wondering if maybe after the election we might have seen some reaching out. I must admit, Mr. Speaker, in the election it was not that hard in northern Manitoba to be an NDP candidate. I mean, let us be up front here. After 11 years of neglect things were happening in northern Manitoba, but you know—[interjection] I am not a yellow-dog candidate, from a member from a seat that may have that attitude about his own constituency. I was elected by 72 votes. I defeated a Tory cabinet minister when I was first elected.

The Conservatives used to have a significant amount of support in northern Manitoba, but we had in this election the Opposition party, the would-be premier, the Leader of the Opposition, he came out against the University College of the North. I thought, strike one. We have been working here for 15 years to get University College of the North in place, and thanks to the hard work of many people throughout the years and the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms.

McGifford), we will in this session of the Manitoba Legislature have an act bringing in the University College of the North.

The Leader of the Opposition is still talking about it. He still has not gotten it, Mr. Speaker. There was an Aboriginal debate. Many of my constituents are Aboriginal people. There are Aboriginal people throughout this province, close to 140 000-150 000 people. Did the Leader of the Opposition even show up at the Aboriginal debate? No. I mean, talk about showing a complete lack of concern.

It got even better, because I have never seen an election in which the Leader of the Opposition has not campaigned in every region of this province, but I tell you, even Gary Filmon came to Thompson. He knocked on doors in 1999. That actually helped us, but that is another story. In fact, I remember what happened. I talked to a long-time Conservative supporter, ran into him on the street when he was knocking on doors on Partridge Crescent actually in Thompson and Westwood. He came up to him and he said, Mr. Filmon, you get elected and you will sell off Manitoba Hydro. He said, well, we have no plans to sell off Manitoba Hydro. This former Conservative supporter, lifelong supporter, said to Gary Filmon, the then-premier, that is exactly what you said about MTS, exactly. I do not trust you.

Now, at least the Leader of the Opposition or the Premier in those days took the time, they even had a northern platform. By the way, part of the northern platform was to take money from Manitoba Hydro in the form of dividends to put into northern infrastructure. I wonder what happened to that platform, but the Leader of the Opposition did not even show up in the North once. I do not know how far north he got, but, you know, I sort of figured it out, he probably still had one of those old Highways maps, you know, the one that did not include a good chunk of northern Manitoba. We changed that. Okay, I was the minister when we did it, but we changed it as the Government.

If you look at it, I think this leader of the Opposition is going back to 1912. I mean, we have been part of Manitoba in northern Manitoba since 1912, except when it comes to the

Leader of the Opposition we are not Manitobans. I say the day in which someone who wants to be premier does not even show up in northern Manitoba in an election campaign is shameful.

Let us be up front with this. I thought, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition, after the election and after the record results that came in from across the province, because we were government, took a different approach. As ministers, as MLAs for four years we have been travelling north, south, east and west. We have acted on concerns affecting all areas of the province. I thought maybe, just maybe, he would have gotten the message.

What was one of the things that he came out with recently? Attacking our Government for spending too much money on transportation in northern Manitoba, back to the same divide-and-conquer approach of the election. Yes, I was Minister of Transportation and Government Services. So was the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith).

I want to put on the record that just in case members opposite have not noticed, we did a lot throughout this province. I was never more proud than when I stood side by side with the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux), the current, the new Minister of Transportation and Government Services, to open the four-laning of Highway 59. In 11 years of Tory government it did not happen. It took an NDP government to make that project the largest single highway construction project anywhere in Manitoba. It was not in northern Manitoba, it was in southern Manitoba.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the comments earlier about Winkler, because the member representing that seat should maybe drive on the main street in Winkler. Who paved it? The NDP paved it. Where? In northern Manitoba? No, in southern Manitoba.

The Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), she can point at the fact that one of the major projects we announced, the biggest project, when we increased the funding for highways in this province, was to bring year-round access, RTAC access, to the highway into Rivers, Manitoba, kept that community alive. I want to

say it is because we as a government spent four years with a map that included all of northern Manitoba, literally and figuratively. That is why we saw unprecedented support for this party throughout the province and why those members opposite clearly do not get it.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, I am not sure, quite frankly, which planet he is coming from. He talked in the Throne Speech amendment about economic performance. Now, what more do you need? Low unemployment. We have turned around the out-migration. We have record in-migration. In fact, this year will be the best year in 10 years in this province for immigration.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have seen incredible performance in terms of our economy. I hate to rub this in a bit here, but I remember if I wanted to start a conversation four or five years ago, very easy, anywhere in the province, particularly in Winnipeg, you would ask people what their houses were worth. What is your house worth? The major single investment of any family that is fortunate enough to own a home is their home. It had dropped 10, 20, 30 percent. It did not matter whether you were in Lindenwoods or if you were in the North End of Winnipeg, in The Maples. It did not matter where you went, there was a sense of doom and gloom.

I have never seen such a hot real-estate market. I have never seen such confidence in our economy. People are voting with the prices they are paying for their houses. Employers are voting in terms of record-low unemployment. We are now getting employers coming to us saying we have a shortage of labour. That is why training is an important part of our strategy and why immigration is an important part of our strategy. We have taken major initiatives in both areas.

They still do not get it. I heard the Leader of the Opposition, he was even getting back into the Kyoto debate. The Kyoto debate? Dare I say that after these record temperatures this year when we have had the second-highest number of forest fire starts in Manitoba history, when we are dealing with exactly what global warming

predicts in terms of increased drought and increased climate instability, has it not dawned on the member opposite that maybe climate change is real and maybe we have to do something about it before it is too late?

I should expect nothing less, because they are continuing on the same path. They still think the solution to building this province is the same kind of rhetoric we heard from the Leader of the Opposition just moments ago. Of course, he had to attack labour in here somewhere. They still have not understood that the key to building Manitoba is to build partnerships. Yes, include labour, and, yes, include business. We have been doing that.

In this last election they brought out the most regressive labour platform I have ever seen. They want what is called right to work. It is not right to work. It is a direct attack on democracy, which is once people have voted, in this case, people have the right to make a decision whether to be represented by a union, that then in that place that is put into place. That is nothing I think more or less than most people in this province would expect, but, no. Theirs is a world of divide and conquer, divide and conquer regionally. Their map does not include northern Manitoba. Divide and conquer in terms of our ethnocultural communities. They cut out Aboriginal people when they were in government. We saw when the Leader of the Opposition did not even show up at the Aboriginal debate. There are many other Manitobans who do not fall into the Tory definition of what their vision for Manitoba is.

I thought what really struck me the most was a phrase the Leader of the Opposition used when he said he would tear apart the tax system. I believe if that government was in power with their extreme agenda they would tear apart the social and economic fabric of this province.

* (15:50)

I do not know if they have woken up to the reality but they should look at what happened to our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan, because we saw there a party, they had to change their name from Tories to the Saskatchewan Party when most of their caucus ended up in jail.

The Saskatchewan Party ran on the same basic failed, outdated agenda.

I noticed the Leader of the Opposition was saying there are two premiers on education doing the same thing. Yes, two re-elected premiers, two re-elected NDP governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan that said the truth to the people of both those provinces, and that is that the unaffordable and irresponsible platform of tax cuts that cannot be implemented will only be followed by broken promises and destruction of social services, health services and our social and economic fabric.

I want to talk about what our real vision for this province should be. I think members opposite have failed. They have failed in terms of the election. They clearly have not learned from what has happened. I should not even say this really because the longer they do not learn from what has happened the longer it will take them to rebuild any level of confidence, not just in my own area but throughout Manitoba.

I want to stress what I see and what our caucus sees ahead as the vision for this province. I want to start from a very basic premise. I mention it in terms of one issue that is very close to my heart. I was very honoured for the last number of months to be Minister of Immigration, but we are an increasingly diverse population. We have the largest Aboriginal population anywhere in the country. We have people from throughout the world. We have more than a hundred languages spoken in this province, hundreds of ethno-cultural communities. That is a tremendous part of who we are and what we are. I look around our caucus and I see the face of Manitoba. I see representation in our caucus that is the face of this diverse province. That is part of our vision.

I look increasingly in a world in which in northern Manitoba now you can get on the Internet and you can access the entire world. We still have to move in terms of broadband for those communities that do not have it, but I see kids growing up in my communities that know what is going on at the four corners of the Earth. We are a plugged-in society. I do not think anyone anywhere in this province can be excluded from opportunities, particularly in terms of

education and training, because that is the world they are seeing; that is a world they should be part of. That is a part of that vision.

I want to talk about the other part of it, too, which is the tremendous natural environment we have, the tremendous diversity of natural environment. Where else can you go in a province, in this case a province equivalent to a state in some other countries, where you have everything from the Prairies to the tundra? We are probably best known internationally for the polar bears, but we have pretty well any kind of diversity, the boreal forest. We have taken on the challenge of protecting that environment, yes, by standing clear in support of the Kyoto accord. I was never more proud than when our Government stood clearly for the ratification and implementation of the Kyoto accord, because in 50 years, unless we deal with climate change, the boreal forest will be wiped out in this province. We will not have to worry about saving the polar bears, they will not exist.

We will see untold changes in terms of environment, but we are dealing with other challenges. The east side of Lake Winnipeg, dealing with the needs of the communities, dealing with the unique boreal forest. We are dealing with that.

Now I think we are the first jurisdiction, in this the international year of fresh water, to have a dedicated ministry in terms of water stewardship. We are committed to protecting and preserving our environment.

Our agenda and our vision go even further than just slowing down climate change or slowing down the degradation of our environment. When we talk about Lake Winnipeg, for example, we have already set the very ambitious goal, yes, but the real goal to return water quality back to where it was in 1970. We are going to deal with nutrient overload. We are going to take on the Devils Lake outlet.

We are going to continue to work to have the kind of regulations that should have been in place in the 1990s in terms of the intensive livestock operations. We have done it by working co-operatively with the industry, but also listening to the environmental concerns.

We have done it, Mr. Acting Speaker, by doing something the members opposite did not even bother to do in the 1990s. You know, city of Winnipeg waste water, it was supposed to go to CEC in 1992. We sent it to the CEC. We have received a report. I was never more proud as Conservation Minister when we indicated that, yes, we would say that we needed regulations in this province that have treatment for nutrients, in this case modernization of the city of Winnipeg sewer system. We are working with them.

It is a challenge for the City. We recognize that. We have got to stop a situation in which, under the Tories, it was okay for the city of Winnipeg to have raw sewage spills going into the Red River for the next 50 years. That is unacceptable to Manitobans. Yes, it is a challenge, but we are ready to undertake that challenge.

To show my confidence in the water supply in this province—[interjection] Thank you very much to the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach) for a very timely demonstration of how important water is in this province.

That is part of our vision, our diversity and indeed our diversity on the environmental side as well.

I want to suggest that not everything is rosy in this province. I think we all know that. I want to put on the record that we said in the election we felt we had accomplished much. I do not think I have ever seen a government come up front to the degree which we did and say we have more to do. I want to say that on the record, because it is very easy when you are up in the polls to assume that you are doing everything right.

You can do whatever you want. You can make the progress you want, but unless you recognize what needs to be done in the future, that is important. I look at the report today in terms of child poverty rates. I now know why we are continuing to focus in on poverty in this Government, because we have done major things. We stopped the clawback of the child benefit, the clawback that was instituted by the then-Conservative government. We have made

some very significant enhancements in terms of that.

I am really proud, by the way, that we have had regular reviews of the minimum wage. When I was Labour Minister we looked at it again. I was very pleased that we have announced in the Throne Speech a modest 25-cent increase in the minimum wage.

It is now back to the purchasing power it was at in 1988. It has been done in a way which is fair to small business, because many small businesses have employees at the minimum wage. You cannot just do it just before elections like the Tories did, but it makes a real difference. By the way, where is the Tory position on the minimum wage? They were opposed even to a regular review. That was their position in the election.

We understand that poverty is an issue. I look today at the very stark introduction of many of the people in the gallery, part of the Child and Family Services initiative with First Nations and Métis people. There are so many issues out there unresolved. This is one of the most important days I have seen, Mr. Acting Speaker. I want to congratulate the many ministers who were part of this in this Government and the previous governments.

Now, what else needs to be done in this province? Let us focus a bit in terms of our vision for health care. I am really proud that this Government has seen that part of the vision for health care is to have, in this case, a dedicated Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), of wellness. This is not a new concept in terms of healthiness and wellness. I find it interesting that the members opposite, they had to criticize. They did not do it. They had 11 years. They had to get up today and assume that there had to be some army of civil servants lined up immediately that was going to make this department work or not work.

The key element here is that whatever you can do in terms of preventing illness saves you a thousand times at the end in terms of treatment. It is a very straightforward concept. I am very proud of it. I am also, by the way, very proud of some of the progress we have made in terms of

health care in this province. Yes, I will talk at the constituency level.

For years, I have been trying to get a personal care home in Thompson. The third largest city in the province does not have a personal care home. It took an NDP government, Mr. Acting Speaker, and very significant fundraising in the community. We now have committed to building the personal care home. It is going to be the biggest single improvement to health care in my community probably since the 1960s. We rebuilt the Thompson hospital, the biggest capital improvement in 20 years. That is my community.

I could talk about Brandon. How many times did they announce the Brandon Regional Health Centre? I am a great believer in recycling, but not for political announcements. It took an NDP government and an NDP MLA from Brandon West and an NDP MLA from Brandon East to deliver for the people of Brandon what 11 years of Conservative government could not do.

I could look throughout this province. The Swan River hospital, that facility was in need of a significant upgrade for many years. That did not happen. What is now happening is the reconstruction of a badly needed regional facility. No mention of that in the Throne Speech. We are opening rural hospitals. We are improving rural health care.

Doctor shortage, I find it incredible when the members opposite talk about a doctors and nurses shortage. They should go back to who cut the number of spots in the medical school in the 1990s. They did. Who cut the number of nurses being trained in this province in the 1990s? They did.

It takes a lot of, I do not know if this is parliamentary, Mr. Acting Speaker, gall, I think that is. "Gall" is parliamentary. To get up, after you have created 11 years of neglect in the health care system, criticize us, after 4 years, of not having fixed it up more quickly than you say you want; they created the problem. We have not solved the problem yet, but we are well on the way.

* (16:00)

I want to just put on the record, too, that people should not be fooled by what the Tories talk about with health care. They do not have to take my word. They do not even have to do a comparative analysis of 11 years versus 4 years. They should read what the Tories promised they would do in the election. A week before the election, after fudging their numbers, they came out with their budget, some half-hearted attempt to show how they would balance the Budget in the province.

I want to remind you of some of the principles before I get to health care, because what they had said in the election, here is how they were going to pay for their promises. They were going to cancel the University College of the North. They did not get it. They did not read the documents. It is a college that brings together existing resources. It is not based on some fancy new infusion of money. It is based on more services to northern students. That is what it is based on, but they were not going to pay for a whole pile of promises. It was the only thing they could come up with.

For two weeks they were going to cut, but then what they did is they said they were going to focus education on the basics. What were they going to get rid of? What were they putting up on the chopping block? They were looking at the arts, band programs. I know in my community how important those programs are, all music programs. They wanted to go back, I am sure, to the good old days of the one-room schoolhouses across Manitoba, those days, those one-room schoolhouses that provided reading, writing and arithmetic were appropriate, but everybody in this province, including rural and northern Manitoba, deserve an up-to-date education system and a system that is not narrowly focussed on some out-of-date, right-wing, ideological perspective on what kids should learn. Kids need to learn about the world. Things like band programs, music programs and art programs are part of that.

Let us talk about health care. Every time the critic for the Opposition gets up and talks about health care, or the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) talks about health care. You do not have to say, well, what do they do? Just look at what they promised. You know what their election

budget was going to propose? It was a significantly reduced budget for health care. They wanted to keep health care to a 1% increase, I believe it was, 1% increase. Now let us just run through this for a moment. The inflation rate has been running 2 to 3 percent, so below inflation. Right there it is going to involve cuts. There have also been significant salary enhancements in areas like nursing, some of the technical areas and doctors. Why? Because there is a shortage. If you do not provide that kind of incentive, you are going to lose people. It is part of our retention strategy, but they obviously were not counting on any of that.

They talk about all their health care concerns, but the reality is when they had a chance before the people of Manitoba to say what they would do they proposed less money for health care than the NDP proposed. Surprised? I do not think so and I make no apologies that budget after budget we have done the difficult work of finding money for health care. It is needed and we will continue to do that in the future.

I think members opposite may want to just kind of rethink where they are at, a bit of advice. I remember at one time they were even opposed to the Golden Boy renovations. One of their MLAs was saying we were wasting money by stopping 90-pound chunks of stone falling off the Manitoba Legislature. They are criticizing us now for new initiatives like Water Stewardship and Healthy Living. I am sure that they are going to continue to do that.

The people of Manitoba spoke in the last election and, boy, did they speak, as my colleague from Flin Flon says. I think the message was clear. They want a government with vision. They want a government that has a vision for all of Manitoba. They want a government that is not going to divide and conquer, that is not going to tear apart the regional and social and ethno-cultural fabric of this province. They want a government where they can walk in and they can see themselves and their concerns represented. They do not want perfection. No government ever is perfect. They want a government though that is committed to working for a better Manitoba through partnership.

I want to put on the record, Mr. Acting Speaker, let the Tories continue to try to divide

and conquer. They had their chance for 11 years. It did not work. It did not work in the last election.

I want to say, I stand today to say I am proud to vote for a Throne Speech that puts that vision of a united Manitoba, 1.1 million people all working together for it. That is what the NDP is all about, that is what our Throne Speech is about and that will be our approach, our vision for the next four years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): The Acting Speaker recognizes the honourable Member for Morris.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege to rise in the House today and respond to the Throne Speech of the Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba. I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his re-election. I had the pleasure of accompanying him on a school visit to Morris Collegiate and congratulate him on his outreach program.

I would like to thank the staff from the Clerk's office for their orientation and help with procedure. I would also like to commend and congratulate the pages who assist the House. Three of these pages are from the constituency of Morris, Stephanie Mulaire from St. Pierre-Jolys, Nikki Kippen from La Salle, and Ashley Lavallee from St. Eustache. I look forward to working with all of you.

I would like to congratulate the former Member for Morris, Mr. Frank Pitura, who chose not to seek re-election after having served in the Legislature from 1995 until 2003 and whom the people of Morris respected for his action during the great flood of 1997. He is a gentleman held in high regard by members of all parties.

Members on this side of the House, I thank you for your help and support. As a new member of the Legislature, there is much to learn, and I appreciate the guidance of my fellow MLAs in helping the staff and interns.

I would also like to thank the members opposite and congratulate those who received

new appointments for their warm welcome into the Legislature and hope that in the end our goals are the same: the well-being and prosperity of all Manitobans, present and future.

A commitment to public life can only be made with the support of one's family. Wilfred Taillieu is not only my husband but my best friend. His long involvement in municipal politics makes our household a constant exchange of ideas, discussions and arguments. I would like to thank him for his love and support. My two sons, Graeme Hall and Tyler Hall, are both fine young men and have been very supportive. Their sense of humour, their sensitivity, their intelligence and their great network of friends have given them great potential in life.

I would also like to reflect for a moment on the tragic loss of my stepson, Garth, who lost his life in a car accident three years ago.

I want to thank my parents, Jim and Enid Durward, who instilled in me the value of hard work and the value of education. They taught me always to do my best in anything I chose to do. Whether you think you can or you cannot, you are absolutely right, they would say to me.

As I was preparing this speech, I reviewed some other speeches in Hansard, and I came across the maiden speech from the member from St. Vital. Because she grew up in MacGregor and I in Austin, just two towns seven miles apart, I read through her speech and I noted with interest that her mother ran against Douglas Campbell. I would like to tell this House my mother nominated Douglas Campbell the last time he ran, so I guess that is why she is on that side and I am on this side of the House.

I am honoured to have received the support and confidence of the great people of the constituency of Morris. I am strengthened by their faith in me and committed to having their concerns heard and heeded not only by the next government, a Progressive Conservative government, but by this Government today. Manitobans, no matter how they voted, deserve equal attention.

Some would say that a Progressive Conservative campaign in Morris had nothing to

fear. The constituency has been Conservative almost forever. In the last 35 years there have only been three representatives, Warner Jorgensen, Clayton Manness and Frank Pitura. Never has there been a contested nomination in 35 years. I am proud to say I am the first woman ever to represent the constituency of Morris, and I was awarded that right at one of the largest nomination meetings in the province with nearly 1000 people in attendance.

* (16:10)

I would congratulate the other nominees: Dale Hoffman, Doug Penner and Doug Dobrowolski for their clean, fair fight and their continued support and commitment to the party and to me as the representative.

The nomination campaign was every bit as dramatic and hard fought as any election campaign, and I want to thank these very special people for their time, dedication and commitment: Tammy Wood, Jean Kuziw, Jean Roy, Bonnie Leullier, Shirley Johner and Lorraine Byrnes. I would also like to thank my nominating team of Richard Klassen, Tim Dyck and Sheena Beaudin and a very dear friend, advisor and mentor, Linda McIntosh, former MLA and Cabinet minister.

Mr. Acting Speaker, following tradition, I would like to talk a little about the constituency of Morris. Morris bounds Winnipeg on the west and southwest and encompasses about 25 communities ranging from St. Eustache in the northwest to St. Malo in the southeast. Headingley is the largest community followed by Morris, St. Pierre, St. Malo and LaSalle. The constituency is varied in its culture, heritage and economic base. It is certainly an agricultural-based area with related business in small rural towns, but it also holds many semi-rural communities that are some of the prettiest places in the province.

Morris has a variety of cultural backgrounds, including German, French, Scottish and Métis. There are about 15 Hutterite colonies in the Morris constituency who contribute to the agricultural, economic and social fabric of the

area. Morris has traditionally been an area of strong family values, a strong work ethic based on the spirit of helping yourself and helping others. A strong sense of self-sufficiency along with the empathy to help those less fortunate has resulted in a very strong and vibrant people. Morris has one of the most fertile flood plains in the province and has great potential for excellent crops but also for excessive flooding. The flatness of the land also causes drainage to be a problem.

Health care in rural Manitoba is an important issue. Some of these areas have health facilities which are underutilized. Some have no health care facilities. Services to rural areas are always a challenge. Mental health services, child and family services, special needs services are harder to access in rural areas. We must ensure rural residents have access to these critical services.

The highways and roads in the constituency have not kept up with evolving transportation needs. Local elevators have disappeared, meaning farmers must haul grain long distances. Larger trucks have evolved to haul fewer loads greater distances, but the roads have not been maintained to a level where they can handle the increased weight. Farmers who have lived on the same farm for 30 years now find themselves overweight the minute they pull out of their farmyard. We need a grid of RTAC roads, market highways and roads to allow producers to efficiently transport their grain. More money to municipalities for fuel tax is a good start, and we look forward to the actual flow of real dollars. The twinning of Highway 59 should be a priority in terms of safety as a route to a major recreational and tourist area and an alternate route when Highway 75 is under water due to flooding.

The Morris constituency has three major routes leading into Winnipeg, Highways 75 and 59 from the United States and the Trans-Canada from the west, and is therefore ideal for tourist attractions. There are many tourist locations like the Morris Stampede, the St. Malo park, St. Pierre Frog Follies, Elie Straw Daze. St. Eustache has one of the oldest and largest bell towers in the region, and the nunnery at St. François Xavier was the home of Louis Riel's sister.

Cuthbert Grant also settled in the area on the spot now known as the Medicine Rock Cafe. Here the murals painted on the walls by a local artist depict the legend of the white horse. The white horse is a well-recognized landmark on the Trans-Canada Highway, symbolizing the area known as the White Horse Plain. Local legend says the white horse can still be seen galloping across the wide open plains, once the scene of the great buffalo hunt.

Headingley, of course, has the world-renowned Nick's Inn. It is also the home of the world's smartest bridge, a prototype built with embedded sensors that monitor weather, load, traffic and weight stresses on the bridge, all from a remote location. Headingley will soon be the home of a world-class automotive museum, the contents being donated to the community by lifelong collectors, Jim and Vivian Pearn. I would like to put the constituency of Morris on the map as a major tourist destination.

Having just heard the Throne Speech, I see our party has a challenge ahead. Where is the vision of this Government? There is nothing new, nothing innovative nor exciting, only hollow promises the likes of which we have heard before. As usual, this Government's Throne Speech has started out with excuses, blaming border closure and forest fires as the cause of their economic challenges. A government with vision plans for unforeseen events and disasters. Instead, this Government raided the rainy day fund to balance the Budget and it is finding itself short on emergency cash. So whose fault is it really? This Government says it is not their fault the border is closed. It is not their fault family farms are suffering. This Government's fault is not accepting the responsibility for the farmers of Manitoba and supporting them with meaningful and accessible cash.

Towns in rural Manitoba are centres of excellence and stellar examples of self-sufficiency. Yet the emptying of rural Manitoba is on the agenda of this Government. Their callous lack of support for farmers in every way weakens the social fabric of the rural economy as the effects of one group of people having no money trickles down through the economy of all rural-

based businesses. What happens when people cannot make a living in rural Manitoba?

I caution this Government, closing hospitals, schools and businesses, forcing people to leave their rural roots and relocate to cities will strain social agencies. Allowing people opportunity to move into rural Manitoba strengthens the people and the province.

The Government has forgotten that life in Manitoba was founded on life in rural Manitoba and agriculture is still what drives our provincial economy.

The creation of the new Ministry of Water Stewardship is of particular interest to me. The constituency of Morris is unique in that both major rivers in the province run through it and therefore flooding is always on the minds of people who live along these waterways, especially those who have lost everything in the flood of '97. People lost their homes, their personal belongings and even their businesses. The social costs have been devastating.

I strongly urge this Government to settle all outstanding claims for compensation before the expansion of the new floodway begins. I also recommend that through legislation those living upstream of the floodway gates be given complete assurance that they will be properly compensated when, and I say when, not if, water is held at artificial levels and they are flooded. The people I have spoken with acknowledge that it is imperative to save the city of Winnipeg from any future flood devastation, but in return they would like to be acknowledged as those who suffered and are still suffering so that so many could be spared.

There is a pillar at The Forks marked with a tile which represents the level the water would have risen to in 1997 if the floodway had not saved Winnipeg. If you were to travel outside the floodway just upstream of the floodway gates, you would see no such pillar. It would be more of an interactive experience. You can still see the abandoned homes that people just walked away from. You can see homes that are still being restored, and everywhere the homes are built so high, a constant reminder of their vulnerability. When you talk to the people, you still

feel the emotion in their voices when they recount their experiences of the great flood of the century.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our health care system cannot survive in its present state. It requires long-range planning that must begin now, and yet this Government stubbornly refuses to do the right thing. Visionary leaders are seldom immediately popular because they make tough decisions that may be criticized today, only to be lauded in the future. We need only think of Premier Duff Roblin when he brought forward the idea of building a floodway around Winnipeg. At first, people scoffed at the idea, but 30 years later, Roblin's folly is now Duff's Ditch, the ditch that saved the city of Winnipeg from utter ruin.

* (16:20)

I fear our Premier (Mr. Doer) is more interested in being popular than in doing what is right for future Manitobans. Almost half of every tax dollar is being sucked into the black hole of health care, yet people continue to endure long waiting lists. Our population is aging. As the baby-boomer bulge hits retirement, there will be a shortage in the workforce. There will be fewer people to tax and more taxes needed for health care. We simply must allow people the right to choose. You do no service to those diligently waiting their turn in line by disallowing others to step aside. Our seniors of today and those of the future have everything to fear from this Government's ideology.

When we know that successful alternatives exist that have been proven to work in countries such as France, which according to the World Health Organization has the best health care system in the world, why are we not willing to learn from these examples? In fact, why is it that 29 countries are delivering better health care systems than Canada? Are we satisfied with being No. 30 in the world?

This Throne Speech touted the innovative gamma knife, the first in Manitoba. This is hardly new technology. It has been in service in American cities for 16 years. Can we not envision any future technologies? There are already new technologies on the horizon that can

revolutionize health care. A company in New York City using nanotechnology has designed a T-shirt the thickness of a Band-Aid with conductive fibres that feed into a small transmitter and can monitor all vital signs, like your heart-beat, your respirations, your body temperature, for starters.

Imagine the ability to monitor one's life, one's body. Imagine how this would help the seniors of today and tomorrow. Would we need centralized hospitals with large, expensive diagnostic equipment, or would this become an individual monitoring system eliminating the need for super-machines and waiting lists for diagnostic testing? Would this cut down on visits to the doctor, improve preventative measures and automate prescriptions? Nanotechnology is here. I read with interest the article in yesterday's *Free Press* and today's entitled "Small Miracles" telling about the future applications for nanotechnology not only in health but in every facet of our society.

The exponential speed at which knowledge and technology is changing in our society necessitates the need for public-private collaboration. The private sector has the ability to react to change in a timely manner. The public sector does not always move so quickly. The Government is light years away from future realities. They cannot see the future, cannot even imagine the future, because they are mired in ideology that is of a past time, a past reality and a past world.

Healthy living should be encouraged for all Manitobans beginning at an early age. Physical inactivity is the leading indicator of obesity, congestive heart failure, cancer, diabetes, arthritis and osteoporosis, which are on the rise and putting increased stress on our already crumbling health care system. I was disappointed to see in the Throne Speech that there was no plan to address these real concerns. As a lifelong proponent of physical activity, I recognized the challenge to not only engage people in physical activity, but to keep them engaged. This Government has not shown they understand the necessity of incentives to maintain healthy lifestyles and ways of monitoring effectiveness. Let us hope that this is not just another \$100,000 advertising campaign.

I am pleased to say that 10 of my colleagues from this side of the House along with 10 staff and family joined me on a Walk to Wellness on the opening day of this legislature. Although all parties were invited to participate, no one on that side of the House felt it was significant or important to raise awareness of walking as a simple but effective way to wellness.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I fear for the quality of education here in Manitoba. The provincial funding to school divisions continues to decline, forcing boards to raise taxes. When will this Government recognize that education is a provincial responsibility and funded entirely? This Throne Speech has touted the decrease in the education support levy. Perhaps they should follow through with their election slogan, More To Do, and remove the education tax entirely from the tax bill.

This Government has vowed there will be a \$10-million saving by forcing school divisions to amalgamate. Once again they have been proven to have a lack of vision. Now, four years later, we still do not know the actual costs of forced amalgamations, but, by some estimates, they are as high as \$20 million, a cost borne by all Manitobans because of the lack of vision of this Government. This Government constantly reminds us of their regressive thinking.

Distance education need not be more bricks and mortar for schools when we have today's technology, not to mention future technologies. This Government talks about a rewiring of rural Manitoba. Perhaps they have not heard that we have entered the wireless age.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Government recently released a long-awaited regional planning advisory committee report. There are two concerns I need to raise. A five-year moratorium on forced municipal amalgamations or annexation implies that after five years the Government could require Capital Region municipalities to join Winnipeg. Secondly, the issue of shared taxation causes great concern. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has said he was not elected to raise taxes, but confiscating a portion of Capital Region taxes might result in a need to these municipalities to increase their taxes in order to run their affairs. Either way, the Premier directly or

indirectly would be responsible for increased taxes. Manitobans will be watching to see if he honours his election promises.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we in Headingley want to thank the Premier, who, as Minister of Urban Affairs in 1988, commissioned the Headingley area study by Hilderman and Witty, which became the basis for Headingley's secession from the city of Winnipeg in 1992. It was the Premier and his government of the day that initiated the success of Headingley as a separate municipality. So I know he would never force an annexation back into Winnipeg. When the plebiscite was held to vote for secession, 85 percent turned out to vote and 87 percent voted to form our own municipality. Headingley, I think today, would come out in the same force if they felt that their autonomy was threatened.

Some municipalities may choose to join Winnipeg or choose to join together into larger municipalities, but none should be forced, Mr. Acting Speaker. It is not the Manitoba way, but I think I have heard that before, just before this Government forced school divisions in their non-held areas to amalgamate. It seems it is very much the Manitoba way of this Government if they have no seat to lose.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Capital Region document suggests urban sprawl is detrimental to cities. One need only look at the Waverley West subdivision to see the hypocrisy of this Government. This proposed subdivision is as far away from the centre of the city that you could get and still be within the boundaries. The Waverley West land is jointly owned by the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba and others. So it seems urban sprawl is indeed all right if you are the owner and the developer of the land. The Government protests even before being questioned that all profit from this development will be earmarked to support housing needs in the city centre. This Government protests too much, methinks.

* (16:30)

As the mother of two young men who are about to venture forth and conquer the world, I am a little selfish. I want them to stay in Manitoba, to make a home here and raise a family here. I want to keep my future grandchildren

near to me, but, more importantly, I want them to have opportunity to stay here, an incentive to stay here and know that they are safe here.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) said after the election, and I quote: Today we start working on the next four years. Four years is not visionary. If the next four years is like the last four years we can expect the Premier and this Government to do just enough to be recognized falling short of anything that could be criticized. He kind of reminds me of that little carnival mouse who pops up here and there but always avoids getting clobbered, but then we know that that circus game is fixed by the people that run the circus.

We need a government that can lead us to innovations in delivery of health care and reformation in education, one that can ensure safe and vibrant rural as well as urban communities, and above all lower taxes and stimulate economic growth, bringing industry and keeping our youth at home. These initiatives are for the future, not next year, not four years, but many years down the road to ensure a better life for our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Government needs a vision. They need a plan of action, but they are a government with a plan to nowhere. It is an omen. This Government has no plan beyond four years, because they have no future beyond four years. The people will elect a Progressive Conservative government that will again bring hope, bring vision and lead the way to a bright future for all Manitobans. Thank you very much.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Acting Speaker, I just heard the Member for Morris saying there is no future beyond four years, but this is already our second four years.

I agree with her that walking is a good form of exercise. However, if your ankle has problems, biking is better. If you have defective feet, biking is better.

Ensuite, je me dirai à moi-même: "Mon cher, tu as des biens en abondance, pour de nombreuses années; repose-toi, mange, bois et jouis de la vie." Mais Dieu lui dit: "Insensé. Cette nuit même, tu cesseras de vivre. Alors pour qui sera tout ce que tu as accumulé?"

Then I will say to my soul: "Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat, drink, enjoy." But God said to him: "Thou fool, this night thou shall cease to live: then, whose shall those things be which thou has accumulated?"

I will talk about accumulation, Mr. Acting Speaker, and more specifically about the need, current and present need, for a pension system for the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. It is not only for the present members, it is for the future members of this Legislative Assembly.

A budget is simply a statement for a given period of time of estimates of revenues and expenditure outlays to carry out programs and activities of government according to the laws and regulations in pursuance of long-range policy, like employment, like price stability, like long-range economic growth. But if a budget is considered as the financial framework of some desirable policy objectives we should be careful not to confuse the preparation of budget estimates as identical with comprehensive policy planning itself, the visionary frame that the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) was talking about.

Policy, according to A.M. Willms in his article called "The Theory of Planning," includes both the objectives and the range of means for accomplishing the objectives. If this is the case then the policy framework that fixes the parametric boundaries of spending in any particular fiscal year should not be the framework by which we will fit the programs and activities of government. Rather the limits of policymaking, the comprehensive ones, must be a function of overall, long-range government policy of which the statement of the Budget is merely a part, although a most important part of that planning.

Therefore, as a matter of overall government policymaking, it will be very appropriate to discuss during the Budget debate whether or not the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba will adopt, or not adopt, once again, the old, deferred pension plan in the form of a Registered Pension Plan, RPP, for the members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, distinct and quite separate from the much-publicized RRSP or Registered

Retirement Savings Plan, which is commercially available.

The basic proposition of this contribution to the Budget debate therefore is that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urgently needs a reasonably adequate pension of its own because of the following reasons: One, such a Legislative MLA pension plan will attract promising persons to become MLAs who, otherwise, without such a plan, would rather seek professional advancement elsewhere; second, such a registered MLA pension plan will help retain the services of newly elected MLAs, for without such a registered pension plan even the newly-elected MLA will think again and probably move on to a more secure or more predictable pattern of professional life elsewhere; and, third, such a registered pension plan will mitigate the inherent uncertainties and the risks attending political fortunes for both newly-elected, also re-elected, and future members of this Legislative Assembly in their noble pursuit of an elected and publicly accounted form of public service.

Now let us talk about the general features of a registered pension plan. Although the Income Tax Act provides for the deductibility of contributions to a registered pension plan and the taxability of payouts from such pension plans, the content and scope of registered pension plans are governed by regulations of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and also by the various pension benefits acts in force among the Canadian provinces including Manitoba.

Under what circumstances would any pension plan be classified as a registered pension fund or plan? According to subsection 248(1) of the Income Tax Act, a registered pension plan means an employee's superannuation or pension fund or plan accepted by the minister for registration for the purposes of this act in respect to its constitution and operations for the taxation year under consideration. The Minister of National Revenue's decision to accept for registration any pension plan will not be made until the evidence of registration under the applicable governing pension legislation is satisfied, namely the applicable Pension Benefits Act.

* (16:40)

To be eligible for registration and thereby accorded tax deferral status, the pension plan must have the following features: (1) it must be a plan provided by an employer in consideration of services by employees; and (2) that the primary purpose of such a plan is to provide pensions in the form of annuities for employees.

In what alternative ways may such a registered pension plan provide pensions for employees? Under the fixed formula pension plan, the benefits will be calculated regardless of the level of contribution. The fixed formula pension may specify a flat pension per month, the amount of which depends only on the number of years of eligible employment services rendered.

The level of benefits under the fixed pension plan may be linked either to the total career earnings—for example, 2 percent of each year's earnings—or to the earnings of a specified number of years prior to retirement—for example, 2 percent of average earnings within five years prior to retirement multiplied by the number of years of eligible employment service. These calculations must be specified in the documents submitted for registration.

The other way of doing it is what they call the money purchase pension plan. The amount of benefits will be determined only at the time of retirement according to the value of the contributed money accumulated, contributed by the employee and the counter-contribution by the employer during these years of accumulation.

In any type of registered pension plan, the employer must contribute to the plan. The plan itself will specify whether or not the employees may have the option to contribute or not to contribute to the plan.

The registered pension plan must specify the retirement age at which pension benefits will start, not normally less than 60 years or later than 70 years. Once the employee has completed two years of continuous service and has attained a minimum age requirement, the plan must provide for vesting of right to a pension.

Thus, we see there are at least two distinct type of registered pension plans: first, the fixed formula pension plan, also called the defined

benefit pension plan; and, second, the money purchase pension plan, also called the defined contribution pension plan.

Let us go to the specific description of these two basic types of pension plans. According to Robert John Kerr in his work entitled "The Only Retirement Guide You'll Ever Need," a defined pension benefit plan is one that specifies the pension benefits that a member of the plan will have during retirement and throughout the surviving spouse's or common-law partner's lifetime based on a fixed formula that is generally the total of the member's average income for a particular period of time, the number of years that the individual has been a member of the plan and a defined pension benefit factor, usually between 1 or 2 percent of one's earnings. The defined benefit factor is the agreed upon pension income that will accrue to the member when he retires as a pensioner.

The defined benefit calculation is two steps. First, there is a lower percentage for the member's earnings that are covered by the Canada Pension Plan. Second, there is another higher percentage for that portion of the member's earnings above the federal government's yearly maximum pensionable earnings. The yearly maximum pensionable earnings is an adjusted earning in which Canada Pension Plan must be paid, on which the Canada Pension are paid and which is currently set at \$39,100.

Although there are a variety of formulas for calculating the defined benefit type of pension, it is up to the employer to see to it that enough contributions are paid to the plan and wisely invested, because, in any event, the employee, when he retires, is entitled as a matter of contractual right to receive a defined pension benefit as the employee's retirement pension income.

More specifically, how do we describe the money purchase pension plan, also called defined contribution pension plan. The money purchase pension plan is a pension plan that does not have any specific pension guarantee, but it defines the amount of contributions that the employee must make and the amount of contributions that the employer is obligated to make. Therefore, the size of the pension benefit at the time of retirement will depend first on these

contributions of the employee and the employer throughout the years, the rate of growth on those accumulated savings as a result of investment strategy, and, thirdly, on the annuity rate prevailing at the time of the retirement of the employee. This annual rate factor may change from month to month, a factor based on the member's longevity expectation, how long the member will live and the interest rate at the time of his retirement.

When retirement day comes, that fund which has been accumulating and building up in the plan will be used to buy an annuity, which is the monthly pension income that the plan will be able to buy, depending on the member's regular contribution, the employer's matching contribution, the annuity rate at the time of retirement.

For example, the University of Manitoba pension plan, the plan annuity uses a base rate defined as the lesser of 6 percent per annum and the rate designated by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, CIA, as appropriate for the computation of transfer values from the registered pension plan based on yields available on long-term Government of Canada bonds.

Now, let us talk about what is called the supplemental executive retirement plan. In a recent issue of *Canadian Business Magazine* of September 15, 2003, Zena Olijnyk, the author, asked is your pension safe.

According to Statistics Canada, the collective total value of all the financial assets of all the Canadian employer pension plans, the plans from a peak of approximately \$614 billion by the third quarter of the calendar year 2000 and went down by approximately \$70 billion. The Superintendent of Financial Institutions, in a speech in May 2003, stated that as federal government regulator, the monitoring agency has placed 60 out of a total of 1200 pension plans in what is underfunding and said: We cannot guarantee that the benefits will be met in all cases.

In 1976, the Canadian federal government has frozen at around \$60,000 the maximum pension payout in Canada. Since then, more and more Canadian private companies are establishing a system of the top-up in addition the

government-regulated and government-mandated pension plans to boost the pension of their executive officers in a form as what is known as SERP, meaning supplemental executive retirement plan.

Unlike the regular mandated registered pension plan, the supplemental executive retirement plans are almost entirely under management prerogative. There are no rules almost regulating the funding, the qualification or the value of such additional top-up executive plans. Unlike the regular company-wide registered pension plans, the SERP, let me call them serpents, because of the voraciousness to eat up the pension money. The company need not set aside any assets to fund the company liability under this type of executive pension package. Being largely unfunded and unregulated, the shareholders of the company may never know how much serpents cost the company whenever a top business executive retires.

For example, the London *Daily Express* newspaper issue of September 2, 2003, had a headline, quote: Pension fat cats scandal; 10.4 million pounds cost of a cozy retirement for the ex-boss.

Why is this a scandal?


The facts are as follows: The chief executive officer of a company retired in July, 2003, taking an early retirement at age 55. Just before he retires, the company exercised a management prerogative and increased his salary, his annual pension to a hefty total of \$662,000, a huge chunk of the total 383 million pounds, the total cost of the required funding for all the employees of the company.

The company insisted that it can finance the company pension system from profits. The rules are the same and applicable equally to every member of the work force, but because the chief executive officer's salary was much higher than the salary of the average company worker the cost of this executive's pension is out of proportion to all those ordinary members of the work force.

*(16:50)

The 662 in annual pension will cost the company approximately 10 million pounds during the period of the chief executive's retirement drawings. In addition, the chief executive officer will also get an increased pay and share bonus package, another benefit worth 5 million pounds. So, translated to a monthly pension, the chief executive officer would be getting 55,166 pounds pension, compared to a receptionist of the head office of the same company and member of the same regular company pension plan but not a member of the serpants. The receptionist is getting only approximately 59 pounds per month pension income.

It is written: Celui qui aime l'argent n'est pas rassasié par l'argent; celui qui aime le luxe n'a pas de revenus. Cela est aussi de la vanité.

He  loveth money shall not be satisfied with money, nor he that loveth luxuries be satisfied with increase. This is also vanity.

There are certain awesome statistics concerning policy makers regarding pensions. This includes us because we will be facing that problem soon. In a study by economists, Smetter and Gokhale, in the United States they estimated that within five years from now, the year 2003, when some 77 million baby boomers start retiring, there will be hordes of retirees in the United States. It means they will double in number, a 100% increase, but the size of the work force that will be supporting the retirees can only increase by a mere 15 percent.

What they use is what they call a generational accounting method. They add the expected government spending within five years' time in today's money and also the government's revenues. The gap, do you know how much the gap is? In the United States it is \$44 trillion. I cannot understand what a trillion means, but that is a staggering amount of total debt that will accumulate within a five-year period of deficit spending in the United States. You know \$36 trillion of that will be spent on medicare and \$7 trillion in social security expenditure. A trillion, I looked it up in the dictionary, is a million million dollars. You know how it looks like when you look at it? There is a dollar sign, number 1, followed by 12 zeros.

In Canada, by the year 2002, health care will cost about \$112 billion. That is minuscule

compared to \$36 trillion in the United States, but we have the same problem. The doubling number of seniors as pensioners will be supported by only fewer and fewer workers because our Canada Pension Plan, even the Québec Pension Plan, is not funded. It is a pay-as-you-go type of plan, and we have problems. Either we cut the benefits, cut the expenditures of government or change the system entirely. Where will we get all this money? That is the problem. I just present the problem. I do not have a solution.

Let us consider some of the policy and legal issues here. This may point to the solution. It has been the law in Québec and in Manitoba that the mandatory retirement age of 65 is questioned, whether under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms this is discriminatory on the basis of age. What does the law provide? The Charter says rights and freedoms set out in the Charter are subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Section 15(1) states: Every individual is equal before and under the law and has a right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, discrimination based on race, national ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. There have been many challenges to retirement at age 65. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that mandatory retirement at age 65 is indeed discriminatory. However, it is one of the reasonable limits prescribed by law in a free and democratic society. Therefore, mandatory retirement at age 65 if provided for in the pension plan is valid.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

What was the reasoning of the court? This was questioned in the context of an academic setting. The court said mandatory retirement does not only support the tenure system which undergirds the specific and necessary ambiance of university life. It ensures continuing faculty renewal, a necessary process to enable universities to be centres of excellence. Far from being only detrimental to the group affected, the mandatory retirement contributes significantly to an enriched working life for the member. It ensures that faculty members have a large

measure of academic freedom with a minimum of supervision, a minimum of performance review in their university life.

In this province of Manitoba, The Pension Benefits Act, Section 21(7) states: "Every pension plan shall provide that normal retirement and eligibility for pension shall occur at an age as specified in the pension plan but nothing in the pension plan shall compel retirement at that or any other age and the provision of a normal retirement age in a pension plan is not discrimination because of age within the meaning of *The Human Rights Act*."

Also, Section 21(9) states: No pension plan shall prohibit or prevent an employee from continuing as a member of the pension plan and to make contributions to the pension plan for the purpose of enhancing the pension benefits under the pension plan solely because the employee has reached or is older than the normal retirement age for the pension plan.

As a comprehensive, long-range policy issue, let us conclude by saying that it is highly desirable that this Manitoba Legislative Assembly restore a new MLA pension plan patterned after the Government of Canada pension plan for members of Parliament. Otherwise there will be no equality between MLAs and MPs. They are all serving the public. We do not have a pension. They do have a pension plan, and also those provincial jurisdictions that have pension plans for members of legislative assemblies. Why? Because such an MLAs' plan would, first, attract promising persons to become MLAs but who, without such a pension plan, would rather seek professional advancement elsewhere; second, help retain the services of newly elected MLAs, who, without such a pension plan, would probably move on to more secure and more predictable paths in their professional life elsewhere; and third, mitigate inherent uncertainties and great risks of electoral fortunes about newly elected and re-elected MLAs in their pursuit of the noble, publicly accountable forum of public service.

* (17:00)

Now how can we do this, provide security to our members of this Legislative Assembly,

without appearing to be self-serving people. That is why we have an independent commissioner who will study the matter.

As for us, in our contribution there is a message that we can learn. There are very few words that will relate the message. Know ourselves, control ourselves and give ourselves. If we do these things, the wisdom of the ages, there will be love, there will be peace and joy in our retirement age.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to respond to the Throne Speech of last Thursday. I must admit that after a number of years of hearing throne speeches that this one probably did not hit the Richter scale. It was actually at the other end of the scale in terms of being safe, not being one that left me feeling that there was a vision that we might want to attach ourselves to as citizens of this province.

I wanted to know where we as a province were heading. I wanted to know basic fundamental principles that this Government may intend to follow.

I look around at the economy of the province. During the Throne Speech, we saw reference to the growth of the number of youth that are currently in the province, but I think the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) would probably acknowledge that they had to very carefully pick their numbers in order to show a block that was showing some increase, because the reality is there are an awful lot of people who would like to be gainfully employed in that age group that goes past 25 who have chosen to be employed elsewhere and are not contributing to the growth of this province as we would like them to.

I also would be interested in where the Government, if they intend to provide direction, leadership or insight into where the economy of this province is moving. Of course, there were some thoughts put on paper that would on the surface look like the Government had a concept of where they wanted to take this province, but, on further examination, I have to reflect on the fact that we have a number of projects under way that are going to create activity in the

province. There is no question about that. The Floodway, the True North, the Hydro projects that are being projected. But those are all publicly funded projects. What we need is the growth in private investment to encourage people to spend time thinking about their business opportunities, manufacturing opportunities in this province and put their dollars in place here so they can also be taxpaying enterprises and entrepreneurs ultimately. They pay taxes both ways around. *[interjection]*

The former Minister of Industry is talking about the Internet pharmacy. I hope she is not saying that this is one of the main driving forces of the economy of this province, because I am, at least part time, still involved in the agricultural industry of this province. Wheat prices are over 30 percent less than they were, cattle prices took a terrible dip; short-term younger animals have returned something close to current prices, but we have seen a very deep trough that has developed in the agricultural economy contributing in the short run, and contributing to the economy of the province. We have seen, combined with what I just mentioned, some of the special crop prices that have taken a severe dip, with some exceptions around oil seeds, but we have seen the other livestock section of our economy take quite a beating. I am referring to the hog industry. It is an industry we need to continue to nourish in this province so that we can, in fact, maintain and expand those jobs associated with the processing.

My real intent in rising this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, was to ask a couple of significant questions of the government of the day. I can count as well as the next person, I know what happened during the election, but it seems to me we did not get a verification of the direction this Government is going because the last three and a half years, I am going to take an opportunity to look retroactively at what this Government has done because that is what the Throne Speech did. It recounted the successes, or what the Government saw as its successes, over the last three years, but in fact those successes were based on \$1-billion worth of additional revenue that the Government was not expecting, or if they were they were unable to predict when they were going into government.

Certainly, that growth and expenditure has not left us the flexibility that we probably should have. It goes back to the old adage that, if you are in good times, that is when you need to save a dollar or two and not spend it all, because, as sure as those good times came, less buoyant times may follow. It is never entirely predictable when they may follow.

We have a government that has gone from, on the one hand talking about more opportunity and buoyant incomes, to on the other hand saying: We have to manage the affairs of government carefully. I hear continuously through the health care system that the Government is saying what the doctor is ordering today is reduced expenditures. There has been a flush of money that has gone into health care. Obviously, it did not solve all the problems. I think anyone who is not entirely deaf in this building would agree that you cannot solve all of your health care woes in this province or in this country by simply throwing money at it.

We have seen the now soon-to-be Prime Minister of this country who raped and pillaged the transfer funds to provinces in health care who is now going into Ottawa saying he is going to start spreading the largesse around. This is a guy who balanced the budgets of this country on the backs of the provinces in many respects and he is now going to tell the cities and the municipalities of this country that he is prepared to buy his way back into government by sharing more of the GST revenue or perhaps gas revenue with the provinces and the municipalities.

I suspect that is not going to be easily brought to fruition. I suspect the five cents that is being joyfully bantered about by federal and provincial politicians about potential increased transfers from federal government, we might be lucky if it ends up around two cents in my opinion. I will stand up and be the first to be accommodating if we see much more than that.

Mr. Speaker, I referenced the \$1-billion worth of new revenue that has provided this Government with some opportunity for some spending priorities to be filled, but in choosing those priorities there are some areas of government I would suggest that they have overlooked. One of them was one that we were

probing today in Question Period, and that is the matter of justice and the Justice Department, whether or not they have put their dollars in a priority place in order to accomplish the mandate that I think the majority of Manitobans want this Government and any other government to carry out, and that is to deal promptly with issues of law and order, to provide appropriate revenues so that the police and/or the judicial system and, in this case, the defence system can carry out their work expeditiously, so we do not have the enormous backlogs that have grown over the number of years in this province.

The first three-and-a-half years, I do not think we saw the kind of emphasis that needed to be put on law-and-order issues and the kind of resources that needed to be put there. I know that the Premier (Mr. Doer) gets quite excited when he hears that maybe the biker gangs began to expand and develop themselves in this province under his tenure, but he has to take responsibility for the expenditures and the priorities that he has put in place over the last few years in terms of justice and the expenditures that he placed there.

* (17:10)

At the same time, we have the Premier on the one hand and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) on the other playing good cop, bad cop, discussing taxes, changes of revenue, and I still have not heard a definitive answer from the Premier or from the Minister of Finance. In fact, it seems to me that when the Minister of Finance muses about whether or not he will maintain balanced budget legislation and he says, well, we would only introduce changes to improve it, I guess I have to ask myself what might that mean in terms of his idea of improvement and my idea of improvement may well not be the same.

Having put that on the table, I want to talk about a constituency issue that was brought to my attention recently. That is the caseworker with the Department of Justice, and I believe he provides probationary services as well at the Sandy Bay Indian Reserve. On a day like today when we are celebrating the actions that have been taken over the last 18 months when the legislation was brought through and approved the establishment of the new Family Services devolution of authority, it might be seen to be in

bad taste to be bringing up some of the concerns that I have, but let us put the facts on the table.

A normal caseload for someone carrying the workload that this gentleman is carrying would be somewhere between 45 and 50. Does anybody want to wager a guess how many caseloads this man is handling? In excess of 200. He has 45 cases of fine options alone that he is administering. When we talk about where have they put the priorities in expenditures in this Government, the Budget for his office has gone from \$23,000 seven years ago to \$43,000 today, and the caseload has more than doubled at the same time.

That tells me that his director was unable to make the case for appropriate funding, and I intend to be asking this Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and this Government whether or not they intend to allow this worker in Sandy Bay, which is the largest community within my constituency, leave him hanging by the thumbs trying to deal with this type of a caseload. It seems to me that, with a population of over 4000 people in the community, he deserves more support. There is an example, I would suggest, where the Department of Justice has not been able to keep up with the growth and demand that has arisen during the period of time that this Government has presided over what I would suggest is the deterioration of justice in this province.

At the same time, and I hope that the Premier is sitting somewhere with his monitor on, because it has recently come to my attention that he personally promised to improve the road and pave the road through Sandy Bay in the '99 election. That was his personal commitment, that he was going to fix the road problems for the folks in Sandy Bay. Then that promise was reiterated in this current election. Now it has been reiterated by his recently defeated candidate who says that this is a promise of this Government.

So I hope the Premier (Mr. Doer), if one of his colleagues here would make sure that he gets the message, takes a careful look at how he is in some ways abusing the Aboriginal communities in my riding by making promises that he never had any intention of keeping, promises that he

felt would bring him a vote advantage but promises that he had no darn intention of keeping. That is the type of offensive action by this Government that leads me to believe that it is all about politics and it is not really about providing what the people of our communities need out there.

As I said, today was a day of some importance, significant importance to the people of our Aboriginal, Métis communities, and I do not intend to pour cold water on that initiative. There is, undoubtedly, a lot of work that will be needed to put the joint administration in place for the new services, but I would hope that the Government is prepared, now that they have taken the next step, to put the resources in place to make this happen. The first thing that came back after the legislation passed was that it was anticipated that it would be unlikely that there would be enough resources to actually put in place the effective administration and effective staff that they were going to need to take over the files quickly. So I say let us make sure that we see action on that file, and I will be checking to see that we have progress on that file so that the Aboriginal community can take some satisfaction, and not only have they been given the responsibility, but they have also been given the opportunity and the wherewithal to deliver the services that they want to deliver to their communities.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that the Government provided absolutely no indication of initiatives or leadership that they intended to provide in the area of agriculture. They referenced the BSE problem. They referenced the drought issue, and those are issues where we expected and, in fact, we demanded leadership from this Government.

You know what? It is not unusual for governments to have to deal with these types of issues where we have such a heavy dependence on resource-based industries, whether it is forestry in this province, agriculture, in this case, the livestock industry itself, the cattle industry that was the most severely damaged at the same time as there were fires in the North. I recall a colleague of mine back in 1988-89 pointing out that there was drought, there was flood and there was fire all in one season. It was akin to fighting fires in your hip waders in dealing with the administrative problems that came with that.

I really have to ask this Government why and how they can possibly justify the fact that, when they converted the slaughter program to a feed program in order to allow the producers of this province some opportunity to maintain their cattle on feed while they were lining up to get them into the slaughter position—when they changed that program, they appear to have been out by a factor of two in terms of number of livestock that they estimated to be on feed. They thought, and their figures showed, that there would be 40 000 animals on feed in this province. Unfortunately, it came back that there were about 100 000 that were applying for feed support.

Now, I would be the last one to suggest that there is something wrong with the assessment that was done, but that is obviously one of the options that has to be considered. Can they verify that there were 100 000 animals out there, or are they going to do as this minister has been prone to do, say, well, is that not wonderful that we have that many cattle on feed? Because what has happened is that the minister and this Government has made that feed program into a lottery, nothing more than a lottery, because the first people to get their cattle into the system, were able to access the dollars. But those who were unable to move or chose not to move their stock until the line-up had perhaps lightened up a little bit, they were ineligible because they ran out of money.

What a way to run a program, to say, here is this much money, here are this many cattle, but when this money is gone, there will be no more. It becomes a lottery. It does away with the opportunity for sound decision making. It does away with the responsibility that I believe government has to fairly administer its programs.

Let us draw an analogy that I hope there are some members in this House that might have some memory of. If we had run the flood recovery program from the 1997 flood, if the flood recovery program had been one that said: Here is X number of dollars to repair your homes, but if the money is gone, you are out of luck. I mean, people would have gone ballistic, and it is to the credit of the cattlemen in this province that they have not been more ruthless

and more cutting in their comments about how this program has been run.

* (17:20)

I know the minister will say, well, we could not negotiate space to have the cattle killed, and we do have a problem with access. I have not heard this minister or this Premier (Mr. Doer) make a strong enough case on behalf of this province. This Premier has always talked about special relationship with the federal government. He is now talking about a special relationship with Paul Martin. Good old Paul; he is the guy who cut back a billion dollars worth of health care money in the 1990s from the previous government. So I hope the Premier has a little bit of luck with his relationship with good old Paul, because I would suggest that if his track record is anything to be considered, the first thing that the new Prime Minister will consider is the fiscal well-being of Ottawa, not necessarily the fiscal well-being of individual provinces.

We have a situation where this Government allowed a federal program and a provincial program to be implemented, knowing full well that there was no guarantee that the dollars in the federal-provincial program would be spent on an appropriate ratio in this province relative to what the other populations of cattle across the country were going to be receiving. There is plenty of blame to spread around on this one, but it comes down to, in my mind, a lack of administrative responsibility on how these programs are put in place, because during the last session of this House which was quite brief, we were here with the primary purpose to deal with the Budget, this Government defended itself by saying, well, we are going to sign on.

As my colleague from the southwest corner of the province pointed out, we signed on, this province signed on to the new agricultural aid program, saying this was going to be a way that money would flow to agriculture, particularly the cattle business. This would be the way that we would offset the fact that the feds did not appropriately design a program.

Here we are. There was supposed to be money flowing by the end of October. If there was an amount that flowed, it was very minuscule. If there is an amount that is going to flow, I am standing here to say that it is probably

not going to be a very large amount that will get here in time to actually save some of the cattle producers who have got themselves in very difficult positions.

Let me demonstrate before I leave this topic just how much difference the program that was here in Manitoba did not make for those producers who did not get their stock into the line-up for slaughter so they could receive the assistance soon enough. I have a neighbour who shipped one animal out of his feedlot prior to May 20 and his gross return on that animal was over \$1,100, but when he shipped the balance of his pen of stock about a month ago, a little less than that, his gross return was \$300. Can you imagine taking almost 75 percent less or, for sure, 65 percent less of your gross income. Then, when he applied for his feed support, the Government said, well, it is gone. You cannot get it anymore. Not only did he take the hosing on the price of his cattle, and we all understand that almost all cattlemen were in the same position in that respect, but then he was ineligible for the feed support. He fed them all summer. It has been turned into a lottery, so he got nothing out of it, because they were told that the money is gone.

He did not even get a prorated amount up front. He was told he was out of luck because he did not line up right at the start. That is an example of why this is a lottery and not an assistance program and why this Government has to bear the responsibility for not properly managing the affairs of the department to make sure that there was an equity in the way people were able to access the services.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that obviously do not get addressed in detail in a Throne Speech. I understand that. There has to be some vision. There has to be some reason for people in the province to say, you know, this Government has really got things on track, things are starting to move.

I suggest that we have had three and half years of government that was sort of on automatic pilot in terms of the construction, in terms of the increased revenue that was coming into the province. We went through an exceptionally buoyant period of time in sectors of agriculture. Those three items add up to a

situation where it was pretty easy to look like government was on the right track.

I am very concerned as we move forward as to how we are going to deal with potential downturns in the general economy. Will we put more government money into it? Will we pick up some initiatives that will encourage development in this province? Will we deal with the outfall from agricultural downturn by simply saying that that is cyclical and that is how we will deal with it?

What about the opportunity for development of our educational institutions? When I refer to the three years on automatic pilot, this Government's promise of a tuition freeze on our post-secondary institutions, I would suggest that some of the pitfalls associated with that—and that is great politics. Who does not want to stand in front of a crowd of parents and students and say, by golly, your tuition is frozen?

If I were a student, I would have said great, let us get on with it. Meanwhile, government has a responsibility on the other end of the spectrum. If you are not going to get the revenue from the tuition in order to support university, then you need the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) and the Cabinet as a whole to stand up and say, we are going to have to make up, bring money to the institutions through the other door. We are going to have to support the capital. We are going to have to support the teaching costs. We are going to have to support a program that has quality and standards that stands up across the rest of this country, Mr. Speaker.

That is where this Government has been able to play the politics very well. When I see the stories that are now coming out about lack of support for institutions in terms of their capital costs, the one shining light is the number of students that are enrolled.

There are a number of reasons, though, which I am pretty sure the Premier probably will recognize and appreciate. One is we are getting a lot of double cohorts out of Ontario because their own institutions were full. Secondly, a tuition freeze certainly does encourage people to become involved and get into the institution, but what is the Government going to do to maintain the institutions now that they do not have that revenue?

How about the faculties that are now going and asking for exemptions to raise their fees? How much has their tuition gone up? In some cases, it has pretty near doubled, and this Government stands there and says we have a tuition freeze? Not in certain key faculties you do not, because they have recognized that they need to have that revenue.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I was waxing eloquent, or I thought I was anyway, earlier on, about whether or not this Government is dedicated to keeping the balanced budget legislation in place.

Well, I have not heard the bravado that says read my lips, but I have not heard a solid message from the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his lead Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that they will not choose to tinker with the balanced budget legislation and increase the opportunity for revenues in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has run out, and I have so much more to say, but I will save that for a longer debate. I have to point out as my comments come to a close today that we have had a very short period of time to be in this House to debate the important issues of this Government, whether or not their management is appropriate, whether or not their direction is appropriate. I look forward to this Premier actually calling a long enough session so we can get into some debate about his plans, when his Budget comes down, what direction he will use to take this province from a have-not to a prosperous and growing economy. That is what I want to hear.

Mr. Speaker, I will close my comments there.

* (17:30)

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, what an honour and pleasure to speak in response to the November 20, 2003, Speech from the Throne.

I rise today to speak—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 24, 2003

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