

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LV No. 8 – 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 1, 2003

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.
SCHELLENBERG, 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, December 1, 2003

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

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 a 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 re-prioritize the four-laning of Highway 32 for the 2004 construction season.

These are submitted by Ray Braun, Darryn Thiessen, Henry Janzen, Gerry Peters and others. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: In according with 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:

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 Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) was unable to attend the round table held on November 7, 2003, he graciously sent a representative who restated his 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 Gail Thompson, Ed LaPlante, Doris San Diego and others. Thank you.

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

* (13:35)

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 Mary Prymak, Ken Brown, Wayne Green 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.

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 Loretta Thompson, Glen Thompson, Harold Thompson 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.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

World AIDS Day

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's provincial AIDS strategy recognizes the special needs of Aboriginal people and identifies the presence of HIV-AIDS in the Aboriginal community as a priority. I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Shannon McDonald, who will chair

the round table community review of the Aboriginal strategy on AIDS.

The round table session will make sure the strategy reflects recently held community consultations and that input from Aboriginal leaders and communities is also included in the final document. Participants in the round table discussions will include representatives from the Aboriginal leadership community organization and elders, regional health authorities, federal government department representatives, community service organizations and people living with and affected by HIV-AIDS.

* (13:40)

The final strategy will provide clear goals, strategic directions and recommendations for policy makers, Aboriginal leaders, service providers, community members and others affected by HIV-AIDS throughout the province. Manitoba Health supports several prevention programs on sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-AIDS. These programs include: \$80,000 in funding for a co-ordinator to help prevent, diagnose and treat sexually transmitted diseases including HIV-AIDS in the Burntwood Regional Health Authority; public health nurses in correctional facilities around the province to deliver culturally relevant sexually transmitted disease education and programming to offenders. Manitoba and New Brunswick are the only provinces providing public health nurses in correctional facilities; a new educational campaign for youth on sexually transmitted disease is in development, including accurate educational materials, information on region-specific issues and trends and usable resources for youth across Manitoba. Manitoba Health partnered with Teen Talk to conduct province-wide youth consultations for this campaign; several educational initiatives are sponsored by Manitoba Health bringing together researchers, policy makers and the community to discuss issues around HIV-AIDS.

I want to mark World AIDS Day here in Manitoba by taking a moment to honour those living with HIV-AIDS and to remember friends and loved ones who have succumbed to this disease. I would like all of us to take one minute of silence to reflect on the tragedy of this epidemic and the opportunities in front of us to take

action and make a difference. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his statement today on World AIDS Day here in Manitoba and to acknowledge the efforts that are being addressed in this province in addressing the issue of HIV and AIDS.

It certainly is, as the minister has indicated, a priority amongst Aboriginal peoples and a growing concern within the Aboriginal community, but certainly other communities as well. It was our government, in the late nineties, that began some of the deliberations and discussions around an AIDS strategy in Manitoba. I congratulate the minister and his department for furthering this issue because it is one that still requires a lot of effort and a lot of attention to be put upon it.

I would also like to let the House know that on Saturday night I had the privilege of attending a fundraising dinner at one of my local churches, the Charleswood Gospel Temple. The evening fundraiser was to raise money to send some dentists and other people to Zambia to address some of the AIDS problems that are happening there. In that country, there are 10 million people and one million of them are orphans because of AIDS.

There were two people at our table who were missionaries in Zambia. These two people are very involved integrally in dealing with the orphans that have become a huge concern for the country because of the scourge of AIDS in that country. It was my honour to be part of that evening and to receive a book from one of the missionaries who had written the book. He and his wife are spending time there addressing the issue.

I would certainly like to acknowledge the work of people in my community that are taking this issue to a worldwide level and trying to address the problems and certainly acknowledge that it still does have a long way to go before we do have this issue addressed.

I thank the minister again for the statement, the recognition of World AIDS Day, and the opportunity to put a few words on the record.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in response to the minister's statement today on World AIDS Day. It is an important day which we recognize by wearing the red ribbons and which we need to recognize in Manitoba by acknowledging the presence in Manitoba of people like Dr. Allan Ronald and Dr. Frank Plummer, who have made an extraordinary contribution to AIDS not only here in Manitoba but globally, particularly through the studies they have been involved in in Kenya. It is, of course, not just Doctor Ronald and Doctor Plummer, but many who have worked with them like Dr. Joanne Embree and many others who have contributed a great deal and have brought back that expertise from Africa to here to help us deal with the AIDS situation in Manitoba.

* (13:45)

Mr. Speaker, during the last session I called for a much-improved provincial AIDS strategy, and I welcome the minister's statement today that the Government is moving along in this direction recognizing the need to pay attention in particular to Aboriginal people, and to the institutions in this province. I would say this is a positive step forward and I would urge the minister to continue his efforts to make sure that the strategy is not only developed but is implemented.

Mr. Speaker: Let us rise and take a moment of silence to reflect on the tragedies of this epidemic.

A moment of silence was observed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 11—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of

Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 11, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill will prevent privatization of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation without the approval of the people of Manitoba by referendum.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 16—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Denial of Benefits for Offenders)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 16, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Denial of Benefits for Offenders); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill limits entitlement to certain insurance proceeds to persons convicted of listed offences.

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. Brian Pallister who is the sitting Member of Parliament for Portage-Lisgar and also the former Member for Portage la Prairie.

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

Also in the public gallery we have from F. W. Gilbert School 17 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Devon Turner. This school is

located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

Also in the public gallery we have from Somerset Collegiate 25 Grades 9 and 10 students under the direction of Mr. George Adams. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today the Progressive Conservative caucus constituency assistants. These visitors are the guests of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

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

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Balanced Budget Legislation Amendments

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, over the last week we heard a lot of loose talk from this Premier and his Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) that has not only the business community but frankly all Manitobans very concerned about the Premier's true intentions.

The fact is the Premier has a credibility gap. First he says: "He was not elected to raise taxes." Now he is saying: "generally speaking" he was not elected to raise taxes. Then last Friday when we raised concerns about his Government's plans to weaken Manitoba's balanced budget legislation, the Finance Minister went from first suggesting that they have "no plans to change the legislation" to letting slip they have no "specific" plans to do so.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier specifically commit that he will not remove requirements from Manitoba's balanced budget legislation that prohibits deficit budgets?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, these phony balloons the members opposite keep floating up in the air, the last week or so it has been the issue of raising sales tax. If you went back to the Chamber of Commerce speech that

the mayor made a year ago, in January 2003, if he had done his research then, he would have found that we had said then we were not prepared to raise that tax. Nobody on the opposite side does that kind of research and then we are ending up with all these hypothetical questions.

Mr. Speaker, the facts of the matter are not only have we balanced our Budgets throughout the last four years, we have taken a lot less from the rainy day fund and we have paid down \$384 million in debt. Those are the facts. I would suggest to the member opposite that there will be a Budget in the spring of 2004 and he can flail away all he wants at that point.

Gasoline Tax Federal Revenue Returns

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier has a credibility gap, and it is leaving Manitobans suspicious as to what his true intentions really are. They fear that he is going to weaken balanced-budget legislation and they fear that he is going to raise taxes because he continues to couch his words, Mr. Speaker. The fact he is now saying that generally speaking he was not elected to raise taxes is a clear signal that he has every intention to do just that. It would appear that increasing the gas tax is the first thing on his agenda.

What we find troubling about this is the Premier knows full well that the Province, as did the previous government, put money raised from the gas tax back into Manitoba, that the federal government takes some \$150 million out of the province and does not put any back in. Rather, Mr. Speaker, than unnecessarily increasing taxes in the province of Manitoba, would the Premier instead commit to convincing Ottawa to return that fair share of gas tax that they take out and put that back into Manitoba? Will he commit to doing that?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Again, I was talking about a little bit of research and, as I say, I made a statement in January 2003 that has ended up in a petition for January 2004 after the fact, Mr. Speaker. It is quite remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of research, I still have a copy of a press release issued by the

Leader of the Opposition that had the wrong gasoline tax, actually called on us to drop the gasoline tax to where it is already, from a press release, I believe, in September of 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the consistent view of this side of the House has been that \$165 million, plus the motive fuel taxes for farmers—you should not forget the agricultural sector, they are paying a disproportionate different tax on the federal taxes than they are on the provincial tax. We should: a) have that motive fuel tax eliminated for farmers by the federal government to be consistent with the province; and, secondly, the \$165 million in gasoline tax should go to roads, infrastructure, infrastructure renewal, transportation projects and be fully accountable. We have taken that position over and over again. That is why we are going to pass a law and we are going to provide an on-ramp for the federal government to have that money go directly to municipal infrastructure here in Manitoba.

* (13:55)

Federal-Provincial Relations Prime Minister Elect

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the recent discussions that the mayor has had in the city of Winnipeg, he said that he was looking for some \$99 million in additional revenue from the gas tax. Considering that the federal government takes out some \$150 million and returns practically nothing to the province of Manitoba, it is clear we do not need to raise taxes in Manitoba or Winnipeg, we need to get back what we deserve from Ottawa.

Perhaps the Premier unfortunately does not have much hope in doing that, Mr. Speaker, because despite his claim to having a good working relationship with the federal Liberals, the federal government, he does not. That was made very clear in his inability to get a fair deal for our farmers in Manitoba.

We have a great opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to improve our roads and our infrastructure if we are successful in convincing the federal government to give back some of the money that Manitoba puts into the federal gas tax, but we will never be successful if this Premier so publicly

attacks the federal Liberal Leader, Paul Martin. Can the Premier explain how he expects to get a good deal out of Ottawa for Manitobans on any front when his party's Web site that is accessible to all has a direct link attacking the new Liberal Leader?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I guess your new federal party Web site will have a direct link to the Alliance Party soon if the vote goes through this weekend.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually was looking at the Premier's Web site last week and the Progressive Conservative site and I think there was stuff on the Premier's Web site, obviously, dealing with current information, and there was a blank page for the Conservatives, I believe.

But on to the issue of the question that is not actually within the purview of the Government. There is a federal Web site which is their intellectual property and there is a provincial Web site. I just want to say that the Prime Minister-elect was in Manitoba campaigning for Liberal candidates in the last provincial election. So did Jean Chrétien. So did Brian Mulroney. He is not fragile, Mr. Speaker. Leaders of political parties are not little teacups that crack onto the floor because they are members of political parties. We all are. The new Leader of the Liberal Party campaigned in New Brunswick against Bernard Lord. He campaigned in Nova Scotia. He campaigned in Prince Edward Island. He paid a little visit here in Manitoba. That is what happens in politics. Federal leaders campaign and we take no offence to that.

* (14:00)

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

James Driskell Case DNA Evidence

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question. On Friday,

after having less than 24 hours to review information related to James Driskell's case, Justice John Scurfield determined there was sufficient doubt about his conviction to warrant his immediate release on bail. In his decision, Justice Scurfield said, and I quote: I have very serious concerns as to the accuracy of the conviction. I point out that my focus must be on whether the new evidence could reasonably have affected the jurors' deliberations, and I regard the DNA evidence alone as sufficient to lead me to this conclusion. It proves that a material piece of evidence upon which the jury may have relied is wrong.

The Doer government has been aware of the DNA evidence for an entire year and despite this Minister of Justice's promise to take action if the NDP were ever elected, they have done nothing. Can the Premier today explain not only to Mr. Driskell but to all Manitobans why his Government failed to act for over one year?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, first, just on the facts of what took place when issues of hair DNA were raised, Manitoba Justice immediately arranged for testing and indeed paid \$32,000 for the analysis of three hairs in England. As well, given concerns in this case and others, the deputy has proactively arranged for a hair evidence review committee to be established. As well, I can just add that the department and I myself personally have certainly urged that the federal review process under section 696 of the Criminal Code be pursued.

Mr. Speaker, given Friday's court decision and the conclusions of Mr. Justice Scurfield which I have reviewed, I am writing today to the federal Justice Minister urging a swift and prioritized review of this matter with a view to referring it to the courts.

Independent Inquiry

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible that Justice Scurfield did in 24 hours what the Doer government was unable to do in 8760 hours.

This Government had the ability to send the matter to the Court of Appeal a year ago. As

Justice John Scurfield said on Friday and I quote: I am satisfied that if all the new evidence had been presented to the Court of Appeal following the original trial the conviction would probably have been set aside and he probably would have been granted a new trial.

The inaction of this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this Justice Minister have resulted in Mr. Driskell remaining behind bars for a full year longer than he should, Mr. Speaker, despite that and many, many promises both from the member from Concordia and the member from St. Johns that if elected they would take action. The Premier has ordered an independent review of how Prosecutions handled the documents disclosed in the Driskell case. It just does not go far enough. Will the Premier today order an independent inquiry? Will he do the right thing?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I regret, Mr. Speaker, that the information and indeed the understanding of the protocol and the law in place on how to deal with this kind of challenge is not understood by members opposite nor by others, and I am prepared to explain that.

There is a process set out in the Criminal Code which provides the federal government with a way to deal with allegations of unfairness in trials and indeed in wrongful convictions. Mr. Speaker, that is set out in section 696 of the Criminal Code. The provincial Minister of Justice is not given a role in that process. That is a process reserved for the federal Minister of Justice. We have been urging that federal review to be started up and I am just pleased that it has started up. I hope it leads to justice.

Mr. Murray: Aside from the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the independent review is very narrow in scope, unlike an inquiry the review does not require sworn testimony. This Premier's review is not a public hearing with witnesses called and the opportunity for detailed questions to be asked of sworn witnesses under oath. This review is not looking into the circumstances surrounding Mr. Driskell's trial or conviction. It is not addressing the concerns of the handling of the file by this Justice Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Premier again: Because of the incompetence and the mis-

handling by the Minister of Justice and, in fact, by the Premier, will he do the right thing and order an independent inquiry?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the only incompetence is the member opposite who does not understand the process in place, the legal process. I am bound by the laws of this country and I can advise that there is no ability in law, whether it is the criminal law, the common law, or the provincial law for a provincial Attorney General to send a conviction to the Court of Appeal.

That power rests with the federal minister, and the federal minister can also look at referring the matter to the court. I urged the federal government to prioritize this matter, to look at this matter and refer the matters to the courts, in light of Mr. Justice Scurfield's decisions.

I want to just reiterate, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of an individual convicted in a court. The remedies lie with the federal Minister of Justice, not provincial.

James Driskell Case Minister's Actions

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): In 1995, as the Justice critic, this Justice Minister promised to help James Driskell. For the last four and a half years, he has been Justice Minister and he has broken his promise. In fact, he has been doing everything in his power to frustrate Driskell's efforts to prove his innocence.

He turned down an invitation to put the new evidence before the Court of Appeal, and he reneged on his verbal promise to fund Driskell's application to prove his innocence through Legal Aid.

Will this Justice Minister take responsibility for keeping James Driskell in prison for the last year?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite has both a vivid imagination and a misunderstanding of the protocol in place in this country. Not only have we pursued the DNA matter, we proactively are looking further. Mr. Speaker, I

wrote to the Driskell team about 10 months ago urging them to pursue the federal review process and, in fact, I said that if counsel for Mr. Driskell was not prepared to do that, Manitoba Justice would determine how it or myself could refer the matter under the Criminal Code.

Now, when AIDWYC finally made that section 696 application, we have co-operated fully and we want to do everything we can to make sure this matter proceeds and proceeds in a timely way and in a process that is legal.

Breach of Bail Conditions Minister's Comments

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Manitobans who breach bail conditions should be subject to immediate arrest. These words should sound familiar to this Justice Minister because those were his words in 1995 and in 1998. Again, another broken promise.

Sheryl Zechel from Lac du Bonnet died last month, and her five children are now without a mother because she was murdered by her common-law husband who was out on bail again after breaching his bail conditions.

Will the minister agree that had he not broken his promise to ensure that anyone who breaches bail would be arrested, Sheryl Zechel would, in fact, be alive today?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member opposite knows that there is an RCMP investigation and review of that matter, and we will await the outcome of that deciding on what further action is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of bail, I also remind members opposite, because I think they became the first modern political party in Canada to demand that politicians and sitting members of the Legislature, in particular the Attorney General, direct the prosecutors in the bail application. That does not happen in modern democracies like Manitoba.

Mr. Hawranik: If breaking promises were a crime, this Justice Minister would be doing time. James Driskell is waiting for this Justice

Minister to keep his promises eight years after making that promise. Sheryl Zechel's children are waiting for this Justice Minister to keep his promise made more than eight years ago.

When will this Justice Minister stop being soft on crime and keep his promises to ensure that there is justice for James Driskell and Sheryl Zechel?

* (14:10)

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are very eager to see the federal process unfold. At the same time, we are doing our own internal review of the disclosure matters in this matter.

I might also remind members, Mr. Speaker, that when information came to Manitoba Justice's attention in the last few weeks, information in the City of Winnipeg police report was not in our possession and had not been provided to the defence. The information was made available to Mr. Driskell's team. We also retained independent counsel at the bail hearing. I might add that the counsel retained was counsel that was very experienced and prominent, and they looked at the legal standards and evidence and made the position in their best professional judgment.

Health Care System Emergency Services

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, on September 25, Dorothy Madden came by ambulance to the St. Boniface Hospital emergency room with chest pains. She waited for six hours, never saw a doctor, never received any care and she died.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why Dorothy Madden, a 74-year-old mother and grandmother, died waiting for care after this Minister of Health said he was going to fix health care in six months with \$15 million?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the patient conference that was held a couple of weeks ago, for the first time in Manitoba history we have critical incidents. Whenever an incident occurs we actually are able to learn from it and deal with it, something that was not in place. The critical incident

regime was put in place as a result of 12 deaths of the babies in the mid-1990s and there was no system in place, Mr. Speaker, which is caught up by that.

Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people died on waiting lists in the 1990s and members opposite did not keep waiting lists. We make the information public. We learned from the issues. It is very inappropriate for the member opposite to make the outrageous claim that we caused the death, or caused the death of a particular individual, particularly if one knows the facts of that case.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, well, it is the minister's comments that are absolutely outrageous. Dorothy Madden spent most of her time in the ER hallway and was never seen by a doctor, even though she had been triaged as urgent.

Can the Minister of Health explain why a patient triaged as urgent spent four and a half hours in an ER hallway and never saw a doctor for six hours until her heart stopped beating, until she died?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very, very unfortunate that the member puts that type of information on the record and somehow implies that the nurses at St. Boniface Hospital made errors in the particular dealing with that patient. I think it is inappropriate. If the member were to know all of the facts of that case and review it, I think it is very important that she look at that before she makes accusations against the nurses and against St. Boniface Hospital, as she has.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would just remind the Minister of Health, it was him that said he would fix health care in six months with \$15 million. He failed.

Mr. Speaker, we have a health care system in chaos. Herman Rogalsky died alone in a waiting room waiting for an ultrasound. Eleven patients have died waiting for cardiac surgery in this province, and now Dorothy Madden has died waiting for care in an emergency room. When is this minister going to get his act together so patients do not have to die waiting for care in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the member is leaving the wrong impression. As I mentioned to the Patient Safety Conference that was put about to deal with issues arising out of the baby deaths, we have changed the system because of the unaccountability of former members opposite for the babies' deaths.

We recognize wait lists. We recognize critical incidents. We deal with it. In the past nobody knows how many people died on waiting lists because they did not keep records. Nobody knows how many of the hundreds and hundreds of people suffered as a result of their waiting lists, because they did not keep records. If the member knew the facts of each of these situations, she would probably apologize to the House and to the nurses and hospital at St. Boniface for her outrageous comments.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like the co-operation of all honourable members. It is very difficult for me to hear the questions and the answers. If there is a breach of the rule, I am sure you expect me to make a ruling. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

The honourable Member for Charleswood, on a new question.

Mrs. Driedger: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. This Government campaigned in two elections to fix health care. In this last Throne Speech they said they had fixed everything, that there is no crisis in health care. If there is no crisis in health care, can the Minister of Health please tell us why 13 patients have died under his watch because they could not get timely access to care in this province?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, there are 15 million contacts between patients and doctors every year in Manitoba. There are 15 million tests done between patients and the public in Manitoba. There are 10 million Pharmacare applications. That is 15 million contacts between patients and the health care system, excluding hospitals and nurses.

We discovered in the 12 unanswered baby deaths in the 1990s that things were not tracked

and followed up on. Those deaths were preventable. If even one had been caught it would have been preventable. What we are trying to do is when there are difficulties, we try to find it. The system is not perfect. It is human beings dealing with it. People have died, people will die. Our choice is to learn from every experience and try to improve the situation, but if members opposite are blaming doctors and nurses for deaths, I think they should know better than that. That member should know better than to accuse doctors and nurses of causing deaths of patients. Very inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to once again ask the co-operation of all honourable members. Time for questions is pretty scarce. We only have 40 minutes and we want to get as many questions and answers as we can. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I am not blaming doctors and nurses. I am blaming this Minister of Health, who said he was going to fix health care in six months with \$15 million, and now he says there are no problems in the system.

On the day Dorothy Madden died waiting for care in a hospital ER, protocol dictated that another nurse should have been provided because of the heavy workload level. Can the Minister of Health explain why another nurse was not provided to that emergency when they needed help?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very inappropriate for the member to attack St. Boniface Hospital and attack the nurses the way she has. She should know better. But I might add that members opposite seem to think somehow that preventable deaths can be improved. In fact, we have improved them since we have come to office.

I might add that in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on April 21 they had an article from 1998 where the widow of a man who died while waiting in the emergency room to be seen by a doctor is suing the Grace Hospital for damages. The only reason I raise that point is members opposite leave the impression that things never happened prior to 1999.

What has happened is we put in place systems, and that is why 86 percent of Manitobans polled said the system is working better.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister's comments are certainly defensive for his position and I find them to be quite appalling.

According to a Freedom of Information document, in June of this year Winnipeg's ERs were short 67 nurses, just in the ERs alone, a nursing shortage of 67. In July of this year, Winnipeg's ERs were short 4.5 emergency physicians. I would like to ask this Minister of Health to tell us if this significant nursing shortage and doctor shortage in Winnipeg ERs was still in existence in September when Dorothy Madden died.

* (14:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I really resent the fact that the member opposite is blaming nurses in St. Boniface Hospital for the death of an individual.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might add that it is incredibly ironic that the very members who fired a thousand nurses, who cut nursing programs, who cut the number of doctors training in Manitoba would now come back and say, how come there are not enough doctors and how come there are not enough nurses. That is why we have tripled the number of nurses enrolled and coming out of education in Manitoba. That is why we have increased the number of doctors by over 30 percent. That is why we have filled so many more positions. That is why there are more doctors and nurses now in Manitoba than when we came to office, more doctors, more nurses now than when we came to office, not during the bad, lean, cutback years of the 1990s.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tuxedo.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Tuxedo has the floor.

School Division Amalgamations Harmonization Costs

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans are only just beginning to see the true costs of the Doer government's forced amalgamation of school divisions. Despite this Premier's (Mr. Doer) promise to save the taxpayers of Manitoba \$10 million, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees has recently come out with a number that they believe it will cost the taxpayers closer to \$17 million.

Does the Minister of Education agree with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees that the cost of amalgamation will in fact be closer to \$17 million, or does he still stick to his Premier's line that they are going to save the taxpayers \$10 million?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): The Public Schools Modernization Act is intended to put more resources back into schools where they belong so the teachers can provide the resources to their students.

We have done a number of things to improve the delivery of services in our schools. Part of the amalgamation process has cut the number of trustees from 433 trustees down to 309. We are rationalizing the services of senior management, we are doing a lot of things to streamline the services to provide more for the students of our schools.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, it has become very evident just how poorly planned this Government's forced amalgamation of school divisions really was. In fact, in the Sunrise School Division situation the previous Education Minister stated in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that he did not think the Doer government knew the wages were that far apart before they imposed amalgamation.

In the end the Doer government made the decision to flow \$428,000 of taxpayers' money to end a labour dispute in Sunrise School Division just two weeks prior to an election.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education how much more will taxpayers be forced to pay

for this Government's ill-thought-out legislation.

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to compare records between—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Tuxedo just asked a question and she is waiting for an answer. It is very, very difficult to hear. I once again ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please. We have the viewing public, we have guests in the gallery, and I am sure every member here would like to set a good example. So I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to compare the records of this Government to the record of members opposite with respect to education funding.

I thought of it as an apples and oranges comparison, but certainly our apples would not be a fair comparison to oranges. I think it is more like lemons with respect to the funding formula. After 13 years in the public school system, I still have a bitter aftertaste from their funding formula of minus 2.6, minus 2.20, minus 2 and, by the way, a token 2.2% increase in an election year.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the only lemon on the table is this Government's forced amalgamation of school divisions, the botched plan.

Sunrise School Division Labour Dispute Funding

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, in the Sunrise situation there continues to be some confusion over the circumstances surrounding the settling of the strike. The Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) has confirmed, contrary to the previous Minister of Education's comments, that a political appointee of Treasury Board approached the school division with a solution to settle the labour dispute.

Can the Minister of Education inform this House whether that political appointee, Lloyd

Schreyer, promised the school division that the \$428,000 would be supplied through a base budget allocation?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, there were 2000 students not in school. The member from Lac du Bonnet expressed concern over the fact that there would not be teachers aides to help kids with special needs on April 17 of this year. We worked with the school division to solve the problem with respect to \$428,000 as mentioned, \$112,000 of that fund would be this year. We did that through means that existed within the budgetary process.

James Driskell Case Review—Terms of Reference

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Unsettled lies the Crown reads a big headline in today's *Winnipeg Free Press*. The wrongful conviction of Thomas Sophonow, taken together with accumulating evidence for the wrongful conviction of James Driskell, has raised serious concerns that there may have existed within the Justice Department and its Crown prosecutors a cancer that led to more wrongful convictions.

Is the Minister of Justice going to allow Justice Enns to investigate other instances where there is evidence or improper behaviour and concealment of information by Crown prosecutors? Will Justice Enns be restricted to instances that relate directly to the Driskell case?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that when there are allegations raised about the conduct or the carrying on of a prosecution in our department we retained a former judge who was highly respected to do that, unlike members opposite who asked the lead prosecutor and got a short commentary. We are pleased with that.

Mr. Speaker, when there are allegations raised about disclosure issues, it is important that there be an outside review. That is what we have ordered. I hope that will be turned in on a timely basis. I hope there will be recommendations for further improvement following even on the recommendations from the Sophonow inquiry.

Deveryn Ross Case Wrongful Conviction

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, if the minister will not agree to fully broaden the inquiry, I ask the minister whether he will appoint another judge to look into the circumstances where there may be another wrongful conviction and where substantial evidence now suggests Crown prosecutors concealed crucial and important information from defence counsel.

I table documents related to this case. This is a case about which the minister has known for at least three years. This is the case of Deveryn Donald Alexander Ross. In today's *Free Press*, we read that the Minister of Justice has been consistently on the wrong side of the issues on the Driskell case.

Will the Minister of Justice call an inquiry into the Deveryn Ross case to be conducted by someone with no conflicts, indeed, it will probably need someone from outside the province, or is he going to be on the wrong side of the Deveryn Ross case as well?

* (14:30)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think when in analyzing the role of a provincial Attorney General, it is useful to know the powers set out in law for a provincial Attorney General. I must respect the law that is in place, and it is under 696 of the Criminal Code. That sets in motion, Mr. Speaker, on application from an accused, or a person convicted or representatives, a process for review at the federal level.

In the Driskell matter, this is an issue of an individual convicted of murder and sentenced by the courts. An Attorney General of a province is not given the power to change a court decision. All remedies lie with the federal government. In terms of the matter raised, I will certainly undertake to review the documents tabled.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if I may have leave to ask one question that would normally be given during rotation.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to ask his question? Does he have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: It has been denied.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ukrainian Famine

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the history of humankind has been rocked with atrocities in which many innocent people have died. The history of the Ukrainian people is no exception. These dark pages in history should not be forgotten. I rise before the House today to help raise awareness of these atrocities, to speak about the recent events in Winnipeg surrounding the 70th anniversary of the Ukrainian famine and to thank those who helped to organize the events.

Estimates of the famine genocide put the death toll between seven million and ten million in a one-year period between 1932 and 1933. This was 25 percent of the Ukrainian population. This famine was a result of the collectivization of the farms and the deliberate confiscation of grain and food. The result was a slow, painful and horrifying death by starvation.

Those who survived and their stories stand as witnesses to the slaughter of their family and friends. It has left a deep and horrifying memory in the Ukrainian community here and throughout the world. Indifference to this infamy and human cruelty has contributed to their anguish. That is why it is in the public interest to recognize the anniversary of this tragedy.

I was pleased to attend the Symposium on the Famine/Genocide of 1932-1933 in Ukraine which was held this past week in Winnipeg. The symposium was intended to recognize the anniversary and to educate people about these atrocities. The symposium included the screening of films and speakers such as Professor Yurii Shapoval from Ukraine, Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk and Senator Raynell Andreychuk.

A memorial service was held on Saturday in which the Minister of Labour and Immigration and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism (Ms. Allan) proclaimed the period from November 23-30, 2003, as the Week of the Great Famine/Genocide in Ukraine.

I would like to thank the Metropolitan Ilarion Centre for Ukrainian Orthodox Studies of St. Mary the Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral and the planning committee that organized the symposium. I would also like to thank the Ukrainian Canada Congress, Manitoba Provincial Council and other sponsors for providing patronage for these events.

Parent Seed Farms Ltd.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Parent Seed Farms of St. Joseph, who recently received the Canadian agrifood award of excellence for agriculture food exports. This award recognizes outstanding achievement in five areas that are key to the continued success of the agricultural sector: environmental stewardship, innovation, export performance, agricultural awareness and education and volunteerism.

Historically, Canadian agriculture has had an internationally renowned reputation for providing safe and high quality foods to Canada and the international community. Canadian farmers, or specifically Manitoba farmers, have been leaders in the research and innovation of agriculture products. Our farmers have found ways to sustain and improve agriculture by diversifying their farms and finding new uses for the products they grow.

Since the 1960s, Parent Seed Farms has blossomed from a small family farm to what it currently is, a major pulse crop exporter with

annual sales of \$30 million or more, with customers in 30 countries. As a leader in marketing new and specialized crops in the late seventies, the Parent family has contributed to the diversification and innovation of agriculture in this province. The company has offered its expertise to many local Manitoba producers looking to diversify their production and cropping base. Through innovation and producing a high quality product, Parent Seeds is making remarkable sales growth in export markets. With a plague of drought, BSE and overall climate change, diversification in farm management practices and in crop production hold a greater importance in ensuring a sustainable and prosperous agricultural community.

It is important to recognize Manitobans who are contributing to this growth and improvement of agriculture in this province. Once again, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, I would like to congratulate Parent Seed Farms for their hard work and dedication to agriculture in Manitoba. The efforts of Parent Seed Farms are most worthy of recognition and thanks for their contribution to this great province of ours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lighthouses Program

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, today the Premier announced an expansion of the innovative Lighthouses crime prevention program into five new sites. With this announcement, there will be 25 Lighthouse sites in communities across the province. The Valley Gardens Community Centre Lighthouse serves people of my constituency. This fall I was pleased to attend the opening of a community clubhouse. Today's announcement shows that our Government is serious about crime prevention and community safety. With new Lighthouses we will be increasing public safety by providing youth with an alternative to gang and other activities.

The crime prevention program Lighthouses helps support recreational, educational and pro-social programs after hours for young Manitobans. It is an initiative launched by Manitoba Justice and the Neighbourhoods Alive! program. Lighthouse sites use schools, recreation centres and other existing community facilities after

hours for sports, arts, music and other activities identified and organized by local youths.

For example, at Valley Gardens, local teams formed a committee to help build a new community clubhouse. They solicited donations from local businesses to help paint and furnish this centre. As a result of their efforts and working in partnership with our Government, the Lighthouse at Valley Gardens Community Centre is able to offer activities for youths aged 10 to 18. Every week 50 to 100 youth in the area participate in a program.

Our Government believes in a community-based crime prevention program designed to develop partnerships among youth, police, justice personnel and the community in order to promote opportunities for youth to get involved in pro-social, recreational and crime prevention activities. Programs like Lighthouses have tremendous benefits for participants. A Statistics Canada survey of children and youth recently concluded that children who participate in organized activities outside of a school tend to have high self-esteem, interact better with friends and perform somewhat better in school.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the volunteers at Valley Gardens for their commitment to their community. I look forward to hearing about the new Lighthouse sites and about their positive impacts on our communities. Thank you.

Brant-Argyle School

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, this October, I had the opportunity, along with the member from Gimli, to attend a special celebration at the Brant-Argyle School, a ceremony commemorating the designation of a provincial heritage site. It is a rare survivor among two-storey brick schools, the Brant-Argyle School, located northwest of Winnipeg in Argyle. It is the only one of its nature and its kind in Manitoba to remain in continuous service as a school since it was built in 1914. After the school consolidation process began in the 1950s, many schools shut their doors and were replaced with larger, more modern schools, but the Brant-Argyle School soldiered on.

In order to meet the needs of the Argyle residents through the decades, the Brant-Argyle School underwent a number of renovations. Between 1923 and 1929, the building was expanded to accommodate the increased enrolment and in 1970 a gymnasium was added. Throughout all of these changes, the Brant-Argyle School has maintained its original architecture, a rather rare feat in light of the many challenges faced over the years.

On November 25, 1999, the Brant-Argyle School became Manitoba Provincial Heritage Site No. 107. The designation as a provincial heritage site not only preserves the Brant-Argyle School as a unique architectural building and an important part of our province's history, but also recognizes the importance of quality education in rural Manitoba.

The declaration of the Brant-Argyle School as a heritage site was celebrated earlier this year, October 17, with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque. It was a pleasure to attend this ceremony.

I would like to thank the citizens of Argyle and the surrounding area for banding together to save the Brant-Argyle School from closure. The efforts that were started in the early 1990s by the community to volunteer, to fundraise and otherwise convince the school board to keep the school open have been successful. Community successes such as these are most worthy of our congratulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise before the House to acknowledge and commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church, which was recently held on November 15 and 16 and to thank them for providing such important programs in the constituency of Fort Garry.

This particular Mennonite Brethren Church began services in Winnipeg in 1953 and formally organized in 1956 in a tiny chapel called the Gospel Light Mission, which was located on Logan Avenue. It was referred to as the Logan Mission.

Over the years, expanding membership has caused the church to relocate to different areas of the city to accommodate its growing popularity. The mission moved from its Logan Avenue location to McMillan Avenue, at which time it was called the Fort Rouge Mennonite Brethren Church. Membership continued to grow due to the popularity of the services. They attracted many new members, in particular people from the south end of the city. The surge in numbers from this particular area of the city brought about a new church being built in 1963 at 1771 Pembina Highway, close to the University of Manitoba. At this time, the church's name was changed to the Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church.

* (14:40)

This church under the direction of Pastor George Shillington ministers to a large number of the Fort Garry population with some 350 to 400 people attending a service on Sunday. It also provides a valuable contribution to the community through a variety of programs such as Skatepark, youth programs for university students and a teen young moms program. They also help rural students in their transition to the city of Winnipeg.

The recent anniversary celebration included a dinner at the Grant Memorial Church where four former pastors presented highlights of the past 40 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend and congratulate the Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House business, I would like to advise the House that a report that was referred to the December 5 meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts does not have any requirement to be tabled in the House or to be referred or considered by the Public Accounts Committee. The report in question is the Auditor General's Report: Guide to Policy Development dated January 2003.

Therefore, this report is withdrawn from referral to the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It has been advised that a report that was referred to the December 5, 2003, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts does not have any requirement to be tabled in the House or to be referred to or considered by the Public Accounts Committee. The report in question is the Auditor General's Report: Guide to Policy Development dated January 2003.

Therefore, this report is withdrawn from referral to the Public Accounts Committee.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, as elected representatives, we come to the House to debate, to discuss and to form laws. All of this helps to guarantee that the Province of Manitoba attains the best for its citizens.

It is again a privilege for me to be part of this process by delivering my response to the Throne Speech. I would like to begin by welcoming and thanking all of the people who helped ensure that this process functions well, including the Clerk and her staff, the Speaker, the pages and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

I would like to congratulate all the MLAs who were either re-elected and those who are elected for the first time and my congratulations to the Speaker for being elected the second time.

As representatives of our constituencies, we must all remember our roles as MLAs and try our best to attain the best for the citizens of Manitoba. As a representative of the constituency of The Maples, I am honoured to rise before the House to speak about the Speech from the Throne.

The Throne Speech signifies the formal opening of the session of the Legislative Assembly. This speech sets forth in detail the Government's view on the condition of the province and indicates what legislation will be brought forth in the coming months and years. In the Speech from the Throne it is evident that this Government is attentive to the commitments made to Manitobans in 1999 and in the June 2003 elections. Some of our commitments include the continued improvements to our health care system, laying the foundation for future growth in Manitoba by building on our economic partnerships by continuing to expand education and training opportunities, and, finally, preserving the Manitoba advantage of a healthy environment, clean energy, safe communities and affordable living. These priorities and the legislation that will stem from them will without a doubt improve the lives of the people of our province.

We must also remember the importance of legislation and policy issues pertaining to immigration and trade, both of which offer us some fundamental solutions to the difficulties we face as a province.

As Canadians, we should be thankful and proud of the advantages, both economic and social, that come from our equalized system of health care. With this system we try to ensure that the well-being of all persons, both rich and poor, and all those in between is protected. The NDP government has made great strides in this area and continues to invest in health care and health innovations, such as new technologies which help cure people of disease. Increasing the number of doctors, nurses, diagnostic technicians and the reduction of waiting lists will also help to improve the quality of our health care.

The advancement of a holistic approach to health will increase the health and well-being of Manitobans. Improving diet and increasing exercise are part of this approach. The development of the Ministry of Healthy Living will address this issue and will help to reduce pressures on our health care system in the long run.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday of last week, the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) warned that in the future there would be a lack of people for

the workforce as the baby boomers retire. She further claims that this lag in the workforce will translate into fewer taxes for health care. This may seem like a problem; however, in truth, it can be partially addressed by the Government's dedication to maintain and sustain the annual immigration goal.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I came to Canada in 1969 and settled in Winnipeg. As an immigrant from the Philippines, I am very well aware of the challenges and difficulties faced by many newcomers to our country. I also know that many people from other countries want to come to Canada and numerous people are trying hard to bring family members here to live. I also understand that immigration is considered key to Manitoba's economic future and growth. It has contributed to our province's diversity and multiculturalism. It will also help to meet the long-term needs of our labour force and tax base. Thanks largely to the success of the Provincial Nominee Program, immigration to Manitoba increased by 50 percent, reaching about 4600 in 2000, and it continues to climb.

To further achieve the annual immigration goal of 10 000 and to retain immigrants, the provincial government has adopted some exceptional strategies. The announcement of the Manitoba Immigration Council will include representation from local communities and organizations, business and labour. This council will be instrumental in increasing immigration to our province, the continued expansion of the Provincial Nominee Program, one of the most successful in the country, the continued strengthening of the foreign qualifications recognition, ESL training and settlement services, and, finally, improvements to the promotion of Manitoba as a destination of choice for immigrants.

* (14:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to endorse the Government's annual immigration goal of 10 000 and the many programs which have increased the number of immigrants. All of these will address the skilled labour shortage in Manitoba and any possible decreases in our provincial population.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am addressing the issue of immigration, not only because I am an immigrant, but also because The Maples is a favoured destination for immigrants coming to Winnipeg. In my constituency, there are more than a dozen languages spoken, and therefore a major hub of multicultural community.

I would like to thank the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure program which has contributed \$900,000 toward the construction of the Philippine-Canadian Cultural Centre located on Keewatin. Also adjacent to The Maples, other cultural communities received support from this infrastructure program. Five hundred thousand dollars each was committed to the Manitoba Sikh Cultural and Seniors Centre, the Manitoba Islamic Association Community Centre Complex and the Hindu Centre. These centres when completed will serve as a cultural showcase and a welcoming place that will assist new immigrants in their transition to their new country of residence.

During the election campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spent much time talking to my constituents in The Maples and I noticed that there is general approval in the way the NDP has governed the province. There was also the impression that much has been accomplished in The Maples, but there is more to do. In the 1999 election, I was presented with two difficult issues. For years, residents along Leila Avenue expressed a desire to have back lanes lit along a stretch of Leila Avenue from the intersection of Manila Road to Agnes Arnold Street. Safety was the reason for this because it was a little dark and unsafe for residents coming home after working the night shift.

Nighttime driving along portions of Leila was hazardous, especially in the wintertime when both sides of the street were covered with snow. These conditions were very dangerous and were the cause of many driving accidents. This problem was addressed a couple of summers ago. The residents received the back lane lights, and later in the summer, Leila Avenue was upgraded to a two-lane concrete roadway between Altamont Street and Agnes Arnold Place thanks to a grant from the tri-level Canada-Manitoba infrastructure program. Finally, the roadwork is complete with landscaping and streetlights.

I would like to commend the construction company on their good work, but I would especially like to thank the residents of Leila Avenue who signed the petition and asked for funding to fix Leila Avenue. This is an example of the importance of developing co-operative relations between the residents and their representative that is to ensure that their issues and concerns are being looked after.

The Maples, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is bustling with new residential and business developments. There is a housing construction boom on Amber Trails and five large apartment blocks are under construction on the north side of Leila and Pipeline Road. A couple of days ago, along McPhillips Street and Templeton Avenue, Jim Gauthier's GM dealership had a grand opening of its brand-new car showroom.

The Government's hard work to make our health care services more accessible has greatly benefited the residents of The Maples and surrounding communities, with the \$7.5-million expansion of the Seven Oaks General Hospital. It houses a new, 20-station dialysis unit, a cancer clinic, with 6 out-patient treatment stations, and clinical, pharmacy and support services areas.

Our Government's commitment to our youth and our families is in the form of expansion to education and training. Helping parents give their children the best possible start in life and retaining our young people are also yielding tremendous results in The Maples. We set up the Seven Oaks Parent-Child Centre to help interested parents develop skills in nutrition, literacy and parenting. The Government has committed funds for a new building for the Seven Oaks Child Day Care Centre. The Province is also working with the Arthur E. Wright, Elwick and Leila North Schools to provide after-school recreational and educational activities for young people. The activities are funded by the Lighthouse program created by our Department of Justice.

The Village Centre at Elwick Community School has just relocated to a new facility on Fife Street in The Maples in order to offer a wide range of programs, resources and activities in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Urban Green Team young people are gaining valuable work experience with non-profit community organizations while improving our neighbourhood. In The Maples, team members have maintained the grounds of the Maples Recreation Centre and community schools and have participated in neighbourhood clean-ups.

Free public Internet sites also have been set up in the Maples Youth Activity Centre. All of these are what help to make The Maples a great place to live and raise our families and I have been very pleased and happy to act as a representative for this constituency over the years. It has been a great and diverse experience.

Since I became the New Democratic Party representative for The Maples in 1999, I have been in a variety of roles in the Legislature. I was appointed legislative assistant to the Minister of Labour and also the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. It has been an honour working with the former minister. I have had the pleasure of representing her in some of her numerous social and official events.

The recent shuffling of the Cabinet in the Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba has resulted in me taking on new responsibility. I became the legislative assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade (Ms. Mihychuk). Although it will present a new challenge, I am excited about this new learning experience. This is a responsibility I will take very seriously. I am keen on helping the new minister in the development of our trade policies and encouraging trade with other countries by expanding our economic activities. The promotional trade investment and co-operation with some of our top trading partners are priorities for our province. We are increasing the number and value of contracts secured by Manitoba companies and organizations in other countries.

Also, in July 2003, the ministry of Industry, Trade and Mines appointed 10 private-sector representatives to a trade advisory council which will provide advice and direction to the minister on Manitoba's new trade strategies. I look forward to working on the Government's strategies which will continue to grow our economy.

I would like to draw to a close by thanking the constituents of The Maples for their support and dedication. I would also like to thank the Government of Manitoba for the continued investment in immigration. I know their support of immigrants enhances our progress and economic growth as a province and helps provide immigrants with a better life. Also, our Government's commitment to maintaining our quality of life and the well-being of all Manitobans is evident in their continued support and investments in health care, education, children, youth and family members, and by ensuring that Manitoba is an affordable and safe place to live and raise a family.

* (15:00)

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was almost six months ago to this day that we faced the Manitoba electorate in a general election. I do not think there would be any of us in this Legislature today if it were not for the tireless number of volunteers that helped out on our various campaigns. Certainly, I want to thank, we had hundreds of volunteers who committed their valuable time and effort, volunteering in the election campaign in Tuxedo. I just want to thank them very much for all of their hard work and dedication toward helping in my campaign.

I am truly honoured, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having been chosen once again to represent our community and look forward very much to continuing to work with the people of Tuxedo to ensure that our voice is heard loud and clear in this Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Tuxedo is a wonderful place in which to work and live and raise our families. Over the past three years, having gone through a by-election in the 2002 election campaign and a general election in June of this year, I have had the opportunity of meeting so many truly dynamic individuals, all of whom in their own unique way play a vital role in the betterment of our community. Our community stretches from Charleswood to the west, which represents about one third of the riding, to River Heights in the east, as far north as the Assiniboine River and as far south as Wilkes, right where we desperately need the underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Tuxedo is a diverse constituency, both physically and culturally. It is comprised of people who represent many different ethnic backgrounds. There are a number of small businesses. There are a number of single family dwellings. There is a vibrant tennis club and golf course. There are two community centres and parklands which cover about one third of our geographical space known as Assiniboine Park and Assiniboine Forest.

We are fortunate enough to have a conservatory, a zoo, the Winnie the Pooh museum, the Leo Mol gardens, the Lyric outdoor theatre and endless bike and nature paths, to name but a few of the attractions in the Tuxedo community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am truly honoured to represent such a vibrant community. I want to thank once again all of my campaign volunteers for their commitment to ensuring that Tuxedo continues to be represented by a member of the PC Party of Manitoba. I know that together we will continue to ensure that our community remains strong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to put on record a few words about the Throne Speech that we recently heard from this Government. I have a few general comments to start off with.

Number one, I think there is sort of a recurring theme from Throne Speech to Throne Speech as we can see in this Legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it is rather unfortunate. What we see is weak leadership, a lack of vision and a lack of hope for economic prosperity for the future of our citizens.

There is no plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to rein in out-of-control spending habits. There is absolutely no plan to improve our health care system, no plan to make Manitoba competitive, no plan to counter our growing crime problem and no plan to keep our young people and attract new people to our province.

Let us look at some of these individual areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let us look at our economy. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has found billions of dollars of increases in revenue to our province since he took office. Yet, rather than choose to give some of this back to the

hardworking people of our province, he chose to spend it. If that was not enough, he spent that and he also had to go into Manitoba Hydro and raid some of those funds, funds, which I will let you know, they did not have at the time, all in order to support this Premier's out-of-control spending habit.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier introduced labour legislation in this province which has stifled potential economic growth and sent a message to communities everywhere that were not open for business. Manitoba continues to be one of the highest taxed provinces in our country. How can we possibly expect to compete in this country with those types of figures?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitoba cannot afford to continue down this path of tax and spend. This Government needs to send a message that our province is open for business so we can attract some of our people back to this province. Judging by this Throne Speech, the Premier either does not have the political will to make the right decisions for our economic prosperity or he does not have the knowledge of how to create such an environment for his province. I think that is extremely unfortunate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the area of justice, let us talk about crime for a couple of minutes. Since this Government took office in 1999, our province has been open for crime rather than being open for business. Under this Government's watch, not only have the Hells Angels moved in, but also, regrettably, Manitoba is first in homicide rates. Manitoba is first in robbery, first in motor vehicle theft, first in mischief, second in offensive weapons violations, second in sexual assaults, second in assault, second in violent crime, second in other Criminal Code violations, third in breaking and entering, third in property crime, and fourth in other theft.

Now, as if that is not bad enough, let us look at Winnipeg in some of those statistics as well. This is according to Statistics Canada. In 2002, the city of Winnipeg was ranked among other major metropolitan areas in selected Criminal Code incidents as follows: Winnipeg was first in homicide; first in sexual assault; first in assault; first in robbery; first in violent crime; first in motor vehicle theft; first in mischief; first in

other Criminal Code violations; second in break and enter; second in property crime; second in offensive weapons; and third in other theft.

One of my colleagues just said: Are you not proud to be a Manitoban at this point? Well, I am proud to be a Manitoban, but I am not proud of the statistics of crime that this Government is responsible for. These numbers are dismal, to say the least. There is absolutely nothing in the Throne Speech to address these issues, which I find absolutely unbelievable. Clearly, this Government has lacked leadership and vision for the province in the area of crime.

Let us look at health care. The Government has put a lot more money into health care in our province since it took office. Yet, what are we getting for it? Patients still line our hallways of our hospitals. Waiting lists for key diagnostic procedures continue to rise. The nursing shortage has doubled, and there is no will on the part of this Government to support a co-op program to try and keep our young nursing students here after they graduate. I think that is just absolutely shameful.

Again, there is nothing in the Throne Speech to address these concerns. There is no plan, no vision and an extreme lack of leadership when it comes to governing the health care system in this province.

So I would like to now go to education. I feel very passionately about education. I have a two-year-old daughter at home and another baby on the way. Many of my peers discuss education of their children, and so on. It is something that we have discussions about on a regular basis, whether it is people in the community, people outside of my community who continue to voice their concerns around how our education system is being run in this province. Some of the issues that come forward are the quality of education. Yes, the costs have increased. There is more money going into the education system. Yet the quality has been declining.

I would like to just go to some statistics that have come out in the last little while where 64 percent of Grade 3 students do not meet expectations in subtraction facts to 10; 48 percent of Grade 3 students do not meet expectations in

extending and describing mathematical patterns; 42 percent of Grade 3 students do not meet expectations in addition facts to 10; and 43 percent of Grade 3 students do not meet expectations in creating addition and subtraction story problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those numbers are unacceptable to the people on this side of the House. Obviously, those are acceptable to this Government. I find that absolutely deplorable when it comes to the quality of education that we are trying to offer our children in this province.

So let us talk a little bit about standards tests. Now, the previous Minister of Education stated that his caucus would be discussing the direction that they would be taking for standards testing in the future. He stated that in a *Free Press* article on September 24 of this year. I guess I would like to know where these discussions have taken place, if they have taken place, and what direction that this Government plans to move in the way of standards testing.

The Doer government spends about 1.7 million on optional testing for Grades 6 and 9. I am just wondering if they are planning to make this mandatory so we know where our children stand. So, really, that 1.7 million right now is, I mean, a number that is being wasted, I think, unless it is a mandatory program in Grades 6 and 9, I believe it is, money that is basically being thrown out the window. So we would like to see them move in that direction but would like to know what their plan is. Also, will they expand the Grade 12 program of testing to include other subject areas? What is the Government's plan, again, for the quality of education for our children?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just to talk briefly about forced amalgamation of school divisions, I think it has been bantered about back and forth in this Legislature several times now about the fact that this Government stated that its forced amalgamation plan would save the taxpaying citizens of our province about \$10 million. Well, recently, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees has come out with a figure that it will actually cost school divisions closer to \$17 million, and that is sort of a minimum they are looking at, a cost of \$17 million.

* (15:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a difference of \$27 million that we are talking about here of taxpayers' money. So I would like to know, and I have asked this question several times: Does this \$10 million in savings still exist somewhere, or are we now finding out what the real costs are of this botched amalgamation scheme of this Province? It was obviously a very ill-thought-out plan. It lacked in vision and had nothing to do with providing a better quality of education for our kids.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about provincial education funding which has dropped since this Government took office from 60.9 percent in 1999 to 56.7 percent today, a 7.7% decline since this Government took office. I mean, clearly education is not a priority for this Government.

There was absolutely no mention or very little mention of education in the Throne Speech, which I find is absolutely unbelievable considering that it is the future of our workforce in this province and to me an extremely important part of what the Government offers. I just find it absolutely deplorable that it was not mentioned more in the Throne Speech other than rehashing some announcements that have been made previously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this offloading of the 7.7 percent or the decline of the percentage that this Government puts into education has resulted in a 30% property tax increase in our province, which is absolutely unbelievable in just the four years that this Government has taken office. The offloading of the education portion onto the taxpayers of local communities is unacceptable, and it must stop.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that unfortunately it is regrettable that there is not much to be positive about in this Throne Speech. Generally, it is very weak. It lacked in vision. It lacked in hope for economic prosperity for our children, certainly with no or virtually very little mention of education at all in the Throne Speech.

I will have no choice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, than to vote against it, but I would also, just in

conclusion, like to thank once again the people of Tuxedo for instilling in me the confidence to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature. Thank you very much.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): It is a privilege and an honour to stand in the House today to speak to the Speech from the Throne that is this Government's great vision for the future of this great province. I am very proud to represent the constituency of Gimli, geographically one of the smaller rural constituencies but in terms of eligible voters the second largest constituency in Manitoba.

In my response to the Throne Speech, I will take a few moments to reflect first on some of the most profound moments in my life, moments which have affirmed what I have done with my life and why I have chosen this political path that has brought me to this magnificent building, the Manitoba Legislature.

I will pay tribute to many people who have played very important roles in shaping my views and supporting my choices, my challenges and my convictions. I will reflect on my home constituency, a place I have called home all my life, and the great things this Government has done to improve the quality of life in my constituency. Finally, I will comment on the vision that has been laid out in the Throne Speech that speaks to a very bright future for the best province in the Dominion in the best country in the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I do that, I must first reflect on what has transpired in the past six months. What a memorable six months this has been. I have had the opportunity to meet with many constituents and share in their celebrations, whether it be recognizing their heritage, preserving their history, celebrating milestones or launching a new venture. It has indeed been a tremendous opportunity to get to know so many people who share their passion for Manitoba.

More recently, I have also had the good fortune to meet with many former colleagues and stakeholders in education with whom I have crossed paths before in my 13 years as a high school teacher. A number of memorable experiences indeed, but however one that was very

important to me occurred last June. I had the privilege of representing the First Minister at The Forks on the occasion of the arrival of the *Viking Saga*. This ship was a 20-metre replica of a Viking *knar*, an ocean-going freighter, which was co-sponsored by this Government to provide tours on Lake Winnipeg all summer long.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this event and reception that followed, I had the good fortune to meet Mr. Magnus Eliason, and, as a close-knit community in Manitoba, our conversation inevitably turned to our Icelandic roots. "Who were your parents? Who were your grandparents?" Mr. Eliason asked. When he discovered that I was the grandson of Gudmundur Bjornson from Arborg, he immediately recalled having met my grandfather before. That was in Arborg in 1938 at an inaugural meeting for the CCF.

My *afi*, or grandfather, rarely talked politics with me when I visited him, and as such I was thrilled to learn that he had been a part of the founding movement of our party. It is unfortunate that my passion for politics would not emerge until about three years after my *afi* died at the age of 98. I regret that he and I never did discuss politics in any depth, but I am grateful I had the opportunity to speak about my grandfather with Mr. Eliason, and I look forward to the next opportunity to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had many moments in my life that have affirmed the choices that I have made and reminded me why I have chosen these paths that I have. I will relate three short stories of three very powerful moments. Perhaps occupational hazard as a former history teacher, I am compelled to tell some of these stories.

I am very passionate about history. When I worked in a retail store in Gimli while working towards my Bachelor of Arts, there was a regular customer, an elderly gentleman named Gordie, who stopped in on a daily basis while his wife made the usual rounds picking up the mail, picking up the groceries, et cetera. Gordie was always the passenger, never the driver, and when I finally got to know him well enough, I asked him why this was the case. Gordie had been posted in Hong Kong with the Winnipeg Rifles when it fell to the Japanese. He spent six years in

an internment camp, and it reached a point where he was so malnourished that he became legally blind. He could barely see a metre in front of him. Gordie would have perished had it not been for a good friend who would chew his food for him and regurgitate it so that Gordie could get some nourishment in order to survive.

One morning, Gordie came into the shop and was visibly shaken. When I asked him why, he told me that he had just been to a reunion for the Winnipeg Rifles POWs and that one person he really so desperately wanted to see, the man who saved his life, had died 10 days before the reunion. Gordie was never the same, and Gordie passed on shortly after that. Gordie's story made me realize how important it is to teach history and how important it would be to tell his story.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a teacher, I have had many wonderful experiences. One that I must tell you about today relates to a young lady who had endured some very difficult times and who I was very concerned about. I could not begin to understand some of the hardships she suffered and the emotional turmoil that was the under-riding part of her high school years. I always wondered if I was able to help her in any way, shape or form. Teachers have the tools to measure academic performance, but it is often difficult to measure the impact we are having on a student in the school of life when academic needs might seem to be secondary. I had the tremendous honour of walking that young lady down the aisle at her wedding. Her story, her circumstance made me realize how important a teaching career is, how powerful an impact teachers have on their students' lives, and as such, I have been incredibly passionate about the teaching profession.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a social democrat, I must tell you the most moving story I was ever told. It had to be that of my friend Roger. His story takes us back to MacGregor, Manitoba, in 1931. Roger's father proudly brought his mother and his newborn son, Roger, home from the hospital only to discover that his wife had fallen ill. The doctor informed Roger's father that his wife's illness would require hospitalization and he needed to pay \$36 up front before she would be admitted, an insurmountable amount in 1931 in Manitoba for a man of limited means. Roger's

father's friends, family and the community rallied to collect money and came up with \$31. When they went to the hospital, they were refused care. They did not have enough money. He reluctantly turned back and took his wife home to watch her die. Roger was 13 days old when he lost his mother.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this tragic story affirms what I believe about universal health care, what we believe about universal health care, and the tremendous work this Government is doing to continually improve our health care system. This reminds me that we must be diligent in improving and protecting a system that we all value not only as Manitobans but as a defining characteristic of what it means to be Canadian.

* (15:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have said, these three stories have affirmed my passion for our history, my passion for the teaching profession and my passion for social justice. But to be passionate about something is irrelevant unless you are prepared to take a step to act upon those passions and thus my journey to the Legislature began.

My success in this journey is a debt of gratitude I owe to a number of people. I must first thank my family. My parents, Don and Hedy Bjornson have supported me through all my choices in life respecting my decisions, offering unconditional support and guidance. My siblings, my brother Don, sisters Cindy and Judy, are my best friends as there is a mere five years and one month from the oldest to the youngest, and I am very proud of their achievements and their successes in their lives. My wife, Joanne, my children, five-year-old Kieran, three-and-a-half-year old Dane and eight-and-a-half-month-old Iris have been very patient, understanding and supportive as daddy adjusts to the demands of his new career. My strength is in the strength, love and support of my family.

My path to becoming a teacher has had many mentors. I cannot acknowledge them all, but I must acknowledge the following: Professor Jean Friesen, who taught me to be passionate about what I taught; Professor Emeritus Ken

Osbourne, who taught me to be passionate about how I taught; my principal and good friend at Gimli High School, Mr. Robert Arnason, who continually supported my program and encouraged me to raise the bar for my students and for myself; my mentor, vice-principal and good friend, Ken Kristofferson, who helped me deal with the demands of teaching that they cannot prepare you for at university, going beyond the pedagogical in dealing with the social dynamics and social realities that our students face every day. I must acknowledge Mr. William Barlow, a colleague both in the classroom and on municipal council. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the class, integrity and dignity he brought to the office of mayor in the community of Gimli over a very distinguished 17-year career on municipal council.

My constituency association is an amazing group of hardworking, dedicated volunteers. There are so many on board I could not possibly acknowledge them all, but I must mention the unwavering support of Roger and Norma Lowe, Don and Helen Tole, and my campaign manager, Bonnie Schmidt.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must also pay tribute to my neighbours and colleagues in the Interlake ridings of Selkirk and the Interlake. The honourable members from these two constituencies have been incredibly helpful before, during and since the election. I am proud to be associated with my two colleagues from the Interlake and look forward to what we can accomplish for the people of the Interlake and Manitoba. The journey that has brought me to the Legislature has been one that I will never forget, and I am very proud and honoured to serve the people of the fine constituency of Gimli.

This constituency is comprised of five municipal governments. It is shared by three school divisions and is an area that continues to grow as a popular tourist region, retirement destination and bedroom community. It is a constituency that is home to a wealth of economic activities, including fishing, farming, light and heavy industry and a region where the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well. The Gimli constituency is home to a number of heritage sites, including the historic Lower Fort Garry, the St. Andrews

locks, the Ukrainian Homestead Museum in Winnipeg Beach and the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli, to name but a few of the attractions, a very diverse area indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Gimli constituency has benefited immensely from this Government. A new health centre in Gimli, a new school in Gimli, capital improvements to three other schools in the constituency, investments throughout the area in tourism initiatives and recreation facilities, recently announced highway projects in response to local government concerns are but a few examples. I must highlight one particular project that was particularly pleasing to me as a history major. The investment in the Full Circle-First Contact exhibit at the New Iceland Heritage Museum and the aforementioned *Viking Saga* were tremendous assets for the community of Gimli, contributing to a wonderful critical mass of tourism infrastructure in the area.

I recently read a review of the exhibit which concluded, and I quote: From a museological perspective, the Full Circle exhibit was not only a striking reiteration of our passionate interest in roots and origins. More importantly, perhaps, it marked an important milestone in the development of Gimli's New Iceland Heritage Museum and its transformation into an institution worthy of that coveted designation, world class.

This excerpt from Dr. Robert Klymasz, Curator Emeritus, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in Gatineau, Québec.

This Government believed in the can-do attitude of the museum board and the Vikings on the Prairies committee to bring these two world-class attractions to Gimli with spectacular results.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, an integral part of the past success and the bright future of the Gimli constituency is the health of Lake Winnipeg and our valuable water resources. I am proud to be part of a government that is leading the nation, leading the way for both Canada and the United States with a first-ever Water Stewardship Department. It was the lake that provided sustenance for earliest Aboriginal cultures to inhabit the Interlake region 2500 years before present. It

was the lake that served as a vital network for fur traders and explorers to travel in the storied York boat brigades, to chart a future for European development and settlement.

It was the lake that attracted the struggling Icelandic settlers from their impoverished colony in Kinmount, Ontario, in 1875. It was the lake that attracted Sir William Whyte to create the weekend retreat that would become the popular boardwalk of Winnipeg Beach in the 1920s.

It was the quality of water that attracted the Seagram plant to Gimli in 1969. It is the lake that has hosted several provincial, regional, national and international sailing competitions. However, it is the same lake that has been closed to fishermen in the 1970s due to mercury poisoning. It is the same lake that has suffered massive sewage spills from the sewers in the city of Winnipeg. It is the same lake that is threatened by the possibility of foreign biota finding its way into the ecosystem if solutions cannot be found for flooding problems in the United States. It is a lake that has been neglected far too long and has suffered tremendous harm from years of neglect. It is a responsibility every Manitoban must now bear.

This year alone we have seen beach closures due to unacceptable levels of E. coli and unprecedented algae blooms. That is why I am very proud to be part of a government that has supported the first longitudinal research on Lake Winnipeg; a government that has assisted in establishing the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium; a government that has established the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board and the first Water Stewardship Department.

This Government has a plan to work with all Manitobans to address the health of our lakes and the safety of our water supply. We will be regulating livestock operations, septic fields and urban waste treatment. We will restore water testing subsidies. We will improve flood protection, drainage networks and clean drinking water service to all Manitobans as part of our commitment to our most valuable resource.

We in Manitoba accept our responsibility for water stewardship, and, as the region through which over 20 percent of the waters in North

America drains, we look beyond our political boundaries to engage all partners in the watershed in a dialogue to restore our waterways to the health we expect, to the health it deserves in Manitoba.

I have lived by the lake my entire life. I have been in awe of the beauty of a peaceful, brilliant sunrise on the lake in the morning, yet that same evening I might be awestruck by the surreal quality of the lake when the waters are such that you cannot discern the water from the horizon. Yet that same night I might look on in fear of the rage and the fury of the lake as it awakens from a dead calm to the violent pounding of three-metre swells. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the lake. This Government has a tremendous amount of respect for the lake and we will work very hard to restore Lake Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on July 1 this past summer, I had the pleasure of attending the Canada Day celebrations in Gimli, Selkirk and West St. Paul. The West St. Paul Canada Day celebrations were held in a beautiful riverside park, aptly named Rivercrest Park, which was bustling with activities to celebrate our nation's birthday.

As a history buff, I could not help but reflect on this sanctuary as it may have appeared almost 300 years ago when the Aboriginal mapmakers were first commissioned to provide a chart for the explorers and fur traders who would soon follow. It is likely that the three Cree cartographers, Auchagah, Tacchigis and La Martelblanche, in 1728-1729 had sought refuge in this very same part as they chartered their course.

This river sanctuary will benefit from the new course that this Government is charting in flood protection initiatives with the expansion of the floodway.

At this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to focus on my new responsibilities as Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth. Before I begin, though, I must say how proud I am to be a graduate of the University of Manitoba. Rarely does a day go by that I do not wear my U of M grad ring. Having said that, I must first say how very disappointed I am that the members

opposite would choose to buy into the rhetoric of the annual *Maclean's* poll rather than joining us in taking pride in and defending the reputation of one of Manitoba's fine post-secondary institutions.

Last week, the Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford) referenced Her Excellency Adrienne Clarkson, the Governor General of Canada, and His Excellency John Ralston Saul as advocates of the ACCESS program here in Manitoba. I will echo those comments as I had the good fortune to hear them first-hand when I was in Rideau Hall on November 14 this year. Our ACCESS program should be the model for academic engagement and opportunity for all of Canada. It is an incredible success story of which we should be very proud.

* (15:30)

Members opposite should be celebrating the successes of our universities. At the University of Manitoba alone, we have researchers who have been responsible for lifesaving research. It is a university where the multibillion-dollar Canola industry was pioneered. It is one of Manitoba's universities which has contributed to the list of Manitobans who have achieved Rhodes scholar status, a status which has been bestowed the most on Manitobans when compared to the rest of western Canada. Yet members opposite choose to accept *Maclean's* rhetoric and call into question the hard work, dedication and academic achievement of our university students and professors.

This Government will continue to make university and college more accessible. We will not rest on our laurels of a 29% increase in enrolment, tuition freezes and the much needed investment in infrastructure. We will invest in the University College of the North and initiate programs that will make post-secondary education more accessible than ever and particularly accessible to rural Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very excited about the new Aboriginal Education Action Plan and the framework for improved learning outcomes and workforce participation for our growing Aboriginal population. Last week, I was

pleased to bring greetings to the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents conference on Aboriginal education initiatives. I look forward to the continued consultation with all partners and stakeholders to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are part of our curriculum and this process. I look forward to a more meaningful and engaging curriculum and education system that will translate into increased success for our Aboriginal youth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite have been questioning our commitment to education with respect to education funding. I will once again for the record gladly compare our record with that of the previous Tory government. I appreciate that I used this analogy earlier, but one more time for the record, we do have a situation comparing the record of this Government with the record of members opposite that can best be described in the analogy, as I said before, of apples and lemons. As I said before, I still have a bitter aftertaste with respect to those particularly lean years under the Conservatives.

We have been funding education at the rate of economic growth or better since we came into office. Compare our four years and over \$83 million of increased funding to \$15 million over five years of Tory governance. In my tenure as a teacher, I saw the impact that the funding from the members opposite had on our school system, minus 2 percent, minus 2.6 percent, zero percent, minus 2 percent, zero percent and a modest increase of 2.2 percent, which was announced in an election year.

We saw an increase in dependence on the local school boards' municipal Special Education Levy to the tune of 68 percent. We have been reducing the provincial Education Support Levy and are committed to phasing it out completely. We have increased property tax credits and put money back into the pockets of Manitobans while not compromising programs, services and infrastructure improvements to our schools after years of neglect by the members opposite.

We will continue to fund education at a level that will allow schools the opportunity to continue to offer many valuable programs for our students. For example, last Tuesday night, I had

the pleasure of attending the University of Manitoba's School of Music concert at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute. Both the concert band and wind ensemble provided very powerful and moving performances. I was very pleased to see 39 students from Winnipeg and area high schools participating as guest musicians. I was especially pleased to see Gimli High School students, former students of mine, performing as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wind ensemble conductor, Dr. Fraser Linklater, referred to the fact that these performers were merely the tip of the iceberg, and that which lied beneath is the wonderful band and music programs that are offered throughout many Manitoba schools by very dedicated and hardworking band teachers. Music is alive and well in Manitoba schools.

Almost two weeks ago, I enjoyed the opportunity to visit the Point Douglas constituency and officially open the new addition at newly renovated Argyle Alternative School. One could feel the pride and the very strong sense of community shared by the students, parents and staff of this very unique school. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the audience was treated to a very informative, often humorous student video production summarizing the school's history and alternative programming.

Many members of the audience were moved by the heartfelt, sincere presentation by Argyle student and Legislature page Frankie Sarson. At the conclusion of the ceremony, I promised to return to Argyle to look at the impressive student artwork. I am happy to say that I did so last Friday. One could not help but be impressed by the magnificent artwork so proudly displayed in the art room and throughout the school. Art is alive and well in Manitoba schools.

As a high-school athlete, I have been listening with great interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the results of the provincial volleyball competitions that have been going on. I really do firmly believe in the motto of the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association that sports is indeed the other half of education. As a product of high school athletics, I am a firm believer in this mantra and suggest to you that physical education is alive and well in Manitoba schools.

The mantra of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is success for all learners. Success for all learners depends on our ability to offer those learners many options to explore their strengths, to engage the learners and provide opportunities to succeed. Success for learners means providing appropriate infrastructure both in terms of capital projects and technology. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to say that we are investing in our youth. We are investing in our schools. We will not compromise the programs that offer our students the best opportunity to succeed in our schools.

I am also very thrilled with the addition of Citizenship to the portfolio. Civic engagement in adolescence leads to civic engagement in youth. This goes beyond civics in the context of voting. This includes understanding one's history, developing a sense of community and participating therein.

Educational leaders need to lead by example, and last week I am pleased to say that I saw such an example of engagement when I delivered an address to an audience of students, parents, teachers, support staff, trustees, superintendents and community leaders at a vision-and-mission-building exercise at the Louis Riel School Division. This exercise is appropriately staged on the anniversary of the amalgamation of the St. Vital and St. Boniface school divisions which had created the Louis Riel School Division.

I was very pleased to participate along with my colleagues the honourable Member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) and the honourable Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick). This exercise was a reflection of part of my personal philosophy of education, that it is a community responsibility that is based on an inclusive, recursive and consultative process that brings all partners to the table in the best interests of the students and their future place in our communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the consultative approach is something this Government has done very well in its first term and will continue to do so in our second. This is a government that respects teachers and trustees and the important work that they do for our children. I look

forward to working very hard with all members of our educational community.

I suppose one of the benefits of being one of the last members to speak in this Throne Speech debate process is the opportunity given to respond to some of the words spoken by previous speakers. As such, I would like to respond to some of the things that have been said thus far.

First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very proud of the exceptional work our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has been doing to clean up the mess in health care that 11 years of neglect had created. One of the very important initiatives was the introduction of the gamma knife. This technology performs lifesaving surgery, reduces patient time in hospital, and Manitoba is the first jurisdiction in Canada to offer this technology and service.

I find it quite odd the Member for Morris (Ms. Taillieu) would pan this technology as being somewhat dated and that we should be exploring newer technologies, which rest assured we are doing. We are exploring newer technologies. However, having said that, this proven technology is a welcome addition for Manitoba patients and doctors, and I suggest that the Member for Morris discuss the equipment and the procedure with the patients who have benefited from this technology, rather than suggesting that we are behind the times here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Portage la Prairie entertained us all with his rendition of welcome to the future by suggesting it was a good idea to actually sell MTS. Very few Manitobans would benefit from the sale and all Manitobans would face increases of over 60 percent on their phone bills. Well, our Government's version of welcome to the future is a strong public utility, Manitoba Hydro, that will only grow in importance and value and remain a public utility to benefit all Manitobans.

* (15:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to be here as the MLA for Gimli. Manitoba is a province that is demonstrating incredible leadership here in Canada: the first Department of Water

Stewardship; the first prenatal benefit in Canada; the first healthy child initiative; the first gamma-knife surgery in Canada; the first corporate tax deduction since World War II; the first university access program; one of the first jurisdictions to sign on the Kyoto agreement; and, with the co-operation of members opposite, the first indoor smoking ban. These are but a few of the many things I can point out that speaks to the vision of this and in the case of the access program previous NDP governments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to be here and to be a member of this Government. This province has been well served by this Government and the success has been reflected in the fact that our young people are staying in Manitoba. It has been reflected in the fact that our health care system is continually improving. It has been reflected in the fact that we have an education system that is providing opportunities for success for all learners. We have a vision for the future economic growth of our province and sustainable clean energy and new partnerships in economic diversification.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also compelled to respond to the comments made previously by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) with respect to the quality of our education. That comment questions the professionalism of our teachers. Obviously, the member from Tuxedo is not familiar with the recent data that shows that Manitoba is faring very well. I was very disappointed to hear those comments. The member from Tuxedo also advocates standard tests. Well, this Government advocates assessment, another apples and oranges comparison.

An Honourable Member: Lemons.

Mr. Bjornson: Yes, lemons. Thank you.

Assessment is a means of improving outcomes for students.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a rural member of the Legislative Assembly, I am thrilled about the economic diversification opportunities that lie ahead and the sustainable growth of the rural economies. This is a government that represents all Manitobans: rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba, urban Manitoba, and as I

mentioned earlier, has invested much in the vision of the people of the Gimli constituency as it has throughout rural Manitoba.

My journey to this House has been one I will never forget, but I have only begun to chart my course here, and I am honoured to be on the course with a government and a vision that has been brought forth in this Speech from the Throne on this the second session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba. I once again thank my constituents for their support and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): It seems you and I have a relationship, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Every time I think I have spoken to a Throne Speech, you have been representing the Government in the Chair.

I am pleased to put a few words on the record about the Throne Speech. I think as is tradition in this House we do take a moment to acknowledge the people that were elected in the last election. I welcome them to the House and offer them our best wishes as they move forward in their political careers and also to acknowledge the people that came before us and have chosen either not to run again or were defeated or have moved on to other endeavours in their lives. I think it is incumbent upon us all to acknowledge that everyone that gets elected to this Legislature, no matter what party they represent, does so with the best interests of Manitobans in mind and moving the province forward.

I also want to acknowledge the staff that work in this Chamber and also throughout the Legislature. We come to count on them quite a bit as far as information, advice and direction. I think my personal experience has been that I have always felt I have been very well served and that the best interests of me as a member and of my community is being put forward when I do ask the questions, so I do want to acknowledge that.

It is interesting, I have had the opportunity, now, in a few elections to make some comments on throne speeches and have seen some, was a part of writing some and a part of Opposition as far as reading it and acknowledging it and maybe offering some suggestions as to where the

Government, perhaps, is not fully understanding the issues and moving forward without a real plan or a real vision.

I am prepared to offer some, I guess, suggestions to the Government today on where I see those shortcomings, but also to offer some solutions as to what they might be able to do to improve it. A lot of people I have talked to who have read the Throne Speech or heard it, certainly, felt the package that was offered to the people of Manitoba truly lacked vision.

To me, a Throne Speech is about the future. It is about opportunity. I think a government that misses the opportunity to talk about the possibilities that are out there for our province and the people of our province, I think they miss a tremendous opportunity to show that vision and show that hope to the people.

At the end of the day, we all live with hope and with that idea that if we put everything into what we do it will be a better day, a greater day for us and our families and, hopefully, affecting and impacting our community in a positive way.

I just think this Throne Speech fails to address that. If I thumb through it, I can talk to you about managing programs and I can talk to you about some of the issues that are facing government, but there is really no vision in the Throne Speech.

In a couple of areas that I do want to highlight, they talk about Water Stewardship and the appointment of a new minister to this department. The Premier (Mr. Doer), in his speech to the AMM delegates in Brandon, talked about how in the past water was in so many different ministries and departments that it was hard to manage. One organization was moving forward on a project or a specific idea, and another department who had the authority was not being notified, and when it hit them as a surprise, you get conflict.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Premier did analyze it right. There were four departments: Agriculture, Conservation, obviously Finance plays a role in it, the Health side of it. By putting it into one, I think the Premier has made a good, sound decision. I hope that he empowers that

department and that minister with the ability to develop the water possibilities we have in this province. I will talk about them, but in the same time that the Premier of this province was doing that and giving the reasons for doing that, which I believe were accurate, he took economic development, moved it and spread it into about six departments. We have the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) representing a segment of economic development. We have the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), a segment of economic development.

Several departments got pieces of that pie. I do not believe that is how you move the province forward with a vision. I think you are going to have the same problems with the water issue in the economic side, because you are going to have departments forging ahead and other departments trying to play catch-up and nobody really understanding, therefore, things slow down.

Take it as advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or just something that I have seen in my past where when you have different factors of the economy working against each other things tend to bog down and things tend to not work as efficiently or as properly as they are meant to be. The intentions are always good.

I do want to talk about the water department. Again, as long as I have been involved in community politics, I have believed in the water system, preserving it. I have believed in the environment side of it. I stand very proudly before this Legislature as a member of a rural council when I was a part of a conservation group that built one of the first dams in southwest Manitoba to store water, and the controversy that surrounded it. There were not a lot of people on side with that type of project. Looking back 20 years ago, when we did this, today it is being utilized, it is actually being used for some irrigation, it is being used as a water supply for some of the producers in the area, and it has eliminated a water problem that other people were having because it does move water and it manages water. I truly believe that Manitoba needs a water management strategy.

We should be talking about building dams and reservoirs in rural Manitoba and containing

water, containing it as I have seen in other places in the United States where they have four and five huge reservoirs of water which they designate uses of, some for agriculture, some actually for human consumption. It is treated, it is moved into the system. It works well. It is good management.

* (15:50)

Everybody in rural Manitoba will tell you, and the Member for Lakeside used to always say that the good Lord put water on this earth so men would fight over it. It is true. Farmers want the water off their property early in the spring. People downstream do not want the rush of water that hits them when everything is drained so quickly. We have to build and determine ways of managing that water, not only just managing it to hold it, to control the flow, but to utilize the economic benefits that come with it.

I would encourage this new minister to take a look at that. I know that the department of natural resources a few year ago did a study across the province and talked about dams, talked about water projects. I think probably now the time has come when we must move that discussion forward and put it on the agenda. It creates a better environment, because it is water management. Instead of flushing high nutrient water through the system, you manage it, you control it, you treat it, you disperse it so that it can be utilized in many different ways.

The Throne Speech talked about energy. While I agree with the Government that Hydro can be a very stimulating part of the energy sector, I wonder sometimes if too much emphasis is being put on Hydro by this Government to be all energy sources to everybody. In my mind Hydro creates water energy; it creates electricity; and it has done a tremendous job of it. It has built up a tremendous reputation of being a supplier and meeting the needs of not only Manitobans but of our export market.

I hear about the speeches made by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and by members opposite. They talk about: We have paid down the debt, \$380 million. Well, I think that is a good thing, but if I look where the money came

from, it came out of a public Crown corporation. That does not balance. That does not make the system better. That is not saying you have actually put your nose to the grindstone and solved an economic problem. All you have done is created a problem for Hydro. Sure, Manitoba's books are balanced according to the numbers, but Hydro's are not.

We look at the legislation they have brought forward since they have been elected in 1999. They brought legislation forward that says you cannot privatize this, you cannot sell this, you cannot do that. One of the things maybe they should put in their legislation is that thou shalt not steal money from Hydro and we will operate on our own ability to raise tax money in our communities and make us all more accountable at the end of the day.

I know that Hydro has had a difficult time in this last couple of years. It is like every cycle in business. No matter how good the cycle is going, eventually there comes a time when there is a blip in the market, the 20% increase in our Canadian dollar. It has really highlighted the inefficiencies of some of our manufacturers, not only in Manitoba but in Canada. I think everybody knew it was going to come some day but we just kept hoping that it would be prolonged and delayed and we would be able to get through it.

In effect what it is saying is that, although we produce and manufacture goods that are a great finished product, our efficiencies and ability to produce them at a cost is not. Having a weak dollar helped us with our exports. Having a strong dollar highlights the shortcomings we have experienced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spoken in this House many times about the health concerns. Coming from a rural constituency and rural communities, we feel the hurt this Government is inflicting upon our rural residents. When people no longer can move within a region of an hour drive or an hour and a half drive and access a doctor, where does it end? Everybody says you can drive to Brandon; you can drive to Winnipeg. Our communities are aging. Our communities are people who need help. I am not sure

they will be able to access the services if they are not provided in a closer proximity to them.

We talk about providing access and yet we make it impossible for them to get that access. We talk about improving health care. Technology is, obviously, improving it at a certain rate, but how do people access it? That to me has been the biggest issue we have, particularly in our communities, is access to care. Members opposite may not realize it, but in my community if you have to get in an ambulance to go to Brandon or Winnipeg, it is a \$500, \$600, \$700 bill. A lot of people living on fixed incomes just cannot afford that. They can access their local community hospitals. Unfortunately, a lot of the time the services are not there.

We also see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the depletion of doctors in rural Manitoba that the Government is being challenged with their vision of how that should be provided too. It is easy to say you have hired more people, but when more people are leaving, you are not gaining on the situation. It is a debate over the numbers as to, you know, we sold 100 pieces of furniture last year; we only made money on 10 of them. It does not give you the right to claim that you sold 100 and appear successful at doing it. The Government's thought process on that just does not mesh with the reality that is happening in our communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a few things I want to specifically talk about. It involves government programs. I think it is important that governments, no matter who they are, listen to themselves sometimes. Sometimes we get talking about the big picture and we make statements that actually make sense if only we would listen to ourselves when we were saying them.

I want to talk a little bit about the recruitment magazine the minister had implemented. I did not disagree that it may be a right idea, an attempt to try. We have a problem in Manitoba where people are leaving our communities. We can talk about the demographics and we can talk that the number of immigrants and number of people coming into Manitoba ages 15 to 24 is on the up and up. Well, I would

suggest to you that is probably because of the cheap education policy.

What I am concerned about is where are the people ages 24 to 30 going who have degrees in education? They are not staying in Manitoba. The numbers show these people are leaving our communities. We have to find a way, if not at making or helping them or encouraging them to stay in our province during that time frame, to at least come back to Manitoba when they have had an opportunity to spread their professional wings as well as their personal wings.

In that vein, I salute the minister for attempting to do it with her recruitment magazine, *Manitoba Calling*, but one of the statements that was made by the minister, and again I agree wholeheartedly with it, the statement reads: I think it is important to re-evaluate government programs, and, if they do not work, cancel them.

Boy, truer words could never be said about any program, about anything. When governments, when business, when individuals are on a path where it is not working, you sit back, you re-evaluate and you move in a different direction.

An Honourable Member: When your horse is dead, get off.

Mr. Tweed: Exactly. There was a statement made that we wonder why the outcomes are always the same when we repeat the same process over and over, and we cannot understand why the results are not different.

I commend the minister for having the foresight to see that attempted, good idea, did not work, was not seen to be working, re-evaluated and cancelled. We have been asking them to take a look at some of their policies and to re-evaluate, and when they are not working, acknowledge it and let us move forward, but, unfortunately, governments tend to get bogged down into ideologies. They do not want to step outside that boundary and say we made a mistake. We are prepared to look at it. We are prepared to re-evaluate and let us move forward. Instead, they deny; they defend; they hide and the problem continues to grow. The problem continues to get worse.

The Throne Speech talked about new opportunity for youth. I have addressed that to some degree. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is where a company like Manitoba Hydro can play a significant role. Has the Province in the last four years gone out and talked to any companies that are high-usage hydro users?

* (16:00)

I think of the debate in Ontario after the blackout when the auto companies were talking about how much they rely on energy to run their businesses, and I would hope that this Government has contacted every auto maker in the world to suggest that Manitoba might be a good place to build such a plant. Job creation, high energy, today's environmental issues are constantly being improved by the auto industry. In fact, they do have a very high rating in the environmental world as the things that they have done in the past, how they have improved them.

There are tremendous opportunities that Hydro can be that springboard to, but only if the Government lets the company operate the way the company was meant to operate. That was to provide power at low cost to its consumers, us in Manitoba, and build a market in the export world to continue the growth of the projects.

I have addressed the certain issue about young people. I think young people do want to live in Manitoba at some point. I am not sure that they want to live in Manitoba for a period of time, probably from their early twenties to their possibly thirties. I would encourage them not to live here in the sense that they need to go out and experience and see the world and have an opportunity. My challenge, and I think our challenge as legislators, is to create the environment that makes them want to come back to our province when they are ready to settle, raise their families, take on responsibilities such as this and in their communities. There has always been a growing process in our young communities. Unless we can offer them that world view, which I think we offer parts of it, but I do not think we want to handcuff them and lock them to the province of Manitoba. I think they come back with far more to offer once they have had that opportunity.

In the Throne Speech, they talked about several things. They talked about community safety. It was not that long ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that everything that happened in Winnipeg or Brandon would never happen in my community because we are far enough way from it. Unfortunately, that is changing. The criminal organizations, the crime that we are seeing is not only prevalent in the cities, it is moving into our communities. We need a government that is going to stand up to these people. We need a government that is going to do everything within the power of the law. I would include changing some laws if that is necessary to make these organizations disappear. I just do not believe that in this society there is a place for that type of criminal organization.

What we have seen in the last month or so with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and the Premier (Mr. Doer), regardless of who, what, when or where, we obviously know that the Hells Angels are here. We know that they are a criminal organization. We know that they deal in prostitution, drugs, guns, crime. It is not a secret. So what do we do to counteract that? To just say that you did nothing, and you did nothing, and you did nothing, that does not address the issue.

I think it is time that the Government stepped up to the plate and took a strong stance. This is their opportunity to show the people of Manitoba that they understand the issue. To hide behind the he said-she said and 10 years ago and 20 years ago, I do not think that washes with the people in the province anymore.

In the Throne Speech, the Government talks about affordable Manitoba. It reminds me of the speech that the Premier gave at the University of Manitoba and said we have got the cheapest housing stock in Canada. One of the students replied, well, I do not really care. I want an expensive home. I want my house values to be going up. I want people clamouring to buy my home, not giving me the lowest priced housing in the country.

I think that is the difference between what is happening today and what did happen before and what could happen in the future. People aspire to have and do more. To stymie that through

government policy or government ideology, we only have to look east and west to see where other provinces are moving forward at a far faster rate because they are taking off some of the shackles that government has put on them.

That is taxation and that is the cost of doing business. The Minister for Energy, in a Hydro committee, said, well, you just pass that cost along. Well, we are the consumers at the end of the day and we are also the taxpayers. You cannot continue to pass that along or people are driven out of your community.

We have recently been made aware of one of the pension issues that is affecting about 160 000 people in this province. Time to retire, they cannot access their own personal contributions to that fund, but if they go to Saskatchewan and live there for 30 days, they can. Is that not an interprovincial trade barrier that we are setting up?

We are going to force people out of our communities to live in Saskatchewan for a short period of time so that they can access the money that they put in there, that they have saved for. The government of the day's argument against this is, well, we do not trust people. They are going to go out and spend it all and then they will be on social assistance and it will cost us all more.

My answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is if these people have made a commitment in their working lives to contribute to these funds, I think they have a right to access them and I think they will be responsible. We have seen the Saskatchewan example where it has worked. But it is interesting the motivation behind why Saskatchewan did it and why Manitoba is not. In Saskatchewan, the MLAs of the province were in the same program. They found out when they retired they could not access their own money. So they changed the rules.

I am saying to people in Manitoba, we have an opportunity to help about 160 000 people by changing the rule and allowing them to access only their money. They are not asking for the employer's contribution to be accessed. They are asking to access their own money. I think that is

something that this Government could probably consider over time.

The other issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will try and keep it brief, but we talk about rural Manitoba and the opportunities. You only have to look at the financial statements of the Province and you can see where the department of rural development has been completely diminished and basically disappeared in this administration.

If you look at the Intergovernmental Affairs budget, they have cut \$17 million out of that budget. I would say it is the rural department. We have lost access to economic development officers. We have lost the positions out of our communities. Even Brandon, a major centre in this province, has seen a diminished role for the economic development officers of this province.

I say to a government that talks about being all things to all people and representative of all people, they truly have neglected rural Manitoba. They may stand on their soapboxes and give you lots of examples of lots of things that they have done, but in reality they have abandoned that part of Manitoba.

We no longer have that can-do attitude out there. We have that, you know, every time we take one step forward, not necessarily government, but, certainly, issues kick them back and make them take a step back, and the Government has not been there. They have been there with words but, certainly, not with substantial activity to help these people.

We talk about sustainable cities, and we, certainly, have seen the debate that has been going on in Winnipeg. While I disagree with the mayor of Winnipeg's proposal, I do not disagree with his attempt to open the discussion about taxation. I think that is something we all should look at.

* (16:10)

I can remember back in 1983, Peter Pocklington, as a leadership candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada, talked about a flat tax. All the mighty powers in the east pooh-poohed him as being too out there, and yet he

created the discussion around it, and a lot of people have looked at it. The one thing I have found is that nothing happens overnight in governments, so I think that Mr. Glen Murray, in his attempt to stimulate the discussion, has done a good thing because it has made people realize sometimes what things actually cost and who pays for them. I am sure that there will be a solution somewhere in that mix.

The part that I find most offensive is I do not believe that you can sell people on a revenue-neutral proposal that takes another \$120 million or \$140 million out of people's pockets. The process did not sell it that way, and I think that the discussion has been valuable for us all. We certainly found out where the Province stood on the issue, where the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood on the issue, when he actually had to answer the questions. The Premier today in some of his comments, particularly around the education issue, says we want the status quo on this side. Well, if the status quo is saving us \$27 million, yeah, I will support that because the taxpayers are going to pay it and they are going to resent a government that would impose that on them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing, I have heard several comments about the Throne Speech. It has been referred to as the drone speech. It has been referred to as having no vision. People have talked about it as far as not being specific or visionary enough. I think all of these terms could apply.

As I said in my opening comments, I have seen a lot of throne speeches. Unfortunately, I do not feel that this one showed any vision to the Manitoba people. I think it shows a maintenance system, but I do not think people in Manitoba want a maintenance system anymore. They want a vision. They want an ideal that they can aspire to and be a part of. I think that this Government has truly failed them with this Throne Speech.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Fort Garry): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am most honoured to rise in the Chamber for the Second Session of the Thirty-eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

I want to begin by acknowledging the importance of your role in guiding the procedures

and processes in the Chamber, as well as the role of the Clerk, table officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms, pages and all others who contribute to the functioning of the Legislature. Their support is greatly appreciated. The care and attention that they showed the class of 2003 on both sides of the House was helpful. The information shared about roles, procedures and expectations assisted in the transition and my effectiveness. This assistance did not go unnoticed. I want to acknowledge the encouragement and acceptance I received from both sides of the House. Their patience and willingness to share information was helpful and appreciated. I would like to congratulate the members of Cabinet and extend my willingness to work with them to support their many initiatives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the First Minister (Mr. Doer) offering me the opportunity to be the legislative assistant for Culture, Heritage and Tourism. I will work closely with the minister and staff to meet the department goals. This opportunity is truly an honour, and I look forward to the challenges and learning ahead. A new, stand-alone Manitoba tourism agency is only one of the very exciting projects that the department is now working on.

I cannot proceed any further without reflecting on the journey that led me to the privilege of representing Fort Garry in the Legislature. I must recognize the hundreds of volunteers that worked on my campaign and also the MLAs for Lord Roberts (Ms. McGifford), Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) and St. Vital (Ms. Allan), my neighbouring colleagues who came out and provided much support.

I must recognize the other candidates for the June 3 election, Joy Smith, Taran Malik, and Didz Zuzens. Each individual worked diligently to assume the privilege as their MLA. It was a close race that caught the attention of people throughout Manitoba and across Canada. Fortunately, the residents of Fort Garry chose to elect their first New Democrat representative. This was based on the record of the Doer government and the commitment of the NDP to continue to address the most important issues for Manitobans: health care, accessible education, affordable living, keeping young people in the province, and economic development.

I am truly honoured and proud of this responsibility that I have been given. I will use my enthusiasm and commitment to serve the constituents of Fort Garry and all Manitobans to the best of my ability. I have enjoyed every day since this journey has begun and anxiously await the beginning of the next days. I am overwhelmed with joy and pride as I stand before you to deliver my inaugural speech. I am very capable of meeting the challenges as I represent Fort Garry because of my experience, knowledge and enthusiasm.

My development extends from my early years in Saskatchewan to my adulthood in Manitoba. As a child growing up in rural Saskatchewan I was given a strong foundation. My family demonstrated that commitment, a strong work ethic, determination and patience can form a strong foundation. The individuals that live in the hamlet of Viceroy and the surrounding area further provided support for this foundation. Childhood in a farming community taught me the importance of community spirit, appreciation for the land, resilience and co-operation. These roots continue to keep me grounded. You can leave the farm but the farm never leaves you.

I have been fortunate to be surrounded by many mentors in my life. There were school-teachers, employers and friends that contributed to my development. They encouraged me to push the limits, take risks and learn from all experiences. My recent mentors include the Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and the former Member for Riel. I appreciated their knowledge, expertise and commitment to the community. The encouragement and direction that they have given me is priceless.

However, my greatest teachers have been the hundreds of families that have given me their permission to work with them. The resilience, acceptance and strength that they have demonstrated during life's most challenging times were remarkable. The learning that occurred in those homes cannot be found in any book. I have grown so much from these brief encounters and will always carry their determination with me.

As a nurse and social worker for the last 14 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been employed in a variety of settings. My experience

includes hospitals, schools, Child and Family Services and community organizations. My professional experience has taught me about the strength of partnerships, the importance of grass-roots involvement, the necessity of inclusion, the need for a strength-based perspective and the value of preventative programming. These community development principles promote social and economic opportunities that support communities to unite and promote community-owned solutions that encourage social and economic successes. I will now use my knowledge and experience to meet the expectations of the constituents of Fort Garry.

Fort Garry is a community that is rich in history. The provincial boundaries are defined by Jubilee, Red River, Bison Drive and Waverley. Inside those boundaries is a diverse community that is vibrant and dynamic. Residents represent different cultural groups, a continuum of social and economic status, professionals and non-professionals at various ages and stages in life.

I would like to give you a little history about Fort Garry. In 1877, the first steam locomotive arrived along Pembina Highway. It was very popular to own a summer home along the Red River in the 1890s. The name of Fort Garry was derived from the Hudson's Bay Company trading post at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the early 1900s, Fort Garry was settled by French and Scottish settlers who originally moved from Québec, Ontario and the British Isles, as well as the Métis people. The population in 1905 was 1000. A rural municipality of Fort Garry was formed on April 6, 1912. There was no office, so meetings were held in the Legislative Building. The first municipal building was built in 1915 at 1650 Pembina. The community was comprised of market gardeners and other agricultural operations. The street names in Fort Garry were named after the first settlers in the area. A few examples are Dowker, Chevrier and McGillivray. The Red River was a source of enjoyment and a transportation method for the community.

The flood of 1950 was a community disaster. However, the community united and at-

tempted to hold back the floodwaters. Unfortunately, the dikes gave way to the powerful waters, but the flood did not take away their spirits or passion for their community. They survived the disaster by supporting each other.

In 1954, community leaders identified the need to establish an industrial park to expand the tax base and employment opportunities for residents. The park began to flourish and meet the goals. It still is an integral part of the fabric of Fort Garry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Fort Garry joined Unity, but never lost its identity. Fort Garry can boast about being the first community to have built a public library and the home of the first university in western Canada. The community has continued to change and develop to meet the needs of residents. There continues to be generations of families that call Fort Garry home.

* (16:20)

An active group of volunteers are committed to preserving and recording the history of Fort Garry. The Fort Garry Historical Society has recorded the history by publishing the book *Fort Garry Remembered*. Their mandate is simply to keep the history and pride alive for generations of Fort Garry residents. They are presently facilitating the process to unite community stakeholders in developing a plan to promote and preserve the historical value of Fort Garry. I am proud to support this initiative and be an active partner.

Since the 1999 election, Fort Garry has benefited from the commitments to revitalize health care, support families, improve accessibility to education and assist local groups. Victoria General Hospital received a contribution of \$5.5 million for a new oncology centre and a critical care unit, as well as the expansion of the surgi-centre and emergency. The board's vision is to develop an infrastructure that is community focused with a holistic perspective that will include healing gardens and a public library.

Healthy Child, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has invested in parent-child centres that assist families to develop skills in nutrition, literacy and

parenting. A summer program was established to support kindergarten readiness and literacy skills at a local school. This was a successful project that was funded by Healthy Child Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Lighthouse program has been funded by the Department of Justice at General Byng School. This is a vibrant and well-utilized recreational program for youth in the community. These preventative programs were made possible with the partnerships of the Fort Garry Network and the provincial government. The Fort Garry Network is an organization that is made up of community stakeholders representing various sectors such as education, health, child care, religious organizations, provincial and municipal government and social service agencies. They meet regularly to assess the community needs and develop proactive and preventative solutions to meet the challenges of the community.

Accessible education was and is the objective of our Government. The effects of our efforts were experienced by many students when tuitions were reduced by 10 percent and enrolment increased to 29 percent. The investment in infrastructure at the university has reversed a decade of cutbacks. We repaired leaky roofs and improved student residence. This support for the University of Manitoba benefits all Manitobans and particularly the Fort Garry constituents who are employed at or attend the university.

Community Places grants have assisted non-profit organizations to upgrade recreational facilities with new play structures and improve rinks. The day cares in Fort Garry have benefited from the approximately 40% increase in funding that has resulted in new child care spaces and improved wages for staff.

The expansion of Vincent Massey Collegiate was a welcome commitment. I attended the announcement with the previous Minister of Education and experienced the excitement as community members were brought to tears during the announcement. I continued to work with the Vincent Massey parent council during this process. What a wonderful addition the classrooms will be to a very dynamic education facility.

These are just a few highlights of the benefits that Fort Garry has been able to enjoy

directly since the 1999 election. While campaigning it was apparent the priority for Fort Garry was health care. Many constituents spoke about the notable improvements such as reduced wait lists, the addition to Victoria General Hospital, better quality of care and more doctors and nurses being hired. They acknowledge the dedication, commitment and hard work of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). They gave the Doer government the mandate to continue to address the issues in health care.

During the campaign and following the election, I met with many constituents and stakeholders to evaluate the assets of the community and also to identify the gaps. They can be categorized in specific topics: family, seniors, students, new Canadians, environmental issues, industry and small business, and education.

Families identified many benefits of raising their children in the community. They are looking forward to another middle-income tax cut of 6 percent that will take effect January 1, 2004. Affordable housing was identified by low-income families who desire to become homeowners. Recreational opportunities such as youth skateboard parks, children's playgrounds, accessible day care and early intervention programs were also highlighted.

With the seniors' community we have discussed issues such as the importance of accessible health care, their appreciation to the home care service, issues around transportation, as well as recreational activities. With university students, we have discussed maintaining affordable tuition, employment opportunities and their desire to remain in Manitoba.

New Canadians are becoming a growing segment of the Fort Garry constituency. This is ingrained in the constituency history. Today, our community is becoming increasingly diverse, populated by new Canadians with backgrounds from Sierra Leone, India and Sri Lanka. Their contributions are priceless as they settle in our community.

Environment is another priority identified by constituents. The close relationship with the Red River leads to many residents being concerned about water quality. The new Department of

Water Stewardship is a welcome addition. Clean energy is also a very important issue. We have constituents who are interested in the operation of the wind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our neighbours who are going to be beginning to establish their homes in the new Waverley Heights subdivision, we are excited to share with them. The business district of Fort Garry, a combination of small locally owned enterprises, large businesses and manufacturing firms, these businesses provide employment for many residents. Business owners have identified an interest in working cooperatively in their community to re-invest with their stakeholders.

I look forward to working with all of these groups in the constituency and to secure a bright and dynamic future.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to make my inaugural speech. I am committed to work for the constituency of Fort Garry and the entire province of Manitoba.

The Throne Speech described the commitment of government to improve health care, provide quality public education, promote healthy lifestyle, protect the environment and also make Manitoba a healthy and vibrant economic hub, encouraging people, especially young people, to stay here. These are the visions that are held closely to Fort Garry constituents.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I also wish to put some comments on the record. This is now the fifth Throne Speech I have spoken to in my career here in the Manitoba Legislature representing the constituency of Springfield-East St. Paul.

I would like to begin by thanking the most special people in my life, my wife, Tanya, who has stood by me through four years as school trustee and five years as MLA. She has been very supportive and, like every other spouse, she takes the brunt of our career, staying at home with our children and doing all the family things while we, as politicians, are out doing the dinner circuit and the ribbon-cutting circuit.

Besides my wife, Tanya, I would also like to thank my little daughter, Brigitta. She would probably be really offended; she is my big daughter, Brigitta. She is, after all, eight years old. My son, Stefan, who is six, and, of course, our youngest, Corina, who is now three and a half. If we are going to start telling secrets in the House, she actually runs the house, a three-and-a-half-year-old. *[interjection]* There is clapping in the House from other parents who also have the youngest running the household, I see.

I have enjoyed the past years that I have been able to serve, not just as school trustee, but the five years as MLA, and during the election, of course; elections are very hard on families. They are very hard on the spouse and particularly hard on children.

It reminds me of a story that came out of the east coast. When Bernard Lord was elected premier, he was gone so much he phoned home one day and his son shouted to his mom, he said, Mom, it is Mr. Lord on the phone. That is one of the problems, you actually do get disengaged from your family and your children. So to them I would like to thank them especially for their support and for their patience, Tanya with her husband, and the kids with their father.

I would like to thank the people of Springfield-East St. Paul who, for the second time, have placed their trust in me, electing me as their MLA and giving me this opportunity to stand in the Manitoba Legislature to debate on their behalf, to fight on their behalf, to represent them. In particular, I just love getting out with the community and visiting, going to events. I certainly appreciate each and every one of them and I look forward to representing them again for the rest of this mandate.

* (16:30)

During the election I had the opportunity to visit Vivian, Manitoba. I was in Anola, Manitoba; Dugald, Manitoba; Oakbank, Manitoba; Cooks Creek, Manitoba; the big city of Hazelridge, Manitoba, and growing strong; and, of course, East St. Paul. I found that the debate was always interesting. I found the issues that were brought forward were always compelling. Sometimes the issues were put forward in a very low-

key fashion and at other times they were put forward in a very heated and emotional way. That is also part of it.

I would like to take this opportunity also to thank my campaign team, in particular my campaign manager, Thor Fjeldsted; he put a lot of time into it. In fact, I guess I should thank Dixie, his wife, even more so for allowing Thor to do this. She used to answer the phone and say, well, Ron, Thor is downstairs growing mushrooms. He spent so much time in the basement.

Certainly, Dixie helped to run the East St. Paul side of the campaign and I would like to thank her and Thor. It is important for men and women to get involved in politics, to not just be Sunday's quarterbacks or armchair quarterbacks, but actually get out there and test their views, trying to convince others of what they believe in. So I would like to thank them.

I would also like to thank the dream team on the Springfield side of my seat. I call them the dream team of Springfield, Bev Zarazun, Gayle Dowler and Nancy Toin [*phonetic*], for an unbelievable effort they put in, just unbelievable, running the office and seeing to it that things were being run in an efficient manner.

All the others who helped out, I know there are many on all sides of this House, individuals who do not necessarily wished to be named, but I would like to thank them for their contribution and their efforts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the other candidates who ran. There is really no democracy unless there is a contest. I have been in two provincial elections. I have had outstanding high-calibre candidates run against me, and I would like to thank them.

I would like to thank the NDP candidate, Georgine Spooner. She has run before, I believe in two other elections, ran again this election.

I would like to thank the Liberal candidate, Vince Boileau, who was a councillor on the last Springfield council. Vince I happen to know better than Georgine Spooner. Vince Boileau and I worked incredibly well together. He, as

councillor, and I, as MLA, spent a lot of time at dinners and at functions, a real gentleman, a great guy to work with. In fact, I think ours was the only campaign headquarters in the province, we actually shared one office. The individual who rented my space to me neglected to mention that he put a chain link fence through half of the office and rented the other side to the Liberals.

When I approached him on it, I said, you know this really is not that workable.

Oh, good heavens, yes, we will just put plastic over the chain link fence. That is what we did, and it worked.

I guess if you are going to run a campaign, why would you not run it with the opposition in your own office? I mean, boy, if that does not define a modern democracy, I do not know what does. But Vince and I sat down, and I said, listen, Vince, we will get through this somehow. They always had a radio going, so we could not overhear what they had to say. We always took our meetings outside to the back parking lot and had our meetings there. That is where the best meetings are held, in the parking lot.

So it all worked out in the end. It was probably a little bit better conditions in the campaign headquarters in Springfield, though we are not complaining. At least we got a campaign headquarters. At that time, there was nothing to be had and it ended up being the back of an old restaurant. It took a little bit of elbow grease. We had to clean it up ourselves. Anyway, it all worked out.

To the other individuals who ran, Georgine Spooner and Vince Boileau, thank you very much for making it a contest and thank you for running campaigns with incredible integrity.

I just relay one story. Of course, we had our signs up. The minute the election was called, we were putting our signs up. I came home about a week and a half later and of course I had a big sign on my yard, and lo and behold, there was a Vince Boileau sign on my yard. Now, of course, Vince and I get along well, but not that well, so I took it down and the next day I walked into his headquarters and I said, you know, Vince, I really have gotten along with you well over the

years and like you, but, you know, I do not like you enough to have one of your signs in my yard. Oh, he says, Ron, that is okay, because I figured all is fair in love and war. Your guys put one in my yard. So I apologized. We promptly took that sign out of his yard and we got along just fine. Even on behalf of Georgine, the campaign was a very clean campaign. There was really nothing to reproach, and I would like to thank my competitors.

I would like to also thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) for holding an event in my constituency, albeit it was a private event and it was by invitation only, in my constituency. I drove down Henderson Highway, and first of all I was confused. I thought it was an SUV convention, and then I realized, oh, no, this would be an NDP barbecue, of course. How could I have confused the two? I always marvel at the socialist penchant and love for SUVs, being the environment lovers they are. In fact, on my street, there was one SUV and one NDP sign and they both seemed to be at the same house, but, you know, that is just the way it goes. I should put on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Premier was in my seat a second time, but that was driving through and he just used the bathroom in Oak Bank on his way to Beausejour.

So it was an interesting campaign, certainly, hard work. The weather, of course, was very hot. I know for the other candidates it was a very hot campaign. I certainly am glad to be back to get on with the people's business.

I will leave my comments at that and once more say to the people of Springfield with great humility, I appreciate the mandate that was given. I committed to two promises at the door the last time and that is what I will do again this time, that I will do my best and work my hardest representing the good people of Springfield-East St. Paul. Thank you.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does give me a great deal of pleasure to have the opportunity for a short period of time to respond and speak to the Throne Speech and, certainly, to the initiatives that our Government has brought forward again in a continuing effort to expand economic opportunities and to expand

some of the social values that I know Manitobans find so near and dear.

Just starting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the area that I represent in Brandon West is to be commended. I know the member opposite and others have spoken about pride within their memberships, their ridings. In Brandon West and area in this last election, I had the opportunity to talk to a lot of Manitobans, both in Brandon West, surrounding areas, the Minnedosa area, the Souris area, throughout rural Manitoba, Brandon East and others.

* (16:40)

What I had found in speaking to a lot of people on the doorstep was that they were happy with the direction that Manitoba has taken and the leadership Manitoba has taken over the last four and five years. Generally, in many, many of the areas that we had mentioned in the Throne Speech, I know some of the members opposite have mentioned that there is nothing innovative and nothing new in this Throne Speech. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say *au contraire*.

Quite frankly, it is a direction that Manitobans have asked us to take. It is what we have got from Manitobans on the doorstep in every constituency in every riding north, south, east and west throughout the entire province of Manitoba.

It again highlights, just running over a few of the keys, the area of health and in education, which Manitobans do find critically important to them, it again identifies that through different services that have been created such as the new water protection act, that Manitobans have told us over and over and over again is critically important to the future of young Manitobans and moving ahead with industry and moving ahead with the safety and health of Manitobans within our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was by no chance that the visionary Premier of this province brought forward a new department, the Department of Water Stewardship, led by a very capable minister, our minister from Thompson, to lead that very important initiative. I can tell you that if members opposite feel that there is

nothing new in this, they may want to go out and they may want to speak to members within their constituencies and ask them how important they feel that water is to the quality of life of Manitobans.

Water is one of the most critical issues that we will ever deal with in our lifetimes. There have been many, many years throughout the last 80-100 years that we have taken water for granted. The government previous in the cut-backs that they had made on some of the drainage and the initiatives in this province should be held to task. The water protection act and the standards for water targets that we are setting in this Government are certainly unprecedented in the province of Manitoba. The importance that we are putting on that is well identified by people within Manitoba.

The sustainable development that we have within our province from every riding in this province, be it an urban centre where we have industry, be it many of the communities that we come from in rural Manitoba on the practices, on agri-practices that we have within our province, every doorstep, every kitchen table, every coffee shop in this province tells you over and over again that we need to respond to sustainable development in the province on the plans that we take moving ahead.

I can tell you this Government is very, very aware of that. We are very aware of the fact that water controls and is part of life. I can tell you that when the Premier announced this and again it was built into this Throne Speech, if any member opposite would like to challenge and say there are no new initiatives and it is not actually priorities for Manitoba, there is one that I can tell you, they are sadly, sadly wrong, if, in fact, that is what they are saying.

I say that with some of the comments that I saw from members opposite as they dealt with their local newspapers and made their comments. When they say there is nothing new within the Throne Speech, I can tell you they obviously have not talked to their local constituents.

As we move ahead with Water Stewardship and in that department, it does entail a lot of

different departments and attention to Lake Winnipeg with the goal of reducing some of the harmful nutrients that have been compounding in that lake and the synergistic effect that we are seeing from a lot of the other chemicals that have been going into the lake. We see what has happened in the last little while and we have seen some of the advisories that have been put out in one of our most beautiful resources in the province. Manitobans do know that action does need to be taken and we do need to consider moves and steps moving ahead. Manitobans certainly have come back strongly in voicing their opinions that, yes, that is a top priority.

That is in the Throne Speech. That is something we will be moving ahead on, identifying and continuing to identify drainage and flood measures, our Red River flood system and our expansion in that flood system on a go-ahead basis to identify both the environmental impacts and the social impacts that could happen within the Capital Region here without an identified plan on moving ahead with the Red River Floodway expansion.

Saying there is not a lot being addressed in the Throne Speech and the highlights that were there, if members opposite feel the Red River Floodway expansion, which is, I might add, currently under way and a strategic plan developing for that expansion, if they feel that does not have the attention of Manitobans living within the Capital Region, they may want to, just may want to go out and knock on one or two doors within any constituency, within the Capital Region and in this area, and ask people if they feel that is a priority we have heard over and over again from Manitobans.

The environmental impact issues in Manitoba are something this side of the House has identified. That department will, in fact, identify moving ahead in a new economy in Manitoba here with those concerns in mind.

Building a strong economy has been something we have looked at. It is identified as well within the speech of how we get there and how we move ahead. When you look at the average telltale signs within the province of Manitoba, you might hear numbers being launched out on a weekly report as members opposite like to

compare, week to week, year over year comparisons, whenever they can pick out a negative number. The true reality is, on the job creation, certainly in Manitoba, some 6800 jobs per year over a four-year period, five-year period now, on average, is over two times, in fact almost two and a half times the strategy that members opposite had.

We see that building and we see it in tangibles. We see it within our communities and we see it as we look around, again, a term I like to use, at kitchen tables and coffee shops in Manitoba, one of the largest purchases that Manitobans ever make within their life is in fact a home. When you talk to the Winnipeg Real Estate Board, when you talk to the Brandon Real Estate Board, in fact, throughout all the province of Manitoba, how strong the housing industry is in Manitoba now. It is hitting historic levels.

It is not by chance. There are a lot of components that go into that. One is certainly Manitoba's and Manitobans' confidence in the economy and confidence in this Government as we go ahead. They know we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. They know, through our educational practices, that they have hope for their families and hope for moving ahead. They know, as Manitoba continues to grow and we have more young Manitobans building their futures at home through net migration of youth, when you look at the ages 15 to 24 there are over a thousand young Manitobans in that age bracket coming in, in the period ending in June. That is, in fact, one of the best results since 1984.

When we see those and we see the confidence Manitobans have in a government that is led by a Premier (Mr. Doer) who has balance for all Manitobans, you see the confidence and you hear the confidence of those Manitobans, when they see on the one side paying down the debt four years in a row, going into another year, where we have paid the debt down by \$384 million, some \$84 million more and better than the previous government did in their four-year period prior to, Manitobans see the debt being paid down; they see the pension liability going down; they see the commitment to balanced budget legislation. They see record sales of homes. They see reinvesting in downtown Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, other areas. We are getting

into partnerships with AMM. We are getting into partnerships with local communities. We are getting into partnerships and listening through committees and groups such as Neighbourhoods Alive! and sitting down and talking and getting into programs with councillors within communities.

* (16:50)

When you see downtown Winnipeg and the price of housing virtually doubling in the last couple of years and the successes those programs have had through our housing initiatives, Manitobans recognize and see the difference and they see it staged, they see the dynamics of working together to make, No. 1, improvements within the neighbourhoods. You improve the cities and the regions and then you improve the entire province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you get that by consultation and consulting with communities, something this Government has done that is very, very different from the previous government. You take something as simple as something like the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, with a group of qualified citizens in this province from diverse backgrounds of labour. They come from areas within the business community and industry here in our province. They come from government backgrounds. They come from social areas within communities.

Sit down and talk about solutions, that is what this Government is about. This Government is about working together with communities on solutions on moving ahead. People see that. They identify that. They feel confident in coming forward and talking to groups like that. Then you begin to see the tangibles that we are seeing throughout Manitoba. Not only is the housing developing, not only is the price of housing increasing and neighbourhoods being rejuvenated, you are seeing a resurgence of the business community and an interest in downtown, certainly in the Capital Region in Winnipeg.

The massive projects that we are talking about as we move ahead through our educational campaigns, certainly reinvesting in education, our idea of economic development, No. 1 in the

seven-point plan, education came first. Education, well trained people certainly within the community, keeping young people here in Manitoba, staying, working and the value of those young people in Manitoba, that was identified in three different phases. One was, certainly, the tuition fees, making it accessible for Manitobans and Manitobans' families to have the confidence in the Government moving ahead that they would be able to sustain and keep their children in university and post-secondary education in the province of Manitoba.

Unlike the previous government, of continued increases in post-secondary education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some 170-200 percent throughout the nineties, became unachievable for Manitobans. No. 1, we stabilized that. We have done that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, No. 2 was increasing capacity, getting more people through that system, getting them out and keeping them in Manitoba. They are bulging at the seams. We are seeing expansion in Red River community College, Assiniboine Community College. We are seeing it in Winnipeg in the universities. We are seeing it in Brandon University.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you are moving ahead and you are reinvesting in those communities, that was one of the key plans, obviously, of this Government for moving ahead with economic development within the province. We are seeing the tangibles of that now. We are seeing Manitobans with the confidence of getting out of the post-secondary educations. Certainly, we build confidence in our communities and in our young people here in Manitoba by investing in education. That has been done.

Members opposite were about one step away in their economic development plans of not investing in education, stopping the funding in education, reversing funding in education to the point where I think their next step might have been issuing hardhats for students to go into the school because of the bricks and the mortar falling off the outside of the buildings here in Manitoba. We have changed that. We have re-invested in those educational facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the U of M, when students were going into the U of M and you had

engineering students going in, part of the government of the day, the Tory government of the day's strategy might have been to have umbrellas and open them up and sit in the classroom as the roof began leaking on them because of the lack of dollars being extended in that.

That is not the direction we have gone. Manitobans recognize it. They see we have a stable, growing operation in funding, some \$250 million in capital investment in our public schools, plus the investment we have in our post-secondary education and the tuition reduction, the 10 percent, as a strategy that has worked well.

The allocating of the bursaries and the scholarship study program is another piece of that. Families recognize that. That is why, or part of the reason why when Red River College and Princess Street Campus opened up, 2000 students moved into downtown Winnipeg. The revitalization of that, the quality of education they get there, the high tech equipment and training they will have will provide the jobs we had sat down and talked about as a key strategy in Manitoba with the business and industry community. We are proud of that. We will continue to do that. The Throne Speech highlights that. It is the direction we will go.

The knowledge-based industries that we are seeing springing up in Manitoba, again, are something that was recognized. The renewable energy that is identified in the Throne Speech is something that we believe is critically important to Manitoba, Manitoba's future and Manitoba's knowledge-based economy.

The research and development we have in the province and the investment we have made in that over the past three and four years of our Government is unprecedented. You are seeing again the tangibles. Manitoba is now home to 37 biotech companies undertaking research in areas such as health, environmental, agricultural and biotechnology.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, these enterprises alone generate more than \$250 million annually in revenue, employ more than 1600 people in the province of Manitoba and will only continue to expand.

They will expand because of this Government's dedication and reinvestment in education and the confidence that young people in Manitoba have in a government that invests in them and invests in their families.

Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, acting again from the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, recommends to provide strong research and dollar funding to universities. That is being done. That is part of a strategy.

The renewable energy in Manitoba is something that this Government is very proud of. Manitoba Hydro, again, members will say, well, there was not a lot in there.

Mr. Speaker, what was in there was that we will not sell Manitoba Hydro. Members opposite may chuckle. They may laugh, but Manitobans have confidence in this side when we say, no, we will not sell Crown corporations. Manitobans have identified that.

It was not that long ago that members on the opposite, the other side, I had heard back in the nineties, say we will not sell MTS; MTS is not for sale.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let us review that. Let us think about that. Members the other day had got up and they had spoken about asking whether or not people on this side of the House had taken out shares in MTS. When the overwhelming no came across the floor, they asked: Why not?

The real question should be why did they undersell a Crown corporation that belonged to Manitobans by a third. That is the question that should be asked. If in fact it was such a good deal and everybody knew it prior to the sale, it really begs me to ask why in fact did you sell it so cheaply out from underneath Manitobans that invested in this for over 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, three times the value went up. Members opposite—I believe that it was maybe the Finance Minister at that time that had connections with other people during the sale, that questions were asked by Manitobans. Now, if you ask Manitobans in constituencies, regardless of the 57 MLAs that sit in this House, how much has your phone bill gone up in the

last five years, six years since the members opposite undersold your telephone company, well, what I hear back is, my God, I can barely afford to keep my telephone within my home.

I hear that from seniors, I hear it from young people in Manitoba, and, in fact, I hear it from people of every walk of life. I am really wondering what the wonderful idea behind the previous government had in saying, oh, your rates will come down, there will be no price increases, and we will not sell your phone company.

* (17:00)

I can tell you when we say, no, it is not for sale, we mean, no, that Hydro is not for sale. In fact, as it identifies in the Throne Speech, we intend and plan on building an asset that Manitobans have and had from the telephone company that we once owned.

But, Mr. Speaker, let us focus on Hydro. Let us focus on moving ahead, as this Government constantly does. When you look at the renewable energy that we have here in Manitoba and the capacity that we have in Manitoba for a future and an expansion, Ontario, obviously, is extremely interested in the power that we have here in Manitoba, a clean, renewable energy source. In fact, we know the federal government is critically interested, through their efforts with the Kyoto Protocol, in looking at moving ahead in the future.

Now, members opposite had talked about things that I have seen on record of late, Internet pharmacies, other things that they have talked about. You know, going back 250 years ago, I heard the same hue and outcry from people when the industrial revolution was coming in. My God, the machines are coming. Oh, no, let us not look at it, let us not look at anything moving ahead. Let us not look at the facts.

Well, you know, we do look at the facts. A hundred years ago, people were scared of the telephone. What they should have been scared of was about seven years ago when you were selling the telephone company, not a hundred years ago. But I can tell you, when you deal with facts as opposed to Chicken Little across the way, I will tell you what, it becomes evident and

clear that in the expanding economy, in moving ahead, when we actually get to the point when we look at innovative, new ideas in biotechnology, when we look at new ideas in the sciences that are out there, it is not something to fear. In fact, it is something to incorporate and encompass and bring in.

Mr. Speaker, the minister that we have, in different areas, in fact, our Agricultural Minister (Ms. Wowchuk), our Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Sale) are looking at avenues and areas where a few years back people would have said, well, wind power. What does that mean? Is it actually critically true?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, when you see large companies, massive companies that are starting to pay attention to the innovative process and the new technology in wind power and the possibility of what that means to Manitoba to hook up onto a fantastic grid system that we have already through a great company in Manitoba Hydro and the opportunity that that brings to put onto a grid system, put on the line and resell, obviously at triple the price, in some cases, to Ontario down to the United States and increase our capacity and keep our rates the lowest in Manitoba that it is across North America, that is innovation, that is moving ahead, and that is opportunity for youth here in our province.

The jobs that that potential could create in Manitoba is well recognized. Obviously, we have got one of the best industries in Manitoba here, in our aerodynamics capacity here in Manitoba, of having wind power incorporated, being considered with private investment in Manitoba, being at the front gate for rural producers that are out there, just like oil was some 60 to 70 years ago.

The dinosaurs that are being sucked out of the ground now through basically oil production is not something that we believe is the move ahead in the future. The capacity will be there through a transition, but the renewable and new energy in the province of Manitoba is of interest to young people. It is of interest to this Government and it is of interest, obviously, to the federal government and private industry in partnerships in moving ahead here in Manitoba.

Again, that goes back to education and that goes back to the ability of young people in Manitoba to be trained and to be in a course right here at home that is affordable, and to expand their knowledge on creating Manitoba's wealth as we move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the investments being made in Manitoba by this Government, certainly, are very obvious. As we have reduced and continue to reduce taxation in the province of Manitoba for small business, for middle-income earners, for corporations for the first time since the Second World War, it is identified by large industry, small business, producers and certainly by working Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, when you have companies, and respected companies, with investment such as J.R. Simplot investing \$150 million in a beautiful community out by Portage la Prairie in the processing of potatoes, that lonely potato that J.R. Simplot saw as being something that he would create and develop wealth in some 70 years ago, and when you read the book that J.R. Simplot put out, people had scoffed at him, going back some 60 years ago or 70 years ago where he said, you know what, the potato has probably one of the most potentials, certainly in areas that will sustain it such as P.E.I., such as areas in Manitoba, and he was quite right.

When you look at what that created, not only from the spin-off areas that he brought out of that with his other Simplot investments in Brandon, with some of the chemical companies that he produced, some of the best in the world to supply our producers with much needed chemical for land use here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, again, an investment, a re-investment in Manitoba.

New Flyer industries, Mr. Speaker, there is a success story. Members opposite just a short time ago were asking: Why are we bridging? Why are we helping? Why are we investing with New Flyer? I can tell you, the turnaround in that industry, obviously, since September 11, the impact of the American dollar, have had some pretty negative impacts on industry here in Manitoba. Well, obviously, it has been around the world. Some of the increases in rural Manitoba, I note members opposite recognize as well

as I do the impacts we have had in the last short time just simply in areas such as small rural hotels where you have seen insurance rates triple just within the last year and a half.

New Flyer is an industry that members opposite questioned. Why had we supported them? Why had we wanted to invest in this industry? Why had we wanted to back the thousands of jobs and families here in Manitoba? Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not hear much from members opposite on the \$425-million contract that is very, very close to being finalized with New Flyer, saving and, in fact, expanding those thousand jobs that we have out there.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, when you see investment by folks such as the Aspers in the province, when you see investment by the bio-diagnostics that we are seeing in the province, Kromar Industries group, Monarch Industries, the list goes on and on, and Palliser Furniture, again.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I have such a short period of time to speak, but what Manitobans do recognize is they recognize that this Government has a vision. This Government is predictable and, in fact, balanced, and it is balanced for all Manitobans in all parts of Manitoba, and it is on a move-ahead basis. As we continue to move ahead with Manitobans in all economic and social groups within Manitoba, we are proud that we listen to Manitobans. We are proud that this Throne Speech recognizes what Manitobans have told us.

Mr. Speaker, in working continually with Manitobans, Manitoba groups, communities, we know that we cannot go wrong when you listen to people in Manitoba. It is reflected here and we will be predictable. We will move Manitoba ahead and we are proud of it.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for those brief remarks that I had a chance to put on the record.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say a few short remarks on behalf of the residents of Lac du Bonnet constituency with respect to the Throne Speech. I extend a very hearty welcome to the pages and the legislative interns. I hope

that they have an experience that is both rewarding and educational.

I also extend, Mr. Speaker, my congratulations to you on being elected for a second time. I know, having been here only a little over a year and a half, I can honestly say I believe you are very fair in your rulings, and I wish you well for your next term.

I would like to also acknowledge the contributions made by all those members of the Legislature who either did not run in the last provincial election or did run and were defeated. I would like to thank them for their service to their constituencies. No matter what political stripe they are, they certainly looked after the best interests of the constituents within their constituencies.

* (17:10)

I think the headline: Throne Speech fails to impress, really rings true with this Throne Speech. The Throne Speech, I believe, lacks a vision. It lacks a strategy to grow the economy of Manitoba and to make our communities safer. In fact, with respect to making our communities safer, the reality is one of the biggest threats to public safety in this province is the Hells Angels and the gangs and criminal organizations of this province, and that Throne Speech did not even mention them.

So I think it is important that we not only talk about what was included in the Throne Speech, but also make note of what was not included in the Throne Speech. Sometimes what was not included in the Throne Speech is probably more important than what was in it.

Part of the Throne Speech indicated the Government felt it maintained its balanced-budget policies of the last four years. However, what it failed to mention was that this has only been achieved through raids of Manitoba Hydro and the rainy day fund, raids of Manitoba Hydro to the tune of almost half a billion dollars and the rainy day fund this year alone to the tune of \$98 million.

It never ceases to amaze me when I hear the Premier (Mr. Doer) on radio or on television

when he talks about Manitoba Hydro, when he justifies the raids on Manitoba Hydro, he repeatedly refers to the retained earnings account, thinking or leaving the impression on Manitobans that somehow there is some magical account at Manitoba Hydro, that somehow there is a bank account with millions of dollars in it that he can raid and ask for from Manitoba Hydro.

He never seems to explain that, in fact, there is no account, that when he announced his \$476-million raid on Manitoba Hydro, there was only \$12 million in an account in Manitoba Hydro. He seems to give the impression that the retained earnings account is an actual bank balance and he tries to get Manitobans to understand that.

What amazes me is that nobody is really questioning that, because the balance sheet itself retains the retained earnings account. All it is, it is simply the difference between the value of the utility and the debt load of the utility. All it is, it is the equity within that utility. So, when he says he is going to take money out of the retained earnings account, what he really means and what he should be really telling Manitobans is that he is getting Manitoba Hydro to borrow more money.

Also in the Throne Speech, it stated, I believe it was on page 4, that the number of young Manitobans enrolled in universities has increased by 29 percent since 1999. However, it failed to mention the fact that there is a funding crisis now at universities and colleges, and there was no mention of what will become of their tuition policy, or the fact that certain faculties like Law, Pharmacy and Dentistry, and also the School of Business, will likely be imposing massive tuition hikes. There is no tuition freeze for these faculties, nor is there a tuition freeze for any faculty that wishes to pursue the same line. The decision on increasing fees is made as well by those who will not pay for it. It will affect those who will not have a vote with respect to those faculties.

On page 6 of the Throne Speech, it indicated that MRIs, CT scans and other diagnostic tests have been increased significantly. What it failed to mention is that the Government originally promised in 1999 to slash waiting lists, but it has

not done so. Compared to September 1999, waiting lists for CT scans, ultrasounds, MRIs and stress tests have all increased. That was not in the Throne Speech.

In the Throne Speech, it indicated that the investments in health care have brought a measure of stability to Manitoba health care, but what it failed to mention was that while Manitoba spends the highest per capita on health care among the provinces, there have been no measurable results, let alone any stability within the health care system.

It also stated in the Throne Speech that total nursing enrolment will grow to 3000 over the next four years. It failed, however, to mention that the nursing shortage has more than doubled under the NDP. It failed to mention that it is still committed to ensuring that two thirds of all nursing positions are full time by spring 2004.

I recall being at the 2003 nursing graduation of the University of Manitoba. The reason that I recall that is because my daughter, my oldest daughter, graduated from nursing in 2003. During that graduation ceremony I noted what the Health Minister said. The Health Minister indicated to the parents who were there, to the graduates who were there that they took responsibility; in fact, he took responsibility personally on behalf of his Government for the number of graduates that were there that day. But what he failed to mention, and many of the graduates and many of the parents mentioned this to me afterwards, was that the nursing graduates who graduated in 2003, those that were there entered into the program, almost all of them entered into the program in 1999, before the '99 election. So he did not give any credit to our government for increasing the enrolment at the university. He should have given credit where credit was due and he should not have taken responsibility for the number of graduates that were there that day.

The Throne Speech also indicated that Manitoba is recognized for having Canada's strongest provincial anti-gang laws. But what he failed to recognize and failed to mention in that Throne Speech was that Manitoba actually has the highest number of gang-related murders and attempted murders since 1999. It had 37 gang-

related murders and attempted murders in the last four years, the highest rate in the country by far.

It also failed, Mr. Speaker, to mention that the Hells Angels were set up in Winnipeg under the watch of the current Government, and they paralyzed the legal system with demands for millions of dollars to fund their legal defence.

I know there has been some dispute by members, particularly the Justice Minister, over the last number of days in Question Period. In particular, last week, he mentioned that the Hells Angels came to this province under our watch, under the watch of the previous administration. That is simply not true. There are articles, in fact, in the *Free Press* in the year 2000 that confirm that the Hells Angels came to Manitoba in July 2000 under the current administration.

In the Throne Speech, it also indicated that Legal Aid will be reformed. It failed, however, to offer any meaningful details. It is such a low priority to this Government that it only warranted a single line in the entire speech in spite of the fact that Legal Aid is under siege, that Legal Aid is in crisis. There was absolutely no plan, no vision for Legal Aid in Manitoba.

In the Throne Speech, it also indicated that Manitobans continue to enjoy Hydro rates that are among the lowest. But it failed to mention that this Government is draining a million dollars a day from Manitoba Hydro, a million dollars a day that Manitoba Hydro does not have. It does not have a million dollars a day. It is forced to borrow more money in order to quench the thirst for money of this current Government.

It also failed to mention that Hydro's debt has been increasing because of that demand for cash by this Government and that Hydro's debt is now actually higher than the debt of the entire province of Manitoba. I think if you asked citizens in Manitoba, if you went on the streets of Manitoba and asked them whether or not they felt that Manitoba Hydro had any debt at all, I think 9 out of 10 Manitobans would tell you they do not believe that Hydro has any debt.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is a misconception that is out there. The message has to get out,

because Hydro is borrowing more and more money to satisfy the need for more money by this current Government, that, in fact, is compromising the ability of Hydro to expand in northern Manitoba, to continue to provide more service to Manitobans and to continue to sell more hydro power to interests outside of Manitoba.

It also failed to mention in the Throne Speech that Manitoba Hydro was projecting a 20% rate hike over the next nine years. That was before this year's low water levels which may result in losses ranging as high as \$350 million this year alone. The Throne Speech also alluded to Manitoba being affordable. It, however, failed to mention that the provincial share of funding for public education has fallen each and every year under the current Government to a level under 60 percent, to 57.7 percent and the remainder of that money that is required for education has actually been offloaded onto the backs of property owners.

*(17:20)

It is very clear in Sunrise School Division and in Lac du Bonnet constituency the amalgamation of school divisions between the then-Agassiz School Division and the Springfield portion of Transcona-Springfield School Division, that the costs of that amalgamation are going to be horrendous. The costs are going to be at the expense of the property tax payer. It is going to be at the expense of the property tax payer. We will see that over the next three to four years.

In fact this year alone there was an 8.46% increase in property taxes as a result of school tax increases by the school division. It will get greater as time goes on. That should come as no surprise to this Government. This Government ought to have known prior to the amalgamation that those increases would be passed on to property tax payers but they chose to ignore it.

The Throne Speech also failed to mention its commitment to phase out the education support levy within three years. I am surprised at that because that was a commitment made during the election and it should have been part of that Throne Speech. It also failed to mention the

reports by the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and the Manitoba Chartered Accountants which stated that our province is not competitive, this Government's current economic strategy has not worked and that our business and income taxes are among the highest in Canada. We are the highest taxed west of New Brunswick.

It also stated in the Throne Speech that they had a seven-point action strategy for economic growth, but it failed to mention that Manitoba's job growth has been described as anemic by economists, and it failed to mention that according to Stats Canada, under this current administration, the public service has grown by 7 percent.

It also should have mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I believe, that the fastest growing businesses and the fastest growing business in terms of employees, in terms of hiring employees, are those businesses that are owned by organized crime, the Hells Angels. They are welcome in Manitoba as an economic generator, according to this Government.

This Government's idea of fiscal management is about spending more money. It is not about efficiency. It is not about competition. It is not about streamlining programs to get the best value for your dollar. Instead, it is more about monopolies and spend, spend, spend. They have had a great deal of spending money. They have had a great deal of spending money since taking office. The largest windfall to this Government has not come through economic growth. It has come from the federal government in terms of their transfer payments.

The federal government is primarily responsible for giving more money to the coffers of the provincial government. After years of declining transfer payments from Ottawa in the 1990s, when the current Government came into power the transfer payments from the federal government started to skyrocket.

In 1998 to 1999, the last fiscal year of the previous government, the PCs, our government, the total transfers from Ottawa were \$1.6 billion.

In 1999, the first year that the current Government took office, federal transfers soared to \$2.1 billion. They were \$500 million higher than

the previous year and they have increased every year since. They are projected to come in now at over \$2.5 billion this year. This Government has had more than a billion dollars more to spend from Ottawa than the former administration in their last year of government. That is enough to run the entire Departments of Justice, Transportation and Agriculture all combined.

We always hear about Manitoba's economic growth, the gross domestic product. They say that it is equal to or better than the national average, but, actually, that is just the percentage that the economy grows from one year to the next. What you rarely hear is the fact that for the past 20 years, Manitoba's per capita GDP, which is our economic growth based on our population, has been well below the national average. Per capita GDP nationally in 2001 was \$32,975. In Manitoba, it was only \$28,960, which means it is 12 percent below the national average. That gap has widened since the late 1990s. That is the real story, but you will not hear that story in the Speech from the Throne.

I think it is incumbent upon me to mention a couple of constituent concerns, particularly with respect to Lac du Bonnet constituency. The road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg is an important initiative, and I applaud the Government for, in fact, appointing Phil Fontaine—because I believe he is a very reputable person—to a committee that is studying the effect of the road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg to ensure that Aboriginal communities have a voice and have opportunities to give input in terms of the road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The road is important for our constituency, but it is also important for our constituencies to the north, to connect those Aboriginal communities to hope and opportunity and job growth in the south. The road is important for economic growth for our area. It is also important for the health of the residents in the North because it connects those residents to health facilities in the Pine Falls-Powerview area.

It is also important because it will also reduce the cost of food in the North. During Estimates and at other opportunities, I have spoken to the Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister (Mr. Lathlin) about my concerns with respect to the pricing of milk in the North and

food prices in general in the North. I think that road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg will do a lot toward making food more affordable for Aboriginal communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I also believe that Provincial Road 304 is a very important road in our constituency. I have mentioned it a number of times in this Legislature, and I have also mentioned it at least 15 or 20 times to the various Transportation ministers that we have had here since I have been in the Legislature, and I think I will mention it again.

I presented a petition to this Legislature signed by thousands of residents and tourists who believe that it is extremely important to reconstruct Provincial Road 304 for safety reasons. Provincial Road 304 is, in fact, the priority road that needs to be rebuilt in the constituency, and the Government ought to look toward rebuilding that road in the near future.

Provincial Road 304 connects Provincial Trunk Highway No. 11 and Provincial Trunk Highway 59 in a southerly direction from Powerview. Eight or nine years ago, that road was rebuilt to within about 10 kilometres of Powerview. The balance of that road needs to be rebuilt. It does not have any shoulders. It is in terrible condition. It presents a hazardous situation for the travelling public, for the people who are in Powerview, Pine Falls, St. George and people north along Provincial Road 304 in Manigotagan and Bissett when they have to travel to Winnipeg or to Selkirk for goods or services for their community.

What compounds that problem for the road is the fact that many of the pulp trucks, chip trucks and transport trucks which service those communities travel Provincial Road 304, and, of course, so do the travelling public in those areas. It is a very dangerous road and it needs to be rebuilt. This situation needs to be remedied and rectified sooner rather than later. I would en-

courage the Government to rebuild that road as soon as possible. I will continue to push on behalf of the constituents of Lac du Bonnet for Provincial Road 304 to be rebuilt.

The Town of Lac du Bonnet and the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet are in a new era of co-operation and regionalization after their municipal elections. Paul Chapman is the current mayor for the Town of Lac du Bonnet. The reeve for the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet is Don Halbert. They are very community-minded people. Both of them want the town and the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet to co-operate and to join together to attract industry and business to their area, to create jobs and needed growth for their area. I am very encouraged by that. I believe they will take reasonable steps and appropriate steps to achieve that end. They realize that they need to construct an industrial park for their area to attract industry and they need to set up a development corporation which would be independent from the town and the rural municipality in order to develop a strategy to develop their most obvious resource, which of course is tourism, the tourism potential for that area. They also have going for them the La Verendrye Trail, which traverses through Lac du Bonnet.

I acknowledge the contributions made to the Town of Lac du Bonnet by Rod Demoline, the mayor of the town who was elected in 2002 after serving his community for many years as councillor in mid-2003.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) will have nine 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, December 1, 2003

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
		Breach of Bail Conditions Hawranik; Mackintosh	239
Presenting Petitions			
Highway 32 Dyck	231	Health Care System Driedger; Chomiak	239
Co-op Program for Nursing Students Driedger	231	School Division Amalgamations Stefanson; Bjornson	242
Sales Tax Proposal Mitchelson	232	Sunrise School Division Stefanson; Bjornson	242
Walleye Gerrard	232	Deveryn Ross Case Gerrard; Mackintosh	243
Ministerial Statements		Members' Statements	
World AIDS Day Rondeau	233	Ukrainian Famine Martindale	244
Driedger	234		
Gerrard	234	Parent Seed Farms Ltd. Penner	244
Introduction of Bills			
Bill 11—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Protection of Crown Assets) Mackintosh	234	Lighthouses Program Schellenberg	245
Bill 16—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Denial of Benefits for Offenders) Mackintosh	235	Brant-Argyle School Eichler	245
		Fort Garry Mennonite Brethren Church Irvin-Ross	246
Oral Questions		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Balanced Budget Legislation Murray; Doer	235	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Gasoline Tax Murray; Doer	236	Adjourned Debate (Sixth Day of Debate)	
Federal-Provincial Relations Murray; Doer	236	Aglugub	247
James Driskell Case Murray; Mackintosh	237	Stefanson	250
Hawranik; Mackintosh	238	Bjornson	253
Gerrard; Mackintosh	243	Tweed	260
		Irvin-Ross	265
		Schuler	269
		Smith	271
		Hawranik	277

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/leg-asmb/index.html>