

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

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-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.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
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, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, 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.
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.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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	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.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
VACANT	Kirkfield Park	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 17, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 2, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Allan: Bill 2, which implements consensus recommendations of the Labour Management Review Committee, introduces amendments that will improve and modernize our employment standards provisions to better meet the needs of today's workers, employers, families and young people.

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

Bill 201—The Good Samaritan Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster, that Bill 201, The Good Samaritan Act; Loi du bon samaritain, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides protection for Good Samaritans who come forward voluntarily to help people in times of emergencies, major stress or major problems that have arisen.

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

PETITIONS

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The owners of Headingley Foods, a small business based in Headingley, would like to sell alcohol at their store. The distance from their location to the nearest Liquor Mart, via the Trans-Canada Highway, is 9.3 kilometres. The distance to the same Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard is 10.8 kilometres. Their application has been rejected because their store needs to be 10 kilometres away from the Liquor Mart. It is 700 metres short of this requirement using one route but 10.8 kilometres using the other.

The majority of Headingley's population lives off Roblin Boulevard and uses Roblin Boulevard to get to and from Winnipeg rather than the Trans-Canada Highway. Additionally, the highway route is often closed and too dangerous to travel in severe weather conditions. The majority of Headingley residents therefore travel to the Liquor Mart via Roblin Boulevard, a distance of 10.8 kilometres.

Small businesses outside Winnipeg's perimeter are vital to the prosperity of Manitoba's communities and should be supported. It is difficult for small businesses like Headingley Foods to compete with larger stores in Winnipeg, and they require added services to remain viable. Residents should be able to purchase alcohol locally rather than having to drive to the next municipality.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act (Mr. Smith), to consider allowing the owners of Headingley Foods to sell alcohol at their store, thereby supporting small business and the prosperity of rural communities in Manitoba.

This is signed by Myron Peters, J. Wiens, J. Lee and many, many others.

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The government needs to uncover the whole truth as to what ultimately led to over 33,000 Crocus shareholders to lose tens of millions of dollars.

The provincial auditor's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission investigation, the RCMP investigation and the involvement of our courts, collectively, will not answer the questions that must be answered in regard to the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Manitobans need to know why the government ignored the many warnings that could have saved the Crocus Investment Fund.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to co-operate in uncovering the truth in why the government did not act on what it knew and to consider calling a public inquiry on the Crocus Fund fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, that's signed by A. Ayson, A. Ilagan, Nestor Dela Pena and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where the six individuals who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 2006-2007 year are seated. In accordance with the established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months, and they will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignments in September and will complete them in June.

They are, working with the government caucus: Ms. Christine Esselmont of the University of Winnipeg, Ms. Emily Grafton of the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba and Ms. Marie MacLellan of the Collège universitaire de Saint Boniface. Working with the caucus of the official opposition are Mr. Brendan Boyd of the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba, Ms. Akosua Matthews of the University of Manitoba and Mr. Arne Thorlacius of the University of

Manitoba. Copies of their biographies have been distributed to members.

Professor Jean Friesen looks after the academic portion of the internship. The administration of the program is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) and the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and to hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's Gallery we have Emma Hill Kepron who is our new *Hansard* Indexer.

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

*(10:10)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the Manitoba Court of Appeal has sided with directors of the failed Crocus Fund and ordered that the Manitoba Securities Commission hearings into the Crocus scandal be delayed indefinitely.

Given that the Premier has consistently cited the Manitoba Securities Commission investigation as a primary excuse for not calling a public inquiry into the Crocus scandal, can the Premier indicate to the House what position his government took in front of the Court of Appeal on this important issue?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, the member opposite talks about positions on Crocus. I would note that the member opposite last year in the last session asked us not to settle with the Crocus suit, not to settle off with the Crocus lawsuit that was pending. Now he wants us to write a blank cheque to the Crocus investors. We don't flip-flop, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: I know that the Premier is very proud of his St. Paul's High School debating points, but let me point out for the House, Mr. Speaker, that when we asked questions in the spring on this important issue, the point was made that if the government is so certain of the strength of its case,

will it bring a motion to strike out the lawsuit. The government didn't bring a motion to strike out the lawsuit, so the message is clear. The government knows they have a weak case.

Given that they know they have a weak case, given that they know they have been complicit in the scandal right from the get-go, why is the government hiding? Why will the government not call an inquiry? Why are they acknowledging through their actions in court by not filing a motion to dismiss that they've got a weak case? Why, Mr. Speaker, when this matter appeared before the Court of Appeal, did the government's Securities Commission lawyer say in their filing with the court that staff of the Manitoba Securities Commission, and I quote: "takes no position on this appeal and will not be filing any factum or any other materials." This is the position of the government lawyers when it came to stalling the investigation by the Securities Commission.

I will table the letter from the government's Securities Commission lawyers saying that they're not going to fight for an investigation by the Securities Commission. Given that the Securities Commission investigation is now effectively dead, now that the Premier's run out of excuses to call an inquiry, will the Premier do the right thing? Will he bring justice for the 34,000 Manitobans who have lost money? Will he today call an inquiry? He is out of excuses. Do the right thing; call an inquiry; stop hiding.

Mr. Doer: I would point out that the Securities Commission is a quasi-judicial body. If we had directed the Securities Commission in any way, shape or form, the members opposite would be rightly calling for the minister responsible's head, Mr. Speaker. The Securities Commission has made decisions in the past. It has made decisions in the past about the selling of Manitoba Telephone shares illegally to one, Cubby Barrett, through the company of Wellington West.

The member opposite, of course, brags in his Web site. He brags in his Web site as being the man responsible in Cabinet for the sell-off of the Manitoba Telephone System. Talk about complicity. It is right in his Web—oh, he took it off his Web site. Oh, he took off selling the telephone system from the Web site—*[interjection]*

The bottom line is that the Manitoba Securities Commission does not answer for its decisions on companies in the marketplace to the government. It is a quasi-judicial body. The member knows that and

to try to pretend that this is not the case is just another example. Yesterday or two days ago he said that Ontario, in its recent documentation, indicated and did not mention Manitoba once. It mentioned Manitoba eight times. The veracity of this member's statement is in tatters, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, they've had seven years to buy back MTS and they haven't done it. If he is serious about—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, again the Premier is full of sound and fury making his debating points, but the fact is that he has had seven years to buy back the telephone system. If he was serious about wanting to nationalize the telephone system, instead of playing politics with it, he would have acted by now. But, seven years later, we have the Premier standing up, acting like an opposition leader, throwing around accusations about the credibility of members of this House.

You know what? If anybody needs to apologize to Manitobans and to this Legislature, it's the Premier: for promising to end hallway medicine within six months and breaking that promise; having the temerity to come into the House six months ago and say that there were zero patients in Manitoba hallways when Manitobans know better; for allowing the Hells Angels to move into Manitoba under his watch, Mr. Speaker; a sixfold increase in the number of children in hotels under this Premier's watch; for the Burntwood health care spending scandal; the floodway fiasco. Manitobans have been burned on Burntwood, they have been soaked on the floodway and I think they have every right to be concerned about whether they're being conned on Conawapa.

Speaking of spin, Mr. Speaker, here's what the NDP leader in Ontario said yesterday in the Legislature on the issue of deals between Manitoba and Ontario. When the Ontario minister tried to say that they were in discussions with Manitoba, the NDP leader, Mr. Hampton said: Well, that's the media spin, here is the reality. Manitoba has a surplus of clean, green hydro-electricity.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there's the breach of a rule.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the studio audience is in good form over there again today, but here is the rest of what the NDP leader of Ontario said yesterday. Is Ontario there making a deal? No, this is his comrade in Ontario, his brother, the leader of the NDP of Ontario saying there's no deal in the works between Manitoba and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, let me make something perfectly clear. We will build Conawapa. We'll do it on time and under budget or on budget, unlike the members opposite who bungled every single major project that they've undertaken in Manitoba. They're over budget on the floodway, they're cutting back protection for Winnipeggers on the floodway. They've bungled the Manitoba Hydro building; they're over budget on the Hydro building.

So let me come back to the question of credibility. If we want to talk about credibility, why doesn't the Premier show some leadership? Why doesn't he do something that demonstrates to Manitobans that he's putting their interests ahead of his party's interests? Why doesn't he call a public inquiry into Crocus? He has run out of excuses. It's time to call an inquiry. It's time to do the right thing for the people of Manitoba.

*(10:20)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite creates a committee to look at Crocus. He hires an individual, the Tory hatchet man who just was responsible for taking on an incumbent Conservative in the nomination race. He hires an individual or commissions an individual named Don Orchard that wasted \$4.5 million on hiring Connie Curran to fire nurses. He's the only Minister of Health that has ever engineered a nurses' strike in Manitoba and then he gives him the terms of reference from 1999 on. Why? Because Mr. Orchard was part of the Cabinet that passed the legislation that the Auditor General found wanting.

The member has no clothing, Mr. Speaker. Now I know he has premature arrogance. He has already got—assuming what is going to happen in the next election. We enjoy his condescending talk because Manitobans will see right through that arrogance, but I want to point out first of all that the member opposite has not apologized for saying that Manitoba wasn't mentioned in the latest Ontario report. It was mentioned eight times. Secondly, the minister responsible for energy in Ontario said, and I quote: We are anxious to get that deal with Manitoba as well.

An Honourable Member: More, more.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I want the member to stand up and apologize for putting false information into the public record after the Speech from the Throne. He said there was no mention of Manitoba and eight times Manitoba was mentioned. Apologize.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP leader of Ontario yesterday said: Is Ontario there making a deal? No. The reason the member said that is there are recent reports, and here is what they say. I quote from Ontario: In summary, we consider it a reasonable assumption that a 1,250 megawatt of hydro-electric imports from Québec may materialize in the near term. For additional hydro-electric imports from Manitoba or Newfoundland and Labrador, there appear to be significant barriers at present related to approvals, cost and transmission siting considerations. This is what the Government of Ontario has said: significant barriers, significant roadblocks to a deal with Manitoba. That is why his colleague, the leader of the NDP in Ontario, is saying: Is Ontario there making a deal? No. It is because it is wishful thinking.

But let me make something clear. Let me make something clear. Now we know that the Premier is desperate to have a major initiative to run on in the next election after seven years of inaction, neglect and waste. We know that he is desperate to roll out a commitment. He is committing to do something by 2019 when I think any reasonable person might expect that he won't be around to break that promise just like he broke the promise on hallway medicine, Mr. Speaker.

So my question to the Premier is this. In light of the fact that 34,000 Manitobans have lost more than \$60 million in Crocus, in light of the fact that we are receiving letters from Manitobans from across the province, including his constituents, will he listen to his own constituents? Will he listen to Manitobans from all over the province instead of trying to create diversions? Instead of creating diversions—

An Honourable Member: Don Orchard.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier wants to talk about contested nominations. Why doesn't he just turn around, take a look at the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), take a look at the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub). Apologize to the Member for Wellington and the Member for The Maples for the fact that they are being contested in their ridings. Two members of an important cultural community in Manitoba are being challenged by his party for their nominations. It is absolutely shameful. The hypocrisy is unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, given the number of his constituents who are looking for justice on Crocus, will he listen to Manitobans? Will he today call an inquiry? Stop the spin, stop the diversions, stop the St. Paul's debating points. Do the right thing and call an inquiry for Manitobans.

Mr. Doer: Well, even before I got to St. Paul's, they told me not to ramble on like that, Mr. Speaker. In fact, my parents told me not to ramble on, and I would suggest that the member opposite, probably his parents told him the same thing. Actually, I want to congratulate St. Paul's for winning the high school football championship. Obviously, I am disappointed the Bisons didn't win last Saturday. I was at the game and it was great.

Mr. Speaker, not to ramble as I criticize the member opposite for, but he did mention St. Paul's. I would point out in his rambling preamble the issue of energy. The minister responsible for energy in Ontario said that we are anxiously in a deal. Obviously, transmission is an issue.

The member opposite also took off his Web site the fact that he worked for the Mike Harris government on deregulating Ontario Hydro. So here we have a person who was involved in selling the shares of the Manitoba Telephone System after they promised in the '95 election not to sell it. Now, does this sound familiar, Mr. Speaker?

We will not sell Hydro. That's what Tories say before the election and what they do after the election is break their word. They sold the telephone system. He was involved in it and the bottom line is, we don't interfere with the Manitoba Securities Commission. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly not asking the Premier to interfere with the Manitoba

Securities Commission. We are asking the Premier to recognize the fact which is that the Manitoba Securities Commission investigation is effectively dead. It is effectively dead and, the Premier, for months, as part of his stonewalling strategy on Crocus, has been saying: We've got an investigation going on by the Manitoba Securities Commission, therefore we don't need a public inquiry into Crocus. Well, that investigation by the Securities Commission is now effectively dead.

The excuses are over. Call an inquiry. Stop hiding. Do the right thing for Manitoba. Will the Premier call an inquiry today?

Mr. Doer: First of all, I have stated that we have every day in Question Period for members to ask any question on Crocus. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have an Auditor General's report that is over 200 pages long. Thirdly, last year we went to the Public Accounts Committee. The members asked some outstanding issues at the Public Accounts Committee. They asked about the e-mail. The Auditor General confirmed the e-mail never went beyond an assistant deputy minister. It never went to Cabinet. They asked that question. They didn't like the answer, but they got the answer to the question they asked.

We have stated, contrary to their Finance critic, that we would get the money back from Maple Leaf Distillers. They didn't like that answer. The member opposite is on the public record saying we won't get a cent back from Maple Leaf Distillers. They are wrong on that point, Mr. Speaker.

The issue of legislation, the issue of rate of return for investors, we amended that legislation to clarify it consistent with the amendments we made under the pension act.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of parties going back to 1992 that are being sued. The former Conservative government is being sued for the seven years they were in office for establishing the legislation, having the conflict, the exemptions they made to Wellington West. That will all be under cross-examination. The investments the Tories made in Isobord, Winnipeg and Westman will all be under cross-examination.

The investments we made into Maple Leaf Distillers and the money we got returned will be under cross-examination. We respect that. We are more than willing to defend the actions we took in government. I know the former premier would

probably say he would be as well, and we're not going to write a blank cheque like the member opposite would.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans want nothing more than to have the facts on Crocus so that we can do justice to Manitoba shareholders who lost money, restore confidence in our province's capital market so that we can continue the process of creating jobs for young Manitobans and where Manitobans have confidence in our capital markets that have been badly damaged as a result of the incompetence and mismanagement of this government.

Now the Premier can skate all day long, Mr. Speaker. He is a good skater. I know he played football with the Crusaders but he is a heck of a skater. I want to say: Why doesn't the Premier stop bobbing and weaving, stop skating, call an inquiry, go under oath, put his hand on the Bible and tell Manitobans what he knew, when he knew it and why he didn't act when he was told about the problems at Crocus?

*(10:30)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can ask questions anytime he wants. The Auditor General had access to not only meetings that were held, but he also had access to Crocus board minutes and he had access to money. We'd actually changed the law to allow the Auditor General to follow the money. We changed the law in the early 2000s. We changed the law for Elections Manitoba to be able to follow the money which he was unable to do in '95.

I would point out that the Attorney General has a 200-page report. The members opposite walked out of the last Public Accounts Committee. They didn't like the answer to the questions. Who had access to the e-mail? The Auditor General. The e-mail never went further than the ADM. They don't like the answers to the questions.

Will they ever get money back from Maple Leaf? The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) said: No, no the government won't see a cent of it. We got all the money back, interest and penalties on top of that. We don't have an Isobord on our side. You've got lots of them, Mr. Speaker.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, on page 169 of the Auditor's Report that the Premier

wants to refer to, those in higher authority apparently cleared all actions over the Crocus Investment Fund. What will this government do to respond to Lucille and Barry Bell who say that health and age prohibit us from further gainful employment; at this critical juncture in our lives, it is devastating to have a large amount of our pension frozen.

Will he call an inquiry so we can find out who the higher authority is?

I wanted to ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger): Will someone over there stand up and answer on behalf of Crocus?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, the highest authority dealing with Crocus was legislation, and the members opposite asked this question as well in the Public Accounts Committee. The highest authority is this Legislature. This Legislature passed legislation in 1992. The Auditor General said it was confusing on whether it was social investments or rate of return. We have dealt with that confusion and recommended that rate of return be the primary consideration.

The members opposite talk about capital funds. There's Richardson Funds doing quite well here in Manitoba. There's a new fund that is being led by a number of Western Life Sciences that are doing well. There's another new fund that is led by a number of other people in the private sector. The capital funds are doing well in Manitoba.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance would know that the Auditor said that there were sufficient red flags in 2002. What is this government going to do on behalf of Lucille and Barry when they say that currently, I am completely ashamed of my province and its government?

Do the right thing. Protect the people of Manitoba from an injustice. Don't do to us what Enron and Bre-X frauds did to their investors. Will someone in this government stand up on behalf of Crocus and call an inquiry?

Mr. Doer: Well, the member opposite, his leader has said: Don't give money to the Crocus investors, and now has said: Give money to the Crocus investors. I think it is very important we did have the tax provision transferred to investors, as was recommended by the implementation committee. The Auditor General has already stated that the implementation committee has fulfilled all the recommendations that he had made, and he said that in Public Accounts Committee.

Members opposite asked about the red flag. The Auditor General confirmed last year at Public Accounts Committee that an e-mail between one bureaucrat and another bureaucrat never went further than an assistant deputy minister. We don't read all e-mails in government. I accept that responsibility. We don't, and the members opposite asked that question. They didn't like the answer, and then they walked out of the next committee meeting. That's what they do. They get an answer they don't like, they walk out.

Foster Families Universal Child Care Benefit

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, last summer the federal government initiated the Universal Child Care Benefit for all children under six. Can the Minister of Family Services confirm whether foster parents directly receive this benefit?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I, first of all, want to say to the House that I am honoured to have the opportunity to serve in this new portfolio and work with my colleagues in communities for the well-being of vulnerable children and families. I, also as a preliminary note, want to celebrate the appointment of our new Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member opposite has some new-found interest in fostering in Manitoba. It is a question coming from what I would say are the foes of fostering in this province based on their record. I will also advise that there have been significant increases in the rates for fostering.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Universal Child Care Benefit was intended for families to assist them in covering the cost of child care options, whether that be for stay-at-home parents, family care providers or day care. Why is this minister's government clawing it back at a time when they should be trying to attract more foster families to the system?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the outside reviews into the child welfare system have said that the universal benefit and the amount that flows to the Province should be re-invested in the child welfare system and, specifically, in fostering.

I am very pleased to confirm with this House that last month we announced a significant increase to the rates for fostering in Manitoba. I want to remind members of this House what the recent

history of fostering is. In 1993, members opposite cut rates for fostering; in 1994, they cut rates to fostering; in 1996, they cut rates to fostering; in 1999, they cut rates to fostering. They got rid of the Foster Family Network. That's their record, shameless questions.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, at a time when we see an all-time high in the number of children in hotels, why has this minister not been briefed in this area in his portfolio? Why does this government receive this money and not turn it over to foster families who are caring for children? It is called the Universal Child Care Benefit, not the NDP universal, NDP government benefit. How much of the \$6-million funding announcement, part of which was earmarked as new money for foster families, is really money from the federal government that was already intended for foster families?

Mr. Mackintosh: You know full well, Mr. Speaker, how familiar members opposite are with clawbacks. I want the member to stand up in this House and apologize to Manitobans for the phoney numbers. Members opposite bring into this House numbers as phoney as I heard on their ads.

It should be known to this House that, until about two years ago, the number of children in hotels was only counted in the city of Winnipeg. Since a couple of years ago, we count all Manitobans. This province is bigger than the children in the city of Winnipeg. They are misleading Manitobans. They should apologize for misleading them. I also will remind members of this House that the number of children in hotels has gone from 121 the week of October 7, to 79 last Thursday.

Justice System Appeal of Sentences

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, only this government could claw back money from children, and yet, they ask for an apology from others in this House. Shame on them, I say.

Mr. Speaker, also in relation to children, on Tuesday of this week, a Winnipeg couple was sentenced for committing sexual offences that were related and were compared to those of Paul Bernardo and Carla Homolka. The victims were two teenage girls. The court heard that they were savagely raped over several days. For their crimes, the convicted couple received seven years and time served respectively, a terrible sentence, out of line with

what Manitobans expect. Residents of Manitoba and Canada are justifiably outraged. They are looking for real justice.

I want to ask this Minister of Justice today whether or not he will direct an appeal on these horrific sentences.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that I am precluded because of my role as Attorney General from commenting on specific cases.

The member had the judges of the court here two days ago. The member could have gone 10 feet over and asked the judges why they made the decision, but the member didn't because the member, too, is precluded from interfering in the justice system. From the facts of the case that I am aware of from reading in the paper, the Crown prosecutor asked for 18 years and seven years, respectively, for those particular offences.

* (10:40)

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, this is a very clear issue here. What I am asking the Minister of Justice to do is not to comment on the specifics of the case. What I am asking him to do is to direct an appeal. Manitobans and Canadians, nationwide, are looking at this case and saying: Is there really justice in the province of Manitoba?

These young victims are going to live for the rest of their lives with this horrific crime. If they can't expect justice from this minister then there is nobody who will protect them in this province.

I will ask very clearly again because he knows that he can do this. Will he direct an appeal of the sentences, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have gone further. In fact, at the federal-provincial conference with the federal Minister of Justice, who is the MP for the member speaking, who makes the criminal law and the sentencing provisions, we asked for automatic sentencing, automatic minimum sentences, on matters of this kind. We asked for stricter sentencing penalties, and the Minister of Justice, who is the member's MP, agreed with us on those particular provisions.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for Steinbach, I want to remind all honourable members that when you are putting a

question or answering a question, please do it through the Chair.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. He wants to talk about some of the issues on the federal level. There is a bill before Parliament, Bill C-9, which has significant restrictions. He supported and campaigned for members who gutted that legislation on the federal side, members that he campaigned for, and I would say to him that he should go to those federal members and say that they are wrong and that he won't campaign for them anymore if they are going to do that. You can't have it both ways.

Mr. Speaker, this is very clear. This sentence needs to be appealed for the victims who are involved here. I am going to ask him very clearly. There are victims involved who are going to live with this for the rest of their lives. If he wants to deflect, if he wants to not answer the question, it sends a signal to Manitobans and Canadians across this land that there is no justice in Manitoba.

I want to ask him again: Do the right thing for the victims and appeal that horrific sentence.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, if I did as directed by the member would he put out his press release? It is possible any potential appeal could be thrown out of court because of interference in this Chamber by a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

If the member wants the case tossed and wants me to put on the record something to have the case tossed, then it is on his conscience and the conscience of those members who say they respect victims. The Crown prosecutor asked for 18 years and seven years. The member knows that. The member could have asked the judges and didn't. He knows why he didn't walk 10 feet over and ask the judges that were sitting in this Legislature. He knows why he didn't walk 10 feet over and ask the judges because he cannot, and he is trying to deflect it, Mr. Speaker. He knows what the law is, and he is not telling the accurate case in this House because he wants us to have the case dismissed. I think that is deplorable.

Throne Speech Health Care Human Resources

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): In 1999, the Premier promised to end hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. Hallway medicine is alive and well, and yet it was ignored in the Throne Speech. Now hallway medicine has escalated into a severe ER doctor shortage and it is a crisis.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why she ignored hallway medicine in the Throne Speech. The elephant in the room, why did she ignore it in the Throne Speech? Is it because she doesn't know how to solve the problem?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I am very pleased to receive a question on health care because, like many Manitobans, when I heard the platform developing from members opposite, from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), abandoning health care as a priority, I was very concerned. We know, Mr. Speaker, what happens when members opposite abandon health care. We know that a thousand nurses get fired. We know that spaces in the medical school get cut because somehow members opposite think it is a good idea to cut human resources in health care. We know that facilities in Manitoba turned to crumbles. We know that there is an infestation resulting in the Health Sciences Centre under their watch.

Emergency Rooms Physician Shortages

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, if anybody has abandoned health care, it has been the NDP who are rated dead last in the country. If we want to talk human resources, our community ERs are short over 40 percent of our doctors. The hospitals are struggling to keep their ERs open. Doctors are burning out and, on October 19, there was a meeting where it was talked about closing a Winnipeg ER. I would like to ask the—*[interjection]* A suggestion thrown out at an October 19 meeting was to close the Grace Hospital ER.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Will the Minister of Health tell us what to do if there are further ER doctors resigning? Will she close another ER in Winnipeg?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, again I am pleased to talk about our government's commitment and making a priority of health care. It is a No. 1 commitment for us, and that commitment, of course, began many years ago.

But, just recently this summer, we introduced the largest first-year class in medical school in three years, the largest class since disco. Secondly, we ensured this past summer, when we were having some challenges in the ER, we implemented programs in the short term, like incentive programs for hard-to-fill shifts, like stabilization programs for longer-term doctors in the ER. So, while we have a

long-range plan that, by the way, doesn't include cutting the spaces of doctors and firing nurses, we have an interim plan—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, their so-called solution was nothing more than a Band-Aid. There's a gaping wound, and we've got a serious crisis in our Winnipeg ERs.

The Premier has become famous for his arrogant and misleading statement that there were zero patients in hallways. All the tracking numbers show that he is dead wrong in putting forward that comment.

I would now like to ask the new Minister of Health if she will ask for a full and honest reporting of ER hallway patients. Will she actually ask for that instead of accepting the false and misleading statements put forward by her leader?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, I am shocked and surprised that the member opposite doesn't go to the caucus and ask the former chief of staff for the Filmon government when they established the criteria and accounting for hallways—in January of 1999, the chief of staff for the former premier was involved in it. She may want to ask that question in caucus. We are comparing apples to apples, and I know they don't like that comparison.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Member for Charleswood what the definition of arrogance is. The definition of arrogance is somebody that comes into this Chamber and makes the assumption that he is going to be in government before the people decide. That's a definition of arrogance. It sits two seats over.

Multiple Sclerosis Diagnosis and Treatment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and her government totally dropped the ball when it came to supporting Dr. Meir Kryger and his super, excellent efforts in terms of sleep disorders, in spite of the fact that I raised this many times in this Legislature.

Today, I am raising concerns of a similar nature about multiple sclerosis, a very serious disease. We have one of the highest incidences of multiple sclerosis anywhere in the world. To ensure we have the very best in terms of prevention, diagnosis and treatment, we need to make sure our efforts in multiple sclerosis are well supported in Manitoba.

Can the minister tell us what she is doing with multiple sclerosis and the excellent leadership that we have with Dr. Maria Melanson?

*(10:50)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I find it curious strange, although again encouraged about questions about health care which, of course, is a priority of ours. I thought that the member opposite made it quite clear yesterday that he shouldn't speak in areas that might be perceived as a conflict of interest. He can have it one way on one day, Mr. Speaker, but on another day that suits him a little bit better he can have it another.

We certainly do agree the work that is being done in Manitoba on a variety of fronts, including multiple sclerosis, Mr. Speaker, is exceptional. Individuals who live with multiple sclerosis and families that have members who have multiple sclerosis are deserving of the absolute best of care. Here in Manitoba they are getting that.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Bullying Awareness Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'd like to acknowledge that this week, November 13-19, has been declared Bullying Awareness Week. Bullying in schools is a problem that cannot and should not be tolerated, Mr. Speaker.

A recent Teen Touch survey of students largely between the ages of 11 and 14 reported that 76 percent of respondents said that they had been bullied at some point, a very unacceptable number, Mr. Speaker. This is a broad social issue that affects children, adolescents, parents and people in the community as well. It has a number of negative effects including those on the development of young people. Every student deserves a respectful, safe, caring classroom environment as part of their educational experience.

In addition to raising general awareness and education on the issue of bullying, it is essential that the proper tools and supports be made available to those who combat bullying on the front lines on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. Those who deal with bullying and see its effects first-hand such as students, teachers, parents and others in the community are instrumental in developing solutions to this problem. Supporting their efforts is essential to addressing this very problem.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to commend all those who have spoken out against bullying or taken action in some other way. Bullying is a community problem and requires the whole community to respond. I'd like to recognize the parent advisory councils and other local groups that have dedicated their time and effort to addressing this very important issue. I also want to specifically thank the teachers for all that they do, Mr. Speaker, with this very important issue. It is through their efforts that we can stop bullying in our schools and on our streets and create a safe and respectful environment in our classrooms. Thank you very much.

Grey Cup

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, Mr. Speaker, this Sunday I will be at Canad Inns Stadium in Minto constituency with 44,000 of my closest friends to celebrate Canada's greatest sports event, the Grey Cup. The B.C. Lions and Montréal Alouettes will do battle for the 94th Grey Cup championship, televised not only throughout Canada but also to our military overseas, United States and to many other countries.

It's more than just a football game. The Grey Cup festival is the stuff of legends. While all fans want their own team to win, the Grey Cup unites Canadians from across the country including more than 15,000 visitors to Winnipeg this week. Performing artists including Manitoba's own Tom Cochrane, and fellow Canadians Nellie Furtado and Sam Roberts, are also in Winnipeg to celebrate. On Saturday afternoon, my family and I will join tens of thousands along Portage Avenue to enjoy the Manitoba Hydro Grey Cup Parade.

Visitors from across Canada will have the chance to experience the world-class MTS Centre which is hosting several events, as well as our first-rate hotels, restaurants, bars and renovated Convention Centre. Most importantly, they will return home with warm, if somewhat hazy, memories of Manitoba's friendly people.

As a true-blue supporter, I am delighted the Grey Cup will put the Winnipeg Blue Bombers on a solid financial footing, not only eliminating the club's deficit, but putting the Bombers on the road to future success. I'm satisfied that this bright future will include the club's 11th Grey Cup victory in Toronto next November.

I am certain that all members of this Legislature join me in welcoming all football fans and in hoping

for yet another classic Canadian football championship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Osvita Foundation Inc.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, The Osvita Foundation Inc. of Manitoba is a charitable foundation and fundraising arm of the Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education. The foundation is committed to supporting excellence in education through their support of the English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program in Manitoba.

Last evening the foundation honoured the Metropolitan and the Archbishop of the Central Dioceses and Metropolitan of Canada of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, his Eminence John Stinka, and also the Archbishop of Winnipeg and Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada, His Grace Lawrence Huculak. The testimonial dinner honoured the contributions of these two individuals to the cultural and language programs within our country, Mr. Speaker.

The guest speaker, Dr. Roman Yereniuk, also paid tribute to the former premier of our province, Duff Roblin, because it was during his term in office that the English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program in Manitoba was established, and also it was this premier who honoured the work of Ukrainians in Canada by erecting the Taras Shevchenko monument on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature.

On behalf of all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate both Metropolitan Stinka and Metropolitan Huculak for their contributions to this country and also for becoming the new metropolitans for this country just recently. I'd also commend the foundation on their ongoing support of the English-Ukrainian Bilingual Program in Manitoba. Thank you.

War Memorial (Netherlands)

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, last week while I was in my former homeland of the Netherlands to celebrate my uncle Ome Harie Houben's 90th birthday, I was privileged to place a small Canadian flag on a memorial honouring the death of 10 allied airmen, of whom three were Canadian. The memorial, consisting of an artistically designed broken propeller, honoured Harold Heath, 19; Chipman Fraser, 22; and three British comrades whose RAF Vickers Wellington was shot down by the Germans on September 3, 1944.

Eight days later, another British plane was shot down, and among the five casualties was 27-year-old Canadian, Irwin D. Fountain. The memorial is located approximately two kilometres from my former hometown, Slek-Echt, and is located on the beautiful grounds of the Lilbosch Trappist Monastery.

Later that day I arrived at the Canadian War Cemetery at Bergen Op Zoom in the province of Noord Brabant. In this quiet and immaculately groomed cemetery, ringed by maple trees, are located the graves of 1,115 Canadians. Among the many rows of blinding white crosses, I finally located grave 7-C12. This was the grave of Elmer Raymond Lindoff. He was a gunner in the 6th field regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery. He died on October 26, 1944, at the age of 25. This was during the critical battle of the Scheld offensive when the Allies, particularly Canadians, were in the process of liberating the Scheld River and estuary to allow ship convoys to reach the port of Antwerp safely.

Elmer Raymond Lindoff was born in Stockholm, Saskatchewan. His sister, Viola Mosell, now deceased, lived in Cranberry Portage. I had promised my friend, Viola, that I would visit her brother's grave in Holland. I was finally able to honour this promise and place two red roses from my uncle's garden on her brother's grave. It was an emotional and symbolic event. I thank cousin Toon Jennissen and his wife, Margriet, Wil Schlicher and Claudia Jennissen and my sister, Maria Cook, for their strong support during this very emotional visit to the graves of some of our Canadian war dead in the Netherlands. But above all, I want to thank those brave Canadians who made the supreme sacrifice in order to preserve our liberty. They are not forgotten.

*(11:00)

Throne Speech

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I rise today to address this lacklustre Speech from the Throne, and once again it is filled with empty promises and disappointing announcements. It has confirmed what we have known for years, that this government is out of fresh innovative ideas. It cannot move this province forward. This Throne Speech fails miserably at addressing the challenges that Manitobans face and demonstrates that the NDP government is out of sync with the public's values and wishes.

While Manitobans have been calling for strong policy that will fix our roads, keep our streets safe and keep our young people in Manitoba, this government has provided a Throne Speech that is full of political posturing and the rehashing of projects that have already been committed to. The NDP government is looking backward, defending its own record, rather than looking forward to protect and advance the future of the province.

We have seen a speech with flaws, Band-Aid solutions and promises to what the NDP think Manitobans want, not what they really need or want. What we saw was no significant commitment to lower taxes and address the growing gap between Manitoba and other provinces when it comes to competitiveness, no long-term strategy proposed to rebuild our infrastructure that has been neglected for years, no practical measures to get tough on crime and keep our streets safe.

Manitobans deserve a government that is tuned in and responsive to their values and goals. They want accountability and sustainability, realistic solutions, not pipeline dreams. This Throne Speech was a major chance to address issues that have long been neglected in this province. Unfortunately, this NDP government did not seize the opportunity and Manitobans will continue to pay the price. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
ADJOURNED DEBATE
(Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fifth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, who has unlimited time.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise on this motion to debate and discuss the Throne Speech just released by the government.

I do want to just say that we certainly appreciate the direction and the guidance that you continue to provide to this House and look forward to working

with you over the coming days in this session. It is a little bit of a shorter session than we would have liked, but we know that's not within the Speaker's control. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for your good work in presiding over the House.

I also want to just take a moment before we get into the substance of the Throne Speech to acknowledge the contributions of the table officers for their diligence during the session and their knowledge of the proceedings of this House which are helpful to all members, myself included, and also the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff for keeping with our great parliamentary traditions, and those, as well, who work so hard in *Hansard* to make sure that they get our comments on the record accurately and quickly as we work here day in and day out.

I also want to just acknowledge the gallery officers for ensuring that the public is given every opportunity to come and watch these proceedings. It is an important role maintaining order in the gallery so that Manitobans can come and participate directly in the democracy of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like just to take a moment to thank His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor for all the work that he continues to do representing our province and for his work on Wednesday at the Throne Speech proceedings.

I also want to congratulate and welcome our pages. I am sure you'll find your experience in the Manitoba Legislature memorable and hopefully enjoyable and also enlightening from time to time. Thank you in advance for the work you'll be doing to ensure that our proceedings run as smoothly as possible.

We are also very privileged, Mr. Speaker, to have some outstandingly well-qualified legislative interns. I have had the opportunity to meet the three interns serving the opposition caucus and to speak briefly with those interns who are providing research to the government caucus. Their support for our researchers and for our team is certainly valuable. I also would just want to indicate my hope that their experience in the coming months will be most rewarding.

The internship program would not be possible without the direction and support of their academic director, and I thank Professor Jean Friesen for her leadership and the role she plays in overseeing this important program with our Manitoba Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition caucus are always pleased to have the opportunity to provide the government with ideas to move Manitoba forward. We have seen time and again over the past seven years members of the opposition, the official opposition, put forward ideas, whether it be on crystal meth or any number of other important initiatives, grandparents' rights, protection for the environment, initiatives in health care and a variety of other areas, ideas that have been picked up by the government. We commend the government for having the good sense to listen to the opposition from time to time and move forward with the ideas that we've advanced on behalf of Manitobans.

What we are concerned about, though, Mr. Speaker, is something much more fundamental, and the Throne Speech on Wednesday was emblematic and symbolic and indicative of a government that has run out of steam. After seven years in office, seven years of inaction, neglect and waste, we have a Throne Speech on Wednesday that is filled with new spending but entirely lacking in vision.

It is filled, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that there are new ideas with political gimmicks, promises to do certain things by 2019, long after the life of this government and probably the government after it have expired. They have missed an opportunity to lay out a positive vision for Manitoba. We want to just say that we want to commend the government for picking up a couple of the ideas that our caucus and our party has put forward over the past number of weeks and months. We know that when a government runs out of steam after seven years they need to look somewhere for inspiration; we have been pleased to provide that inspiration to the government.

We have a government that shamelessly steals ideas from opposition and/or the federal government. This Throne Speech is riddled with ideas and initiatives that came from Progressive Conservatives at the provincial level and Conservatives at the federal level. Take, for example, the initiative related to grandparents' rights. This is a bill introduced twice before and twice ignored by the government, and it took a rally in front of this building this past summer on the part of grandparents to get them to pay attention. This is a pattern of this government. Unless it gets into the media, unless people come to the front steps of the Legislative Building, the approach is to sweep things under the carpet, try to avoid them and to carry on with a policy of neglect.

So, with the hard work on the part of the Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), we are pleased to see that the government is going to move forward finally with legislation that deals with the very important issue of grandparents who wish to and who have a valuable role to play in connection with their grandchildren in the case of marital breakdown. Now we know, Mr. Speaker, of course that the court requires discretion, but first and foremost the interest of the children must prevail. But we also need to consider the positive impact that grandparents can have in the lives of their grandchildren when a family breaks down. These are often difficult and painful circumstances for families, and we think it appropriate that a steadying and constructive role by grandparents be acknowledged in provincial legislation. We are pleased to see that moving ahead after years of delay.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have been calling for months and years on the government to deal with the issue of interfacility ambulance transfer fees. It was first announced in the 2005 Throne Speech and now, finally, after years and months of calling on the government to take action to deal with this blatant unfairness, our system of ambulance transfers moves ahead. They have listened to our party, and they are moving ahead and we thank them for doing so.

Mr. Speaker, we have been calling for years for the government to undertake a review of regional health authorities. We know that under the watch of this government our regional health authorities have turned into monsters. They have grown exponentially as the bureaucracy has grown, and they are talking about shutting down emergency rooms in Winnipeg. We are growing increasingly alarmed and concerned that the government doesn't have its priorities right. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has referred in the past when he was opposition leader to Cabinet shuffles as being akin to changing the monkey while the organ grinder remains the same. Well, we continue to see a situation where this Premier with every Cabinet shuffle changes the monkeys, but the organ grinder is the same. The guy calling the shots is the same person. He has had seven years to deal with the ballooning bureaucracy at the health authorities. He has done nothing, and finally, under pressure from our party, they are going to undertake a long overdue review of our regional health authorities to make sure they are doing what they were originally intended to do, which was to provide reasonable and sound co-ordination of health care services and the best possible allocation of resources. They weren't

put in place to become empires. They were not put in place to become bloated bureaucracies at the expense of patients in our health care system. The review is years overdue. We are pleased to see that the government, at its own glacial pace, is finally prepared to do what Manitobans have been thinking for years and go ahead with a review of our regional health authorities.

* (11:10)

We also know that, speaking of slow melts, there is a challenge of dealing with global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, and we are pleased to see the government picking up an idea that was floated at our annual general meeting two weeks ago and move ahead with an initiative to encourage the use of hybrid vehicles as a way of cutting down on emissions for fossil fuels. It is long overdue. We know greenhouse gas emissions have grown steadily in Manitoba under this government's watch, notwithstanding the rhetoric, notwithstanding the "think green" advertising campaign that has Manitobans seeing red. The facts cannot be avoided. Greenhouse gas emissions have been growing under this government's watch, and we think it's important that action be taken. We're pleased to provide inspiration for the government on one small element of an overall environmental initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we've also seen in the Throne Speech a little bit of me-too-ism, and that's okay too. When you've run out of ideas and you have to look to the federal Conservatives for inspiration, that's not such a bad place to go for good ideas. So what they've done is introduced income splitting for seniors, and I want to just take a moment to indicate our support and our encouragement to the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, for moving ahead on income splitting for seniors to bring the tax burden off Manitoba senior citizens who have spent a lifetime paying into government and deserve to be treated with respect in their old age. We're pleased to see the government following the federal Conservatives on this initiative.

We also see the government in its Throne Speech committing to new funding for transit. It's gratifying to see the government doing what it already had to do, and that's spend federal money that's coming into the provincial government under a federal-provincial agreement where the federal government told them to spend the money on transit. This is not a new idea. It's something that the government was required to do under the agreement,

and it's something that the government is now doing in response to an initiative that took place at the federal level. I thank the government for, in its own foot-dragging way, moving forward on spending federal money in areas that are important to Winnipeggers and important to other people who live in cities around our province.

In addition to those ideas in the Throne Speech borrowed from Progressive Conservative and Conservative governments, we had a series of re-announcements, Mr. Speaker. That's something that we're getting used to from this government. Again, when you're out of steam, you need to find a new way to put a new gloss on old announcements, and that's what we saw plenty of in this week's Speech from the Throne.

We had the scene on Wednesday with the government playing politics by announcing funding and programs over and over again. Let's just take a few examples. They're going to spend money on infrastructure, effectively a re-announcement of the announcement the Premier (Mr. Doer) had made a number of weeks earlier. When you look at the way they're going about this infrastructure challenge, panicky announcements on the eve of an election with no plan, with no assurance to Manitobans that they are going to get value for that money spent, no commitment to what's actually going to happen in terms of highway building, which is so long overdue in Manitoba, but they roll out \$4 billion which seemed to come out of nowhere in highway spending. We don't have the foggiest idea at this stage of the game as to how that money is going to be spent and whether Manitobans are just going to get more of the same; the way we were soaked on the floodway fiasco, the way we were burned on Burntwood. We need to know, as Manitobans, whether the government has learned anything from its seven years of mismanagement, and we need to know whether we are going to have a repeat of what we've seen in these various other NDP fiascos.

We now find out, just before the Throne Speech was introduced, that the government is cancelling bridges connected to the floodway project. These were bridges that they deemed essential just a year ago to provide Winnipeggers with 1-in-700-year flood protection. All of a sudden, a year later, these are optional, Mr. Speaker. We know that "California Dreamin'" is one of the Premier's favourite songs, but we're concerned that it's looking more and more like bridges under troubled water in the event of a 1-in-700-year flood. We think that Manitobans deserve

better. They deserve to have their hard-earned tax dollars treated with respect. They deserve value. They deserve to get benefits when their money is spent. We see a record number of boil-water orders in Manitoba today. We see a government that's neglected our water systems, potentially putting the health of Manitobans in jeopardy. After seven years of neglect, inaction and waste, we know Manitobans deserve something better than what they're getting.

We also saw a repetition in the Throne Speech of their old promise to do child welfare reviews. This is what they do consistently. Every time we have a problem in child welfare, the first step in the NDP playbook is deny the problem. The second step—first is deny the problem, and if that doesn't work, try to blame it on somebody else. If that doesn't work, Mr. Speaker, have a review. When the review comes out, and it turns out to be a whitewash, start to point the blame at others. It's not good enough. We had in this Throne Speech again a pathetic re-announcement of a child welfare review which didn't get to the bottom of the chaos that we now see in our child welfare system. Manitoba's children are too precious to be subject to this kind of neglect.

We think the government and the Premier (Mr. Doer) need to take personal responsibility for staying in the province until this challenge, this crisis in our child welfare system is fixed. The flimsy, passing reference to child welfare in the Throne Speech I think demonstrates a government that has completely lost touch with the important things in Manitoba, the priorities of Manitobans. And what could be more important than the protection of children at risk in our province? And it barely gets a mention in the Throne Speech. It is shameful. Well, there has been focus in the media over the past couple of days on some of the things that were in the Throne Speech, and we'll have plenty of opportunity to debate those various initiatives. As I've indicated, many of them came from our caucus and from the federal Conservative government.

What's just as interesting as what was in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is what was missing. It's what was missing that says as much about this government as what was actually in the Throne Speech: meaningful tax relief. Manitoba today has the highest taxes in Canada west of Québec, the highest personal income taxes. We've got the highest property taxes; we've got among the highest business taxes. They've re-announced old, minuscule announcements announced in the budget. There's no

commitment to deal with Manitoba's increasing slide to mediocrity compared to our neighbours, and young Manitobans deserve something better than what they got in this Throne Speech.

We are one of four provinces that still has a payroll tax: a tax on jobs and a tax on investment in Manitoba. I know the NDP's small-business plan is to take big companies and turn them into small companies. But that's not good enough for Manitoba's young people. We need to do better. We need meaningful tax relief to keep young people in Manitoba, to encourage people to invest and create the kinds of jobs that young Manitobans need in order to stay here in Manitoba. It's been said that only the mediocre are always at their best, and we know and we grow increasingly concerned that this government has showed itself at its best on Wednesday, and its best is mediocre or worse.

Now we saw in this Throne Speech absolutely nothing in terms of a concerted effort to create opportunities at home to keep young Manitobans in our province. Now they've done some flimsy things on the surface. They created the name of a department. We've now got a new government department for competitiveness, but the fact is you can change the chef, but if the recipe remains the same, then it's the same crummy stuff they've been feeding us for the last seven years, Mr. Speaker.

We've got the same old tired, rerun ideas, the same old passive-aggressive, anti-business attitude that permeates the NDP, and nothing could be more clear about their lack of commitment to business in Manitoba than the lack of attention to growing our economy and creating opportunities for young people contained in this speech. Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) likes to talk about the 1990s. He's reminiscent. It's time for the Premier to come out of the jungle, to stop fighting old wars that ended almost a decade ago. It's time for the Premier to come to 2006 to start to look forward. It's time for him to stop fighting old wars, it's time for him to come to 2006, and it's time—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (11:20)

Mr. McFadyen: It's time, Mr. Speaker, to start looking at the challenges that we face today: high taxes, record red tape, crumbling roads, the worst health care system in Canada. It's time to start taking responsibility for this record, but it's time for a government that's going to apply with energy and

new ideas a plan to deal with the challenges facing our province. Now we know, and I've touched on it already, that we have a record number of children placed in hotels in our Child and Family Services system. We know that the Grey Cup is a great event for Winnipeg and we're glad to have it here, but when you see the tragedy of young people in hotels being displaced because of a lack of planning on the part of the government, a lack of commitment to dealing with this problem, then we have something that is absolutely tragic.

Think of the message that this sends to vulnerable children in Manitoba: We are going to put you in a hotel, but we have not had enough foresight to plan for the Grey Cup, so out you go so that we can make room for Grey Cup patrons, Mr. Speaker. It is disgraceful. It is shameful. It is up to the Premier to take personal responsibility for this problem. It is time to deal with the problem that has been created as the number of children in hotels has increased. It hasn't doubled. It hasn't tripled. It hasn't gone up fourfold. It hasn't gone up fivefold. The number of children in hotels in Manitoba today is up sixfold from where it was when he took office. It is one of the blackest marks on what is already a very poor legacy on the part of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, let's now look at the most infamous broken promise in Manitoba's political history, this Premier's commitment to end hallway medicine in six months. Where was that in the Throne Speech? I have read the speech. I have read the speech back-to-front several times, and there is not a single reference in the Throne Speech delivered seven years after it came to office to hallway medicine, and I wonder why. *[interjection]* For the record, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said from his chair that hallway medicine has been solved, and that is why—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, the Premier needs to spend less time in California and more time in Manitoba, and that is becoming more clear every day. The comment that he made from his seat just now, to say that there are no patients in Manitoba hallways, is absolutely at odds with what every Manitoban who has been in a hospital in recent weeks and months already knows and that's that many, many Manitobans are languishing in hallways in Manitoba. The Premier seems to want to bury his head in the California sand and not acknowledge that we have got a significant problem when it comes to Manitoba patients lying in hallways.

The best he can do—*[interjection]*

You know what this reminds me of, Mr. Speaker, after months and years of denying that we have a problem with young people leaving Manitoba, No. 1, their leaked initiative to the *Free Press*—what is it, Mr. Speaker, an initiative to keep young people in Manitoba. What an admission of failure after seven years. Seven years of denial followed by an admission that they are failing young people. Seven years of denial on hallway medicine. I hope that the Premier will do the right thing on this case as they did in the Throne Speech with respect to young Manitobans and admit that they have got it wrong on hallway medicine, admit that they haven't solved the problem and get on with it. Fudging statistics does nothing for Manitoba patients.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Hells Angels moved into Manitoba in 2000 under this Premier's watch. They moved into Manitoba under this Premier's watch, and we have seen the growing tragedy of young people, particularly in our cities, but in towns and villages across Manitoba, increasingly being drawn into the world of the drug trade and organized crime. This is a problem that has grown exponentially in recent years. Now, we have seen a failure on the part of this government to deal with it with what Manitobans really need.

What Manitobans require and what Manitobans deserve is a government at the provincial level that is committed to enforcement. Enforcement means police, prosecutions, jails and courts, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't require more news releases and more legislation. What we need is action on enforcement.

What we have today, Mr. Speaker, and we are grateful as Manitobans for this, is a federal government committed to getting serious about amending the Criminal Code in order to bring real consequences for criminals in Manitoba. Who stopped it? The Premier's good friend, Pat Martin, the Premier's good friend, Bill Blaikie, who stood up and gutted the federal government bill to bring real consequences for criminals. Why won't the NDP members opposite stand up for law abiding Manitobans? Why do they stick up for their friends in the NDP and criminals? Why won't they stand up for law abiding Manitobans?

It is shameful, and I don't know why the government won't make it clear, make it abundantly clear. As they distribute the propaganda around Manitoba from the provincial NDP, it says, and I quote, "We need more New Democrats in

Parliament. Let's do our best to see it happen." This is the Premier's material coming out of the Premier's political party. Then, when these New Democratic Party members of Parliament gut crime-fighting measures at the federal level, we have to wonder where the commitment is on the part of Manitobans.

After inmates were given the right to vote in Headingley, Mr. Speaker—I recall inmates were given the right to vote—that, as I recall, seven out of 10 Manitoba inmates voted NDP when they were given the opportunity. We know that there is no secret as to why that is. They know that they have got a government. It's the hug-a-thug mentality of the NDP. It's a government that coddles criminals, and that is why seven out of 10 inmates vote NDP.

Mr. Speaker, on justice, we know that we need a plan to crack down on gangs. We know that we need to deal with the challenge of addiction in our communities. We need to see a concerted effort. We know that, if they can beat crime in New York City, they can beat it anywhere including here in Manitoba. It just requires a committed effort, and we need somebody prepared to show leadership on this issue. What we got in this Throne Speech was nothing more than a hollow commitment to move ahead with more news releases, more legislation, and a failure on the part of the government to move forward with enforcement. We don't see anything in terms of a condemnation of their federal NDP cousins for their action in gutting crime-fighting legislation in Canada. They should be ashamed.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of injustice meted out to Manitobans under this government, we have the issue of the Crocus scandal. We have Manitobans who put their faith in this government. We have Manitobans who received the advertising. They got the material in their pay envelopes: Buy into Crocus; Get the tax credits; Buy into Crocus and support the Manitoba economy. It went on for years. It went on for years under this government while they knew that there were problems under the Crocus Fund. The Crocus Fund was performing fine until 2000 and beyond. When the Crocus Fund got into trouble, the government carried on with promoting the fund to innocent Manitobans. They have lost faith in this government and this government's willingness to fight for Manitobans, to protect Manitobans.

Now, what we see is that the primary leg of the stool—the Premier's defence, the Premier's evasion on Crocus, has rested on a three-legged stool. One of which was the Manitoba Securities Commission

investigation. That leg has been kicked out. The stool has fallen down. It is time for the Premier (Mr. Doer) to stop making up excuses. It is time for the Premier to call an inquiry into Crocus and do justice to those thousands of Manitobans who have had their retirements negatively impacted as a result of this government's neglect in its oversight of the Crocus Fund.

Mr. Speaker, we also see from this government a complete lack of strategy in this Throne Speech to promote growth in our agricultural economy. We know that agriculture is changing throughout the world. We know there are heavy subsidies in the United States and Europe, and we know there's a transformation going on in terms of the growth and the production of agricultural commodities around the world. It is time for Manitoba to catch up. It is time for Manitoba to stop fighting the battles of the 1990s and to have a government that's going to look forward, a government that is going to look forward to the future of agriculture in Manitoba which rests in value-added activity in our rural communities.

We need a government that is going to provide. We need a government that is going to look forward and say, what kind of future lies ahead for our rural communities, and what are we going to do to encourage the transformation of our rural economy so that young people don't have to do what they've been doing for the last seven years and leave their communities in order to find opportunities elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:30)

Now, we know that there are challenges in agriculture that go well beyond the borders of Manitoba, but we need a government that is going to be in the corner of Manitoba farmers, in the corner of our rural residents and fighting for them instead of working against them, which is what this government has done every step in the day along the way.

A \$2-a-head tax on cattle, Mr. Speaker, a failure to respond in a timely way to the BSE crisis that was ravaging our beef sector. We now see contradictory positions on the pork industry, 27 million of taxpayers' dollars put at risk at OlyWest at the same time as we have an open-ended moratorium in the pork industry.

Mr. Speaker, we believe an environmental review is overdue for the pork industry. We support a review of the environmental implications of what is going on with the pork industry in Manitoba, but to

have an open-ended moratorium which sends a signal that there is no certainty, there is no planning, there is no foresight on the part of the government, is to drive away investment as a further blow to Manitoba's rural economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see suddenly the New Democrats have been converted to democracy when it comes to agriculture in Manitoba. Well, where was their commitment to democracy when they are about to impose unilaterally a \$2-a-head tax on beef farmers in Manitoba? If something is going on at the federal level, they are running around trying to meddle in issues that are occurring at the federal level, but when it comes to actions within the direct control of this government they couldn't care less about what the farmers have to say. They couldn't care less about Manitoba producers.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I had occasion to meet with more than 800 rural Manitobans last night; they are not impressed. They want change. They want change, and I can tell you that we have had a growth in our party's membership over the last nine months. Over the last nine months we have seen a growth in membership in our party from rural Manitoba approaching 7,000 new Manitobans who have joined our party over the last nine months because they believe that we are the party that is fighting for rural Manitoba. We know that those Manitobans cannot wait to see this government removed from office so that they can have a government that is going to be in their corner instead of working against them when it comes to the challenges that they are facing. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) is throwing out comments from his seat today. The Premier is making comments from his seat today.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is making comments from his seat. I think he said something about a hatchet man. I just want to let the Premier in on something, because I know he is spending a lot of time in California with Governor Schwarzenegger these days. I do not know if he is auditioning to play Danny DeVito's role in the remake of *Twins*. I am not sure what the idea is, but I do want to let the Premier in on something. *The Terminator* is not a documentary. It may very well become one at some point, but *The Terminator* is not a documentary. The

Premier needs to spend less time in the California sun, more time here in Manitoba. He needs to get in touch with the concerns of Manitobans.

Now, we have seen in the Throne Speech a commitment to do something by 2019, and that relates to the Conawapa project. We support hydro development in Manitoba, and we support hydro development occurring in a way that is planned, that is sensible, that is on time and on budget, which is a contrast with what we have seen after seven years of projects running over budget and late in this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen that Manitobans have every reason to be sceptical about this government's ability to manage major projects on their behalf. We've seen with the mismanagement of a floodway, a project labour agreement that has cost Manitoba taxpayers no less than \$60 million, \$60 million dollars down the toilet because of the government's deal with its union-boss friends.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here we see after a year of bungling and mismanagement on this project, that the only bridges that the Premier is building are bridges to his friends in the labour movement. He should be building bridges that allow Winnipeggers to get in and out of Manitoba in the event of a major flood, not bridges under troubled water, which is what we're going to have in the event of a 1-in-700-year flood, if that's what happens under this government.

Mr. Speaker, we just see time and again, and again another major omission from this Throne Speech, time and again a story of misplaced priorities. We see the government launching and spending hundreds and thousands of dollars on pre-election, taxpayer-funded election advertising campaigns. Hundreds of thousands of dollars. It eclipses anything that's ever been done under any previous government in this province. I can tell you that if the government has \$1.6 million to spend on a politically motivated spirited energy campaign, why not take a chunk of that and have a campaign aimed at recruiting more Manitobans to become foster parents so that we can start to deal with the real problems facing Manitobans and not have them subjected to these phoney pre-election taxpayer-funded advertising campaigns? It is a question of priorities. It is a question of priorities. We need a government that takes a hard look at the challenges that we face, spends their time and energy on those things that are important. Time and again we see a

government that is more interested in advertising and junkets to California than it is in dealing with the major challenges that we face here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we see today, and we've seen it repeatedly, governments and companies in other provinces, Alberta and B.C., launching campaigns to recruit young Manitobans, Canadians and people from around the world to come to their provinces in search of opportunity. Even BC Hydro has now launched commercials to recruit Manitobans away. They know an easy target when they see one, which is why they're advertising in Manitoba to draw young Manitobans away. So, while we see in this Throne Speech some re-announcements of some old initiatives, we see some ideas here that came from our party and from other levels of government. We see a whole list of glowing, outstanding omissions, neglect, inaction in so many crucial areas facing our province, whether it be hallway medicine, whether it be dealing with children who are staying in hotels, or whether it be getting our priorities straight and having an action plan with a focus on keeping young Manitobans here in our province.

* (11:40)

So, Mr. Speaker, sadly, we have witnessed a Throne Speech from this government with no fewer than 12 references to the 1980s and the 1990s and little or nothing looking to the future for the benefit of young Manitobans. This is absolutely unacceptable. It is absolutely unacceptable. We today remain one of Canada's few remaining have-not provinces. We are the only province in western Canada that continues to rely on the federal government for equalization handouts, and it's totally unacceptable. One in every three dollars that comes into this government's coffers comes from the federal government. It's a record level of dependency, and it is absolutely inconsistent with the proud history that we have had as Manitobans. If you go back and you look through our province's history, historically we're a province that was a net contributor to Canada's Confederation. We are a province that could stand on its own two feet. If you look at the era of Roblin, we are a province that looked forward with strength and optimism to a better future, and it was a province that moved forward with energy and new ideas. Today, we have the opposite. We have a government mired in mediocrity.

We have a government that is content, that is satisfied and, almost, I think, proud of the fact that they are excellent at getting handouts from the

federal government. That is one area where I give the Premier (Mr. Doer) credit. That's right. There used to be a joke in Ottawa under the former NDP government that the Premier served in. The joke in Ottawa in those days, Mr. Speaker, was that you could tell when the plane from Manitoba had arrived because the whining carried on even after they shut off the engines. We've had a continuation of that sort of mentality as the cap-in-hand approach.

Manitobans have a proud history of standing on our own two feet. We deserve better than a cap-in-hand government that is mired in mediocrity. The Throne Speech does nothing to move us forward. It does nothing to move us toward a province that can stand on its own two feet with pride and optimism.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see today a Throne Speech that has completely failed to lay out a path for a better future for Manitoba. We see a government that is out of steam and out of ideas. We see a government that continues to rely on handouts from the federal government, that continues to advertise without mercy, promote gambling in Manitoba in order to fill their coffers through the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation. I think Manitobans deserve better. We believe that Manitobans deserve better than what they are getting from this tired, out-of-steam NDP government. So, after seven years of inaction, neglect and waste, we have a Throne Speech that has failed to lay out the positive vision for Manitoba. *[interjection]* We have a Throne Speech today—*[interjection]*

The Premier has heckled consistently from his chair from the beginning of this speech, and we know that, if he put as much energy into coming up with new ideas and drafting a Throne Speech as he puts into one-liners and callous jokes in this House and non-stop heckling, Manitobans would be better served.

With regret, after reviewing this Throne Speech, this last-gasp, pre-election Throne Speech from a tired NDP government, for all of the reasons I've already referred to, I would move, seconded by the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire),

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

But this House regrets:

(a) the government's failure to provide meaningful and competitive tax relief for Manitobans; and

(b) the government's failure to provide foster placements for the unprecedented number of children in care housed in our hotels; and

(c) the government's failure to acknowledge that hallway medicine still exists in Manitoba, and that it has now progressed to a crisis in Winnipeg's emergency rooms due to a critical shortage of doctors; and

(d) the government's failure to implement an effective strategy to reduce wait times for diagnostic testing, surgical procedures and appointments with specialists; and

(e) the government's failure to address the critical shortage of health care professionals, which is crippling the ability of the system to provide timely access to care; and

(f) the government's failure to keep rural emergency rooms open despite promising to do so, forcing Manitobans to travel crumbling highways to access emergency care; and

(g) the government's failure to offer assurances to students and parents that educational outcomes and greater accountability in education are a high priority; and

(h) the government's failure to call an independent public inquiry into the Crocus Investment Fund scandal, which resulted in 34,000 Manitobans losing more than \$60 million; and

(i) the government's failure to ensure prudent expenditure of taxpayers' dollars, spending millions of dollars on rebranding campaigns and pre-election advertising; and

(j) the government's failure to support the construction of a new transmission line for hydro-electricity on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, which will cost Manitobans over \$500 million; and

(k) the government's failure to implement a long-term provincial strategy to recruit and retain police officers; and

(l) the government's failure to crack down on auto thieves and gang activity; and

(m) the government's failure to address court backlogs and the flourishing remand culture in Manitoba; and

(n) the government's failure to focus on the competitiveness of our post-secondary institutions compared to others across the country; and

(o) the government's failure to provide a strategy to promote growth in Manitoba's agricultural economy, focussing instead on issues under federal jurisdiction; and

(p) the government's failure to implement a plan to market by-products of the biofuel production process; and

(q) the government's failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

(r) the government's failure to acknowledge that it was Manitoba Progressive Conservatives who announced ideas for rebates on hybrid vehicles, an external review of the regionalization of health care and grandparents' rights legislation; and

(s) the government's failure to ensure the promised level of flood protection for the people of the City of Winnipeg; and

(t) the government's failure to provide better economic development opportunities for rural and northern Manitoba; and

(u) the government's failure to create a competitive environment that encourages private sector businesses to come to Manitoba and spur job creation and economic growth; and

(v) the government's failure to address the out-migration of Manitobans, especially our youth.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:50)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Before moving the motion, I would like to ask the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition: The verbal wording was different than the written wording, so I will go through all of them first and then you can say if you agree. We are after the seconder of the motion:

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end of the motion the following, you said "sentence" but in the wording it says "words."

So that is one. Maybe we will just go through all of them and save a little bit of time.

If you just follow me, then in:

(b) the government's failure to provide foster placements for the unprecedented number of children

in care housed in, and you added "our" before "hotel".

Okay. Then in:

(g) the government's failure to offer assurances to students and parents that educational outcomes and greater accountability in, and two words—and followed "the" that was left out of your comment, and then "education" and then also "system" was left out of your verbal comment.

Then we will go to (i) and where it says "Hydro ratepayers" in the written form, you substituted "Manitobans." So if you are agreed to take out "Manitobans" and if we could put in "Hydro ratepayers." Okay.

Then we will go to the back of the page 4:

(s) and for the government's failure to ensure the promised level of flood protection for the, you added "people of the" City of Winnipeg.

So, if you are willing to delete that wording, we will print it as it is written.

So, with those changes, if you are agreeable, then we'll proceed with the motion.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the oral comments didn't conform exactly to what is written, I would simply ask that what we submitted in writing take precedence over the oral comments.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you very much for that.

It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), seconded by the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire),

THAT the motion be amended—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets:

(a) the government's failure to provide meaningful and competitive tax relief for Manitobans; and

(b) the government's failure to provide foster placements for the unprecedented number of children in care housed in hotels; and

(c) the government's failure to acknowledge that hallway medicine still exists in Manitoba, and that it

has now progressed to a crisis in Winnipeg's emergency rooms due to a critical shortage of doctors; and

(d) the government's failure to implement an effective strategy to reduce wait times for diagnostic testing, surgical procedures and appointments with specialists; and

(e) the government's failure to address the critical shortage of health care professionals, which is crippling the ability of the system to provide timely access to care; and

(f) the government's failure to keep rural emergency rooms open despite promising to do so, forcing Manitobans to travel crumbling highways to access emergency care; and

(g) the government's failure to offer assurances to students and parents that educational outcomes and greater accountability in the education system are a high priority; and

(h) the government's failure to call an independent public inquiry into the Crocus Investment Fund scandal, which resulted in 34,000 Manitobans losing more than \$60 million; and

(i) the government's failure to ensure prudent expenditure of taxpayers' dollars, spending millions of dollars on rebranding campaigns and pre-election advertising; and

(j) the government's failure to support the construction of a new transmission line for hydro-electricity on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, which will cost Hydro ratepayers over \$500 million; and

(k) the government's failure to implement a long-term provincial strategy to recruit and retain police officers; and

(l) the government's failure to crack down on auto thieves and gang activity; and

(m) the government's failure to address court backlogs and the flourishing remand culture in Manitoba; and

(n) the government's failure to focus on the competitiveness of our post-secondary institutions compared to others across the country; and

(o) the government's failure to provide a strategy to promote growth in Manitoba's agricultural economy, focussing instead on issues under federal jurisdiction; and

(p) the government's failure to implement a plan to market by-products of the biofuel production process; and

(q) the government's failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

(r) the government's failure to acknowledge that it was Manitoba Progressive Conservatives who announced ideas for rebates on hybrid vehicles, an external review of the regionalization of health care and grandparents' rights legislation; and

(s) the government's failure to ensure the promised level of flood protection for the City of Winnipeg; and

(t) the government's failure to provide better economic development opportunities for rural and northern Manitoba; and

(u) the government's failure to create a competitive environment that encourages private sector businesses to come to Manitoba and spur job creation and economic growth; and

(v) the government's failure to address the out-migration of Manitobans, especially our youth.

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

The motion is in order, so we will now continue our debate.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to debate the Throne Speech and the amendment that has been just moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

I do want to say at the outset that I want to welcome the new pages and the interns to the House and also note that it may be my last speech before the election. I know some of us may not be back. We never know when we go into an election whether we are going to be re-elected or not. Some may not even know whether they've been renominated or not, but this is what happens in a democratic environment and we have to be prepared for an election which possibly could not be until June of 2008. So we may be here quite a long time.

I noted with some disappointment that one of the members opposite lost his nomination last night, and it may be a long time for him in this House if he has to sit here as not the candidate for his party for another year, year and a half.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I noted that the Leader of the Opposition looked very crestfallen and defeated with the announcement of the Conawapa project and, you know, I can see why. Because just two days earlier, on November 13, the *Winnipeg Free Press*—the *Winnipeg Sun*, pardon me—carried a story entitled "Tories open to private-sector Hydro deals," in which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) talked about future Hydro developments, his vision of future Hydro development involving private-sector deals.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know that in Manitoba we have about 5,478 megawatts of current generating capacity. My understanding is that represents about 50 percent of the possible capacity of the province. So we have developed the first half of the hydro developments using the government as the sole owner. This Leader of the Opposition is planning to develop the rest of half of Manitoba's future development in private hands. That is what he says here.

Two days after that, we have a Throne Speech in which we announce that we are going to proceed with Conawapa. Conawapa is a 1,250-megawatt project representing roughly 20 percent of what we have currently installed. So a huge, huge project second only to the Limestone project of 20 years ago. This Leader of the Opposition, based on his announcement on the 13th, would be planning to develop it under private auspices.

We announced it two days later, and in the days following our announcement, what has this Opposition Leader said regarding Conawapa? He's totally retreated; he's gone negative on the project. He would like to support it, but he knows it is a winner with the public and it's going to hurt his chances in the election. So he is caught between a rock and a hard place here. So what has he done? He stood up in the Legislature in the last couple of days saying basically bad things about the project: Oh, it can't happen. It is not there yet. We don't have firm power sales. The market is not there for the power, totally the opposite of what he was saying two days earlier when he was happily announcing that we would be doing future projects being opened to private-sector development in the Hydro deals. Now, two days later, he is not talking about this anymore. Matter of fact, he has gone negative. He is not saying, well, the government is doing a great job here. Conawapa should be developed, and let's go back to my great idea of two days ago in which I said we should involve the public sector in the financing.

He's all of a sudden said, no, we don't need the project. It is not necessary anymore. It was necessary on the 13th, and now on the 15th it is not necessary anymore. Matter of fact, it has gone from being necessary on the 13th to actually being a negative on the 15th, right? It is going to bankrupt the province. We are not going to be able to sell the power.

This is at a time when we are selling all the power we can produce. This is at a time when we have had the largest net income Manitoba Hydro has ever experienced, has ever seen. The past year, in the report ending March 31, which I just happen to have a copy of here, it indicates that they have a record net income of \$415 million due to the high water and the record energy exports which, by the way, the consumption of energy in North America is not projected to be dropping any time soon. If anything, we should have been developing this project earlier.

* (12:00)

In fact, if the previous Conservative government hadn't sat around for 11 years, they should have been out trying to get an agreement with Ontario to build the east-west power grid rather than focussing exclusively north-south, as they did, and doing nothing on the issue. The result is all these years have gone by. Well, in fact, they mothballed the project back in the early '90s, and they sat around for the rest of their 11 years, and now it's left to us to try to resurrect the project.

Fortunately, the economy is very good. We are selling all the power we can produce. We made \$415 million pure profit last year. Our previous net income record was \$270 million just in 2001, and, in fact, Manitoba Hydro was Canada's largest exporter of electricity to the United States. So we have a very positive story to tell when it comes to the whole area of hydro development, hydro production, hydro sales.

This is a good-news story and nowhere do I see any reference in the member's amendment, which we are addressing now, to the issue of Conawapa, once again one of the biggest mega-projects this province will be facing in the next couple of years by far, the 1,250-megawatt Conawapa project, and no reference whatsoever to it in their amendment to the Throne Speech.

An Honourable Member: Maybe they forgot.

Mr. Maloway: I think they may not have forgotten; maybe they like the project, and they just don't like the idea that the government's developing it, because

once again they are missing an opportunity to reward their friends.

Now, speaking of rewarding friends, they only know too well how to do that. We talked this morning about MTS and what happened to MTS, and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) stood up, and I think we were all here as witnesses, and what did he say? He said, well, buy it back. Well, isn't that sweet? He was part of the group who engineered the sale below market, \$13 a share. They only charged seven; they got a loan of seven, so they basically got it for less than the 13, then turned around and days after many investors were selling these very same shares for \$30. Today the shares I believe—I do not own any—are in the \$40 to \$42 range.

So now the Leader of the Official Opposition, get this, says, buy it back. This is Tory economics. These are the big business brains over there, right? You want to turn your economy and turn your future over to these guys who want to sell an ongoing asset at 13, less than 13, and then they want to buy it back at 42, and why would they do that? Well, so they could sell it again at 13. No wonder there are so many happy Tories. You know, whenever I see a Tory convention I see a lot of happy people there, and it's not just the alcohol that is making them happy. I mean, we all have our party conventions. Our people usually seem to be a little more concerned and serious than the Tories seem to be at their conventions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the Tory campaign being a little bit deflated here because of the happenings of the past few days, and I think they are scrambling to try to get back on track here. They also made some tentative announcements of what they plan to do when they are in government. One of them was the grandparent access protection and, of course, we have announced that. That is one plank in their platform that we thought so highly of that we are going to introduce it. So they should be happy about that.

Number two, they announced a rebate for purchasing hybrid cars. Now, my understanding is they had just announced a tax credit which, of course, would just benefit richer people, and we are announcing a rebate for purchasing the hybrid cars. So the rebate is better which helps all people and is better than a tax credit. Now, to be honest with you, I can't see the super rich getting into a Prius anyway. I don't think that's the market for the Prius. So I don't

think we're going to be sending too many rebate cheques. But, when the Tories concocted their plan, they were careful to make sure that, if any rich people did want to buy a Prius, they'd at least get a tax deduction out of it.

Another area that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) announced that he would like to make some moves on was a review of the health authorities, and there I agree with him 100 percent. But, surprise, surprise, we are going to do that. We have announced in the Throne Speech that this coming year we are going to do an independent review of the regional health authorities. I might remind the honourable member that, in fact, it was the Tories who brought the regional health authorities in, in the first place. They try to pretend that this monster that's out there, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, that's growing tentacles; they like to talk about that. That is their baby. That was their baby from 10 years ago when they were in power. That was Don Orchard's baby. Don Orchard brought that in, and we inherited it from them.

As a matter of fact, we made some improvements. The Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was the Health Minister at the time when we amalgamated the two boards, because the way they were going, they had two. One wasn't enough. They had to have two. So where was their focus? They were too concerned about selling the telephone company off at \$13 a share to focus on the health care system which had two authorities. So we have streamlined those authorities. I would be the first to admit that I think we really do need a review. We have to get a handle on the regional health authorities and just where things are going in that area.

So I think now that it may be prudent for the Leader of the Opposition not to announce any more platform because he's three for three at this point. He's proposed three and we've adopted three, and we've got a lot tolerance. We can keep going on this. He proposing them, we'll keep implementing them. Keep the good news coming, guys.

Now the members' amendment which we are to be addressing dealt with the area of taxation. There, again, the opposition certainly has a lot to worry about because they're used to the old-style NDP governments that aren't really too concerned about the finer points of corporate taxation. But they found that this government is a moving target on these points, and they're finding it very hard to make hay. They line up with their business friends periodically

and announce that we've got to reduce the corporation tax to keep in line with Alberta and keep in line with Saskatchewan, and that is their current buzz word.

But the fact of the matter is for those people who think that they were great tax cutters when they were in government, let me tell you that, in 1987, it was the previous NDP government that raised all the taxes that gave them all the revenue that they needed for the 11 years they were in government. So we went and raised the taxes for them, and they didn't reduce them at all. So, in terms of the corporate taxes, on January 1, Manitoba's corporate tax rate will be lowered to 14 percent. In 1999 this rate was 15 percent higher than Ontario's, and in 2007, the rates in the two provinces will be equal. So it wasn't the Conservatives who reduced the corporation taxes over the years; in fact, it was the NDP.

* (12:10)

In terms of the payroll tax, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) wants to talk about the payroll tax and he should know, if he looks into the history of the payroll tax, that, in fact, we did increase the exemptions over the years. So, in fact, no real small businesses are paying the payroll tax any more. There was a point at which it was fairly low and there was a lot of paperwork involved, but the exemptions were raised and raised so that only very large businesses are, in fact, even paying the payroll tax.

So, if he wants to eliminate the payroll tax, if that is what he's saying, I want to know how he's going to replace the revenue. How is he going to replace the several-hundred-million-dollars worth of revenue that he's going to forgo in terms of giving up the payroll tax?

So these are the issues—[interjection] Yes, is he planning to sell off Hydro plants? He's already talked about all the new developments being in private hands. Well, you know, it's not probably a large jump to think that maybe he might be wanting to sell off some of the existing to pay for the elimination of the payroll tax that he's talking about.

The Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) was talking about an increase in the sales tax. There are all kinds of little tax increases over there in the opposition. They talk a great line when they're in there with their Chamber of Commerce buddies, you know, taking their orders, right? Then they come out

and they make these announcements that they want to increase the sales tax.

So this is what they're going to say when they're in opposition. When they get in government it's a different situation. They didn't lower the corporation taxes when they had 11 years to do it. They did not eliminate the payroll tax when they had 11 years to do it. They lived off the taxes that were fairly high and robust during those 11 years. They didn't decrease them at all. By the way, when they did want to decrease them, guess when that was—1999. It wasn't believable. It wasn't believable. The public didn't believe them and out they went.

Now they're crying that, in fact, they were right all along and, in fact, there was room to reduce the taxes and, in fact, that billion-dollars worth of income came into the government, and we have been spending all that money that they would have liked to give away, give back in tax cuts. The fact of the matter is we've taken that money and we put it in the health care system. That's not what they would have done. They would not have improved the health care system with that billion dollars. They would have used it for their tax cuts and Manitoba would have been the poorer for it.

Now, let's look at where we were in 1999 just in the condition of the downtown of Winnipeg and the condition of the economy, the condition of the real estate market in Manitoba. I remember getting a call from one of my constituents when they were in government in 1998 or 1997-98, and this man was very disappointed and distraught. He was dealing with—it was an estate sale and the house was being sold by the Public Trustee for \$20,000 in the North End. He thought there was some inside job going on with the Public Trustee, because how could they sell his house and property for only \$20,000? So I checked with the real estate appraiser at the time and they said literally the bottom had fallen out of the market in parts of the North End and the West End, so even \$20,000 might be too much for that house and property.

Well, let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that today that house and property could be selling for \$60,000, \$70,000 or \$80,000. Right? The downtown development during their 11 years was non-existent. They couldn't build the arena. They didn't build the arena. The arena got built under the NDP. The new Hydro building is getting built under the NDP. The Red River College buildings, built under the NDP, and numerous other developments downtown, all

built since the NDP came into power, obviously a development-friendly government, and absolutely nothing was happening for the 11 years while they were in power. The whole area was deteriorating. The real estate market, the bottom had fallen out of it and you couldn't give away houses. That's what happened during their 11 years and they expect they're going to be able to fool enough people in the next six months to believe that they have reformed, that they are somehow a different group.

When their leader stands up and says, oh, we are going to have private development in Hydro, are they going to be believable? That is their problem. We have been catching all the inconsistencies in the last few days of the Leader of the Opposition, just constant inconsistencies. He makes an error and he doesn't apologize for it. He seems like he is a guy who calls it as he sees it, but if he doesn't see it, he makes it up. And he is making these factual errors. I think they have got some problems over there, and so the sooner we have the election, the happier I'm going to be. We don't want to give him too much more experience here to try to get this thing right.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other announcements that we have made. The criticism of the members opposite has been that the Throne Speech is a little bit too specific. They think this kind of looks more like a budget, or a pre-budget Throne Speech, and, well, I have seen 20 or so of them and this one does look a little specific.

But, for the first time in Manitoba history, all post-secondary students who stay and work in the province will receive a 60 percent tax rebate on their tuition fees. Now that sounds like a great idea, but when we announced it, what do their business buddies and them do? They panned it. The first day, they said it was bad. Well, we'll see how much it is disliked out there in the election campaign. I'd like the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) to take us out to the University of Manitoba and ask them what they think. Ask the students. Let's go out and test the students' response to this. I would say to her, I'll get more positives on my letters that I send out than she will negatives.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's only good news coming out of this government at this time. The opposition is basically just grasping, grasping at straws to try to get some traction. I guess that is what it is. They thought if they changed leaders, they would get some traction, and they probably did a little bit better in

that area than they were doing, but there's still some wheels spinning here.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just ask you how much time I have. *[interjection]* Okay, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in the last six years, we have spent a billion dollars to rebuild and modernize health facilities since 1999. We've had emergency room upgrades in Brandon. We've had emergency upgrades in Gimli, Boundary Trails. We've had the Health Sciences Centre, the largest health capital project in Manitoba history. We've had Dauphin Regional Health Centre set to open in the new year, and construction is supposed to begin on a five-bed acquired brain injury unit in Thompson, an expansion in the Bethesda hospital in Steinbach.

You know, the Member for Steinbach is always critical of the government that we are not spending enough money in his area. Well, there's the proof to him, and the member will be voting against the Throne Speech when we are doing good things for his constituency. In the last seven years, we've provided funding for 10 new schools, 13 replacement schools, 48 additions and more than 600 renovation projects.

It reminds me back in the early '80s, when it came time for the election in 1981, that was a fundraiser for the party, I would be out talking to engineers and architect firms and so on, and they'd say, you know, we're not really NDP. We are kind of Conservative inclined here, but, you know, we can't afford those guys because they shut the province down. When Sterling Lyon got elected in '77, we had Limestone starting up, and what did he do? He mothballed it. He shut it down. And, in 1981, the same architects and engineers who were literally starving under the Tories who were leaving the province in droves; they were voting NDP. We couldn't turn them away. They were breaking down our doors to write us cheques at a time when they could because they wanted to get rid of these guys. They wanted to see development and what did we do? We built the Limestone project. We built it a billion dollars under budget and what did the Liberal Leader say? The previous Liberal Leader was calling the project "lemonstone." You know, negative, negative, negative, yet this project is one of the biggest projects in Manitoba history and has paid for itself probably over and over and will certainly, by the end of the project, over its useful life, pay for itself many, many times.

This government, the NDP, since 1969, has always been proactive. It is active. We have been builders. We have made some mistakes, but we don't go in and hack and slash and burn like the Tories do when they are in government, and that is what the public is going to see from this group if they manage to get elected.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have announced a new Department of Competitiveness, Training and Trade to reduce red tape in government, focussing on the creation of a single-window service for business. Well, the Chamber of Commerce should be very happy with that. What have they been saying about it? *[interjection]* Yeah, I have been waiting to hear what they have been saying about that. The single window is a very good idea and, as a matter of fact, the government has to develop that for all its services on-line, its services to the public. Not just services to business should be delivered through a single window but services to the public. Services that the government puts on-line to the public should be delivered in the same manner, through a single-window service.

In terms of population gain, Mr. Speaker, between 2000 and 2006 we recorded a net population gain from other jurisdictions with 6,683 more people coming to Manitoba than left. That compares to, get this, a net loss of 9,763 people in the last six years of the Tory government. Once again, when they were in government, we lost 9,700 people. Since we have been in government, we gained those people. *[interjection]* Well, the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) likes to say that we are responsible for gaining the Hells Angels. That is absolutely untrue, absolutely untrue. The Hells Angels were here long before that. They got themselves set up here under the previous Tory government. I was here long enough to know that the motorcycle gangs got active under the Filmon government, under the Tories, for the last 11 years, and for them to try to re-write history is absolutely improper and not an honest way of approaching the issue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have many, many other points here that I could deal with. I know that my time is coming short, which may be my last speech before the election, so I guess I should be wanting to make it as long as possible.

In Manitoba, we have 45 Lighthouses.

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

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Call it 12:30? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 12:30, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 17, 2006

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