

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 26, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated.

Routine proceedings; introduction of bills.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 36—The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill No. 36, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries); Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique Manitoba (majoration de l'émission en cas de lésions catastrophiques), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: Been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable minister for Education, that Bill No. 36, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries), be now read a first time.

Mr. Chomiak: As indicated by the Premier (Mr. Doer) in this House, a review has been done and a very important hancement has been provided to catastrophic coverage under The Manitoba Public Insurance Act to deal with the needs of catastrophic injured individuals and provide significant benefits after review and a rewrite of those portions of the act, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

PETITIONS

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

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:

Manitoba's Premier and his NDP government have not recognized the issues of public concern related to the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

The WRHA is building an administrative empire at the expense of bedside care.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority needs to be held accountable for the decisions it is making.

Health-care workers are being pressured into not being able to speak out no matter what the WRHA is doing or has done.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government to call a meeting of a standing committee of the Legislature and invite representatives of the WRHA to appear before it.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by H. VandenBrink, J. Yerama, J. Rudnicki and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

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

Photo Radar

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to protect the safety of construction workers who are on the job by having reduced speeds in construction zones when workers are present.

The provincial government handed out tickets to thousands of Manitobans who were driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones when there were no construction workers present.

A Manitoba court has ruled that the reduced speed zones in construction areas were intended to protect workers and that the tickets that were given when no construction workers were present were invalid.

The provincial government has decided not to collect unpaid fines given to motorists who were ticketed driving the normal posted speed limit when no construction workers were present.

The provincial government is refusing to refund the money to the many hardworking, law-abiding Manitobans who had already paid the fines for driving the regular speed limit in a construction zone when no workers were present.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) consider refunding all monies collected from photo radar tickets given to motorists driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones when no workers were present.

And this is signed by Gord Partridge, Sheila Michalski, Bryan Gainor and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to protect the safety of construction workers who are on the job by having reduced speeds in construction zones when workers are present.

The provincial government handed out tickets to thousands of Manitobans who were driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones when there were no construction workers present.

A Manitoba court has ruled that the reduced speed zones in construction areas were intended to protect workers and that the tickets that were given where no construction workers were present were invalid.

The provincial government has decided not to collect unpaid fines given to motorists who were ticketed driving the normal posted speed limit when no construction workers were present.

The provincial government is refusing to refund the money to the many hardworking, law-abiding Manitobans who had already paid the fine for driving

the regular speed limit in a construction zone when no workers were present.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) consider refunding all monies collected from photo radar tickets given to motorists driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones where no workers were present.

And this petition was signed by Janice Rubin, Carrie Ransby, D. Shope and many, many other Manitobans.

Parkland Regional Health Authority— Ambulance Station

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The communities of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation rely on emergency medical services personnel based in Ste. Rose, which is about 45 minutes away.

These communities represent about 2,500 people. Other communities of similar size within the region are equipped with at least one ambulance, but this area is not. As a result, residents must be transported in private vehicles to the nearest hospital if they cannot wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

There are qualified first responders living in these communities who want to serve the region but they need an ambulance to do so.

A centrally located ambulance and ambulance station in this area would be able to provide better and more responsive emergency services to these communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider working with the Parkland Regional Health Authority to provide a centrally located ambulance and station in the area of Eddystone, Bacon Ridge and Ebb and Flow First Nation.

This petition is signed by Arlene Mousseau, Bev Garneau, Noella Monkman and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facility—Morden

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

Tabor Home Incorporated is a time-expired personal care home in Morden with safety, environmental and space deficiencies.

The seniors of Manitoba are valuable members of the community with increasing health-care needs requiring long-term care.

The community of Morden and the surrounding area are experiencing substantial population growth.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to strongly consider giving priority for funding to develop and staff a new 100-bed long-term care facility so that clients are not exposed to unsafe conditions and so that Boundary Trails Health Centre beds remain available for acute-care patients instead of waiting placement clients.

This is signed by Neta Fehr, Grace Robinson, Katherine Toews and many, many others.

PTH 15

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

In 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that preliminary analysis of current and future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore,

does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Councillor Robert Bodnaruk, Howard Smith, Louise Smith and many, many other Manitobans.

Education Funding

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to selected property owners in certain areas and confines.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

The provincial sales tax was instituted for the purpose of funding education. However, monies generated by this tax are being placed in general revenue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson) consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba.

And to request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the most important—I'm sorry, this is signed by Ronald Crockford, Leonard St. Germain, M. Nelson and many, many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Photo Radar

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

It is important to protect the safety of construction workers who are on the job by having reduced speeds in construction zones when workers are present.

The provincial government handed out tickets to thousands of Manitobans who were driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones when there were no construction workers present.

A Manitoba court has ruled that the reduced speed zones in construction areas were intended to protect workers and that the tickets that were given when no construction workers were present were invalid.

The provincial government has decided not to collect unpaid fines given to motorists who were ticketed driving the normal posted speed limit when no construction workers were present.

The provincial government is refusing to refund the money to the many hardworking, law-abiding Manitobans who had already paid the fine for driving the regular speed limit in a construction zone when no workers were present.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Attorney General (Mr. Chomiak) consider refunding all monies collected from photo radar tickets given to motorists driving the regular posted speed limit in construction zones where no workers were present.

And this is signed by Jim Huggard, Hugh McMorrow, Patricia Flaws and many, many others.

Mr. Speaker: Committee reports; tabling of reports.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation Annual Report for 2007-2008.

Mr. Speaker: Ministerial statements; oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

1999 Election Campaign Rebates Investigation

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, following the 1999 election, the NDP filed several false election returns—in fact, 13 of them—that allowed them to claim, improperly, more than \$76,000 in rebates at the expense of Manitoba taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, when this was discovered by Elections Manitoba, officials from the NDP applied strong-arm tactics to Elections Manitoba to have the investigation headed off.

I want to ask the Premier whether he approves of the tactics, the strong-arm tactics, used by his party officials to head off this investigation into his party for their wrongdoing, which came at the expense of Manitoba taxpayers.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not approve of the ongoing and continued position of the Conservative Party of Manitoba, whether it's the executive director of the party accusing Elections Manitoba of, of helping the NDP with the boundary, proposed boundary changes, or whether it was the kind of questioning last night in committee.

We have always believed that the officers of this Legislature are independent bodies of the Legislature. Sometimes we agree with them; sometimes we disagree with them. But we always respect their integrity, their commitment to their job and their independence.

We absolutely believe in the independence, a point that was reinforced at least 10 times last night by the Chief Electoral Officer. That's the position we take and we reject the strong-arm tactics of independent officers by the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the question relates to a letter that was sent to Elections Manitoba, to Mr. Scott Gordon, by Mr. Milne who was the executive director of the NDP at the time, subsequent to the discovery that the NDP had wrongly filed 13 claims in order to trigger \$76,000 in improper rebates from Manitoba taxpayers.

My question to the Premier is: Does he agree with the strong-arm tactics used by Mr. Milne to try to pressure Elections Manitoba to get rid of a forensic investigator who, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, they did get rid of?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the—again, the Chief Electoral Officer commented on that last evening in terms of the circumstances under which the members questioned.

Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer also stated last night that the two individuals that were leading the legal advice to him and the advice that he followed were conducted by Mr. Green and Mr. Graham, both of which have a lot more experience than the two members opposite on the law, both of which have integrity, both of which have the experience of the Monnin inquiry, of course, where cheques were ripped up and another party was created.

And, having said that, Mr. Speaker, all political parties subsequent to the '99 and 2003 election have confirmed Mr. Green to be the elections officer for purposes of all investigations.

When we say that Mr. Green has the integrity to do the job, we don't say it in the morning and change our mind at night. That's the point Mr. Balasko made. He made the right point and I support his right to say it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the forensic auditor, Mr. Asselstine, found that the NDP had improperly filed election returns. The result of that, ultimately, after the 2003 election, was that they were given the opportunity to quietly repay that money.

The fact, also, Mr. Speaker, is that the lawyers involved would've advised their client, but it's the client that makes the decision ultimately as to how to proceed, and the fact is that this is the chronology of what took place: false returns; \$76,000 from taxpayers they weren't entitled to; and a disclosure after the 2003 election that they had quietly been allowed to repay the \$76,000.

Mr. Speaker, it also came to light in the course of the same investigation that the NDP had been using the same practice prior to the 1999 election. I want to ask the Premier: Will he direct his party to repay to Manitoba taxpayers the money they wrongfully took from them in their returns, false returns, filed prior to 1999 while he was the leader?

Mr. Doer: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is a party that—*[interjection]*—this is a party that established another party in an election campaign and then had the head of Treasury, had the Treasury Board head go in and rip up the cheques so there wouldn't be even a chance of a forensic auditor doing an audit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Doer: And so, Mr. Speaker, the point being raised by Mr. Balasko last evening was that there are two lawyers, Mr. Green and Mr. Graham, that provide him legal advice of how to proceed. He takes their legal advice as an independent officer of the Legislature, an officer who stated at the committee last—last evening that different political parties in the past have conducted and changed items with their consent before, and we always—our instructions to—our instructions to our people are to co-operate at all times. Whether you agree with Elections Manitoba or disagree, co-operate at all times with the independent Electoral Officer.

Members opposite want to criticize that office. They want to criticize that officer. We believe in their integrity and their independence, and that's where we'll stand, Mr. Speaker.

Elections Manitoba Contract of Forensic Auditor

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last night in committee, before the NDP government shut it down and refused to allow any more questions, there were a number of details that revealed the strong-arm tactics used by NDP officials to interfere with the work of a forensic auditor of Elections Manitoba.

Among them was a statement from the forensic auditor that after he interviewed the NDP regarding 13 falsely filed election returns, the provincial secretary for the NDP told an Elections Manitoba employee that every step possible would be taken to ensure that that forensic auditor would never get another cent of government money worth.

How does the government justify high-ranking members of the NDP using the levers of government to threaten an election Manitoba forensic auditor?

* (13:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I had the great privilege of going to no committee meetings in the 1990s because the Conservatives never called the Elections and Privileges Committee of the Legislature, ever. We have had eight committee meetings, three or four, maybe five of them, that had this item fully disclosed to the public.

Secondly, I might point out that the Hamilton & Asselstine firm have been hired by government departments subsequent to that date.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has in the past said that he is the chief ethics officer for his political party. He said that he accepts that responsibility.

Well, the chief ethics officer for the NDP said nothing while his party officials threatened Elections Manitoba's forensic auditor with the loss of government work. The chief ethics officer said nothing when his provincial secretary asked that the forensic auditor be removed from work from Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, why did this self-appointed, self-proclaimed ethics officer for the NDP party sit by and allow this to happen, allow this to go on under his watch?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, during the browbeating by the Member for Steinbach yesterday, the Chief Electoral Officer said, and I quote: "I have never personally felt pressured by any government over time to make a decision."

He also said: "Elections Manitoba is completely independent and it is completely non-partisan and that is a factual statement."

He then went on to say: The work was shared. The work was reviewed. At the end of the day, our decisions are based upon legal analysis and the advice from two outstanding lawyers with strong reputations in this field, providing advice independent of each other to me, and I am acting consistent with that information.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) attacked the Chief Electoral Officer, saying he was sweeping stuff under the—under the cover. Last year he said that—he attacked the credit rating agency, saying they had no credibility. Last year he accused—two years ago he accused the—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Goertzen: It appears that the Premier has resigned as the chief ethics officer for the NDP party, Mr. Speaker.

The forensic auditor—the forensic auditor who was attacked indicates in documents tabled last night that both legal counsel for Elections Manitoba and the Chief Electoral Officer believed that the NDP were not entitled to public funds they received since the 1980s under the union cheque-swapping scheme. This government has at every turn refused to return

money that they should not have received, whether it's photo radar or whether it's trying to get money through the vote tax.

Will the chief ethics officer, the Premier (Mr. Doer), the self-proclaimed chief ethics officer, now instruct his party to return the money that the Chief Electoral Officer, that the legal counsel, indicated should never have been collected under the cheque-swapping scheme?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. The money was returned and the information was brought to light by the chief—Chief Electoral Officer, and I seem to recall that one of the first acts in this Legislature that members opposed, in this Legislature, was bringing in legislation banning union and corporate donations. After 1999 election—I know they don't like the fact that they lost, and they keep going back to the fact that they lost. Everybody in the Legislature—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Let's have a little decorum, please. Order. The honourable Attorney General has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Yes. One of the first acts we did, ban union and corporate donations to make it more democratic. We banned union and corporate donations to make it more democratic. They have never forgotten it, Mr. Speaker. They can't get over it.

The—Mr. Speaker, the individuals who were on the Monnin commission that could have laid criminal charges were the same individuals—Mr. Green was the individual who did the investigation.

The kind of allegations that I hear from members opposite—*[interjection]* Thank you.

1999 Election Campaign Returns

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): What good are laws if the NDP don't have to follow them?

Mr. Speaker, in 13 constituencies, NDP candidates submitted returns to Elections Manitoba that were false. Among those false returns was that filed by the now Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). To his credit, the Minister of Finance recognized the illegal activity by the central NDP campaign and insisted that he receive a letter absolving him of any wrongdoing.

I want to ask the Minister of Finance what steps he took to correct this illegal activity.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I seem to recall these same questions in this House three or four years ago by members opposite, and let me, again, point out that—that all election returns were independently audited and reviewed by election Manitoba. We were up front. The party was up front and transparent.

We followed election financing laws, and even though legal advice was that the party was in compliance with the act, the party refunded the money that was in question because of an accounting issue. It's a lot different than—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —ripping up cheques and hiding—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —and starting another political party to go against a political party. That is illegal, Mr. Speaker. That was found illegal. The new rules put in place in 1999 had been—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, one has to ask, if the activity was not illegal, then why did the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) demand a letter from his party absolving him of any illegal activity?

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Finance—it's to the Minister of Finance: Mr. Asselstine indicated that this illegal activity dated back to the 1980s, and I want to ask the Minister of Finance whether he demanded the letter in the 1995 campaign to absolve him of any wrongdoing in the case of false reporting of returns in 1995.

Mr. Chomiak: The—the Member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) did not run in 1995. Had he won—

An Honourable Member: That was the vote-rigging year.

Mr. Chomiak: That was the vote-rigging year, Mr. Speaker. That was the year of the vote rigging. That was the cheating year. That was the year that the Monnin inquiry found that the Conservative Party had set up another party and cheques had been financed, and that's where Commissioner Monnin said that even though criminal activity charges should have been laid against principals like the head

of the Treasury Board, they had already suffered enough and criminal charges would not be laid.

How far do members want to go back, Mr. Speaker? Do they want to go back and back and back? Do they want to talk about the members of the Premier's staff who were found to be lying on CJOB radio? If they want to open that up, let's open it up.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, we'd be—we'd be happy. Let's, first of all, clear up '99, and then we'll talk about the years prior to 1999.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Honourable member for the Interlake, I'm asking for order here. Order. The honourable Member for Russell has the floor.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The integrity of the Minister of Finance in this province must be above reproach and the minister took one correct step by receiving—by requesting and receiving a letter distancing himself from this regrettable illegal activity. However, it was incumbent upon him to do more since he is now have knowledge of this illegal activity.

And I want to ask the minister whether or not he reported this illegal activity to his own Department of Finance, since it was the Department of Finance that had to pay the sums of money to the NDP campaign on behalf of all ratepayers in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, with respect to this—the Chief Electoral Officer said yesterday, and I quote: With respect to the repayment of reimbursement and the refile in the returns, first thing to set out some context, that's not unusual. There is not a political party in the House that hasn't refiled a financial statement, that has not repaid, reimbursed it at one point, in some cases more than once. So this has happened in the past across the board, having not resulted in prosecutions in either case.

He goes on further to say, Mr. Speaker: Elections Manitoba is completely independent and is completely non-partisan. That is a factual statement. And, finally, I have never personally felt pressured by any government over time to make—to make a decision.

How far do you go before you challenge the integrity of an independent officer of this Chamber?

**Photo Radar Tickets
Support for Proposed Motion**

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, a constituent of the Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) wrote to her about the recent photo radar cash grab by this government to urge her MLA to vote in favour of refunding thousands of photo radar tickets that the court ruled should never have been issued in the first place.

Will the Minister of Water Stewardship side with her constituents on this matter and vote in favour of the motion?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Attorney General.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Let's have a little order, please. The honourable Attorney General has the floor.

* (14:00)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the party for whom the member is a representative first asked that all 60,000 tickets be refunded, all of them, and subsequently they changed it to be under certain circumstances. We talked to the City of Winnipeg who, who, who, through the police department—it's not the Province that issues the ticket; it's the City of Winnipeg police department on bequest of the authority of the City of Winnipeg through the legislative authority of the Province of Manitoba. And we've changed those regulations with respect to—with respect to the delegation of powers to the City of Winnipeg and the signage, et cetera, and we've changed that on a go-forward basis.

The Crown looked at the case that they were dealing with, with respect to a particular evidentiary issue, found out that on an evidentiary case that it wouldn't be ethical for them to proceed and stayed the case.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, it just goes to show that we can't really trust NDP numbers because those were their numbers that they provided in the public, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a constituent of the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) wrote to him about the NDP photo radar fiasco to urge his MLA to vote in favour of refunding thousands of photo radar tickets that should never have been issued in the first place.

Will the Minister of Justice allow the Member for Radisson to represent the will of his constituents and vote in favour of the motion to refund the tickets?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, when the photo radar issue came to bear, I did indicate—and I said it publicly—that I found out there were 60,000 tickets that had risen from two to 3,000, and I said, you know, there is a problem here.

I talked to the—I talked to the City of Winnipeg, I talked to the city of Winnipeg chief of police, and even though the member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) has misquoted the city of Winnipeg police chief, he clearly indicated that he supported—and I say, I quote: I believe that it's important for us to enforce construction zones when people are working or when there's a safety issue.

And I've said that before. Nothing's changed, Mr. Speaker. And that is what the city chief of police said on that issue, and the city of Winnipeg councillor, in writing, has indicated to us that—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tuxedo.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, according to a court ruling, thousands of Manitobans were wrongly issued photo radar tickets in this province, and the NDP government is refusing to do the right thing and refund those tickets.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), the Member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) and many members opposite and many members on this side of the House have received e-mails asking for the government to refund these tickets.

Why won't the Premier (Mr. Doer), why won't the Minister of Justice allow for a free vote within their caucus so that those members can represent the will of their constituents?

Mr. Chomiak: In the second press conference that I had on this regard, I indicated what the legal advice given to me is, that in law, Mr. Speaker, in law, those—those tickets were already taken care of. There was an appeal period that was already out of date, and if an individual had wanted to appeal, there had to be the fixed intention of appealing at the time that they entered the plea.

Mr. Speaker, that, I know, is legal—is legal jargon, but the fact is, in law, there is no legal right for any refund. What I did say on the second day of the issue was there is an issue and a concern with respect to the applicability of the law. When I talked

to the City of Winnipeg, it was very clear from the city councillor that a refund would come out of the police budget—I have that in writing—and, secondly, the chief of police said he's concerned about safety in construction zones not just when workers were there, but for drivers, et cetera.

Health Access Centres Physician Employment Reluctance

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, health access centres were supposed to improve primary health care, but according to Freedom of Information these access centres can't seem to hold on to doctors.

I've spoken with doctors who have said that the centres are poorly managed, overstaffed and extremely costly. They also said that doctors who work there are micromanaged to death. One doctor called them inaccessible centres.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why doctors don't want to work at the health access centres?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, on the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we know that the work that's being done in the province of Manitoba on primary care is very significant, and one of the building blocks of our improvement of primary care is the access centre, a one-stop shop for people to have their health needs taken care of, to have social needs taken care of, to have supports for their families in situations of unemployment.

These are very important centres for the families of our community to access. Doctors and nurse practitioners and other health-care professionals are a very important part of that program, Mr. Speaker. It's why we've committed to bring more doctors to Manitoba to ensure that they can work in a variety of roles, and it makes me wonder why members opposite, during the campaign, promised to bring exactly zero doctors to Manitoba.

Deficits

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, 1,471 doctors have left Manitoba since the NDP—since the NDP came into power, and doctors don't want to work at the two access centres in Winnipeg.

When the doctors said that these access centres were extremely costly, they weren't kidding. The financial statements for a six-month period for Access River East and Access Transcona are absolutely mind-boggling. In just six months, Access

River East shows an \$8-million deficit, and in just six months, Access Transcona shows a \$5-million deficit. So over 12 months, out of these two buildings, we've got a \$26-million total deficit.

Can the Minister of Health explain these deficits?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that our regional health authority in Winnipeg and, indeed, our regional health authorities across Manitoba are working to improve primary care. The regional health authorities, in concert with the access centres, are responsible for their budgets and responsible for ensuring that we bring care closer to Manitobans, we provide greater access.

You know, it makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, if perhaps the member opposite is just against access centres at all. I listened to her this morning in speaking about health capital, and I would think the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) and the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) would be interested to know that she said, all we have to do is look at the bricks and mortar that this government has been building in terms of health buildings. Why do they have to do that when they could redirect some of that money into programs like universal hearing?

Why is the member against building health capital in the province of Manitoba? Why is she against it?

Lease Costs

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is manipulating this information. We were talking—

An Honourable Member: It's in *Hansard*.

Mrs. Driedger: Yeah? We were talking about—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: —the WRHA big building on Main Street and wondering why they needed to build a big headquarters for the WRHA in Winnipeg. That's what that was about, Mr. Speaker, take that money and redirect it into helping kids to get hearing tests.

Mr. Speaker, Access River East pays an annual lease of \$775,000. Access Transcona pays an annual lease of \$702,000. So the lease cost for these two

buildings, for these bricks and mortar, is \$1.5 million just for the buildings.

So can the Minister of Health please explain these expensive lease costs?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, again, it does provide me an opportunity to put facts on the record concerning the building on Main Street, which is a CentreVenture project from which the WRHA is leasing space, two floors of which are going to provide primary health care—the very essence of her question—to, arguably, one of the most vulnerable populations in Manitoba.

So now we know that the member opposite is against bringing primary care to vulnerable populations. As of this morning, she's against building health capital. Is it the personal care home in Tabor or Lac du Bonnet that she's against? Is it against the building of the new women's hospital? Is it the south end birthing centre? Is it the maternity ward at St. Boniface Hospital? Is it the redevelopment of HSC? Is it the mental health ER? Which one of these health capital projects does she—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Youth Violence Government Strategy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeggers and Manitobans were, again, justifiably shocked by the unprecedented level of violence in our province, especially violence by young people. The random—apparent random murder of a 23-year-old man by two 14-year-old boys prompted police to say that over the last couple of years there's been an increase in young teenage violence and it's shocking how young these perpetrators are.

Mr. Speaker, after nine years of trumpeting a myriad of programs the NDP said would reduce youth violent crime, will they today admit that their kid-glove approach to brutal teen violence is not working?

* (14:10)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, it wasn't that long ago that the member asked me why the youth centre and our jails were so full and at all-time high rates of occupation, and I haven't heard a question from the member as to why we've reduced auto theft by 70 percent and one of the main reasons being is that the perpetrators are in custody and are not able to

commit auto theft when they're in custody and that programs like Spotlight that is an intensive case-monitoring program around young offenders that the member was against has actually effectively helped reduce recidivism and crime amongst heavy offenders.

So I do not know from where the member speaks, or is he against our demands that have now been accepted by the federal government to change the Young Offenders Act?

Where is, what did—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: I'll tell him who I'm quoting. I'm quoting the police who were in the paper today saying it, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the public and the police know, teenage violence is increasing, but on their caucus Web site, they trumpet an approach to youth which they say is working, but the police know it's not working. The public knows it's not working. Everybody but the Minister of Justice and his colleagues knows that it's not working.

These 14-year-olds were five years old when they were born, and they've grown up under the NDP justice system, under the NDP kid-glove approach to violent teenage crime. Why won't the Minister of Justice just admit the problem's getting worse and his solutions simply aren't solutions, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: I find—Mr. Speaker, one of—I was very interested that in the mid-'90s, when funding to the Aboriginal Indian-Métis friendship centres was cut by members opposite, we predicted at that time it's going to continue to be a problem for all youth.

Mr. Speaker, every time I'm with the minister of—the head of the Treasury Board and the federal Minister of Justice, they compliment Manitoba on the leading edge of all of the activities, and every time I talk with the min—in fact, I saw him the other day, and I said, you know, Minister, I'm going to be using your name in the House again because every time I'm at a public function with you, you talk about the support that the Conservative government gets on its crime agenda from the provincial NDP. It's known across Canada. It's known—we're a leader in that.

Mr. Goertzen: Who it's not known to is the police and it's not known to the public and it's not known to the family of the 23-year-old victim who was apparently killed by two 14-year-old boys, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Justice can't indicate at all to us what success these programs he's indicated have been helpful are at all. He doesn't know any of the rates of recidivism. I asked him weeks ago. He says he couldn't tell me how many people had come through the program and had not re-offended. Mr. Speaker.

It's clear that it's not working. The police say so. The public knows it and, unfortunately, the families of these victims are left to live with the consequences of this kid-glove approach to violent crime.

Why doesn't the Minister of Justice just admit that after nine years they have failed in their approach to youth crime, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: I think, Mr. Speaker, the advent of the Lighthouse program that's had over 100,000 kids attend to keep them off of the street; our auto theft suppression strategy, by working with the police, has dropped auto theft by 66 percent.

Last election, on the crime campaign that the members opposite launched, the only thing that they talked about, Mr. Speaker, after they had voted against police, they talked about police, and I find it very interesting that the police chief of Winnipeg wants to take police off of traffic photo radar use and use it on crime, but the member opposite will not quote the city of Winnipeg police chief when he says he wants to put officers on crime and high-end things.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we want to take the auto theft strategy and put it to the gang strategy, and MPI, that evil empire that members opposite always criticize, might have to fund some of that.

Photo Radar Tickets Construction Zones

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, going to and from Selkirk on a route that was clearly marked 80 kilometres per hour, there was a sign that was associated with an inactive construction area, and it said the following: Speed limit 60 kilometres per hour when passing workers. Right? The sign specifically indicates that the lower speed limit only applies when there are workers to pass, when they are present.

So I ask the Premier (Mr. Doer): Why are people, in some construction zones in Manitoba but not in others, being given speeding tickets for travelling at 73 kilometres an hour in an 80 kilometre an hour zone when no workers are present?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member may not know, but the Province does not utilize photo radar, and on provincial—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chomiak: The only entity that's taken up the use of photo radar is the City of Winnipeg, and the member might know—*[interjection]*—there are two separate—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —sections of the highway traffic act dealing with speeding, dealing with speeding with construction workers. One is that the deals with the signs that the member talked about; the other is dealing with photo radar for the City of Winnipeg. The member ought to know that. He was there when the bill was debated and when the bill was passed in this Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my point is that in some parts of the province the government is advertising lower speed limit only when there's workers presence, and in other parts of the province, in Winnipeg, people are given speeding tickets for going through areas where there's no workers present, where there's an inactive construction zone. *[inaudible]* to the Province, the Province is very clearly advertising: only slow down when there's workers present.

And the question to the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Justice is: Why is the Province doing such confusing advertising? Why is the Province still authorizing today the use of photo radar ticketing—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Chomiak: The Legislature passed an act entitling mis-municipalities to utilize photo radar in three sites: school zones, which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) says he would eliminate; red light cameras, Mr. Speaker; and construction sites. Those are authorized by the Legislature to be used by the City of Winnipeg.

The City of Winnipeg entered into a contract with an independent, private third party to operate the photo radar. They decide where the photo radar was and is located, Mr. Speaker. That is their authority. That is their determination. The resulting fines that come back go to the City, and a partial of that goes to the Province, with respect to court costs,

because we have to administer the court system for everybody—the federal government, the City of Winnipeg, the municipalities, et cetera. And the court costs we have to pay for.

And with respect to the signs, I hope the member slowed down because it's very important not—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

**Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Attendance at Standing Committee**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health (Ms Oswald). Every week Manitoba loses, on average, just over two doctors over the lifespan of this government, and the sad truth of the reality is that many of these doctors leave because of the conditions that this government has put health care in the province of Manitoba today.

A big part of that is the minister's boss, Mr. Brian Postl, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking to the minister, and we're calling for the minister to have individuals like Brian Postl, in the chair of our regional health-care authorities, to come before a standing committee of the Legislature where we can hold accountability and ensure accountability is restored back in health care in the province of Manitoba.

Will the minister agree to do it today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important—I know members opposite have the right to criticize any of us in political responsibility, but, again, whether it's an independent officer of the Legislature or a senior manager that has had integrity, that has been personified in a number of cases.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the individual the member opposite slams today is the same individual that Paul Martin chose from right across this country to do the wait list kind of strategy for the whole country. So, Prime Minister Martin, a Liberal Prime Minister, chose Brian Postl, Dr. Postl, over every other administrator or doctor in Canada. That's the kind of reputation he has. I'm disappointed—I'm disappointed in the member opposite's assessment.

* (14:20)

**Employment and Training Programs
Funding**

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, we know that investing in our greatest resource, the people of Manitoba, will help keep our province moving forward and our economy growing in new and inventive ways.

Last Friday, there was an announcement of an agreement between the federal and provincial government regarding the investment in Manitoba's employment and training programs to support workers affected by the economic downturn.

Would the Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade please inform the House about this important agreement?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): I'm very glad to have a question about supporting workers in uncertain times, and it had to come from a New Democrat in this House, I would note.

Of course, Manitoba enjoys the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada, but at the same time, at the same time we know that there are workers being affected by the economic downturn beyond our borders. And so I was pleased to sign an agreement with federal Minister Toews to amend the Labour Market Agreement and the Labour Market Development Agreement. The federal government has now signed an agreement with nine provinces across Canada to provide short-term support for the next two years, and I do appreciate the ability for each province to invest the funds the way that they want.

And I'm proud that Manitoba's priority is supporting our most vulnerable workers, those who are unemployed, with or without EI benefits. We'll be investing in those workers for the benefit of all Manitobans.

**Highway 75
Bypass Inclusion**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government said in a press release that there will be rehabilitation of Highway 75 and start of construction on CentrePort Way.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure if he can indicate whether the plans include for a bypass around Morris and a bypass around St. Norbert.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): It's indeed a pleasure again to re-announce that this government has added \$122-million more than last year to the infrastructure budget in this province of Manitoba, over \$500 million. Mr. Speaker, that's more in three years than what the members opposite put in the whole decade of the 1990s into infrastructure and transportation.

They should be ashamed, Mr. Speaker, even to raise the issue of infrastructure. You know, they strut into every coffee shop in rural Manitoba talking about how they want this road, that bridge, this culvert, but should they—they should be telling those constituents how they vote every single time against every budget we bring forward.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, in an e-mail forwarded to me recently there's an indication that last year at the North American SuperCorridor conference in Guanajuato, Mexico, discussing an inland port, some of the projects identified for funding included a bypass, which allows Highway 75 to be raised, and a southbound St. Norbert bypass south of the Perimeter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister to explain why last year he was outlining his plans for a bypass around Morris and around St. Norbert at the NASCO conference in Mexico, and now he won't tell the people of Morris or the people of St. Norbert here in Manitoba what his plans are for their future.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have consulted with many municipalities with regard to infrastructure, and I know the member opposite from Morris wants a bypass to go around the town of Morris, but we want to consult with—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lemieux: —the businesses and community leaders in that community before we approach any kind of bypasses, any kind of alternatives to Highway 75. I know the member opposite would be one of the first to stand up saying, don't arbitrarily do this, Mr. Minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're consulting with the leadership of that community, talking about their Main Street, looking at many options. So whatever we come forward with, we certainly don't want to harm communities like Roseau, for example, by doing any kind of remediation work on Highway 75.

Once again, \$122-million more than last year, Mr. Speaker, into infrastructure funding.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw attention to—of honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us, we have Mr. Gerry Ducharme, who is a former Member for Riel.

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

And also in the public gallery we have from Taking Charge! program, we have 10 visitors under the direction of Ms. Carol Haug. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

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

Members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gladstone's Canada Post Stamp

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): I rise today to congratulate the town of Gladstone for recently having their Happy Rock monument selected for a Canada Post stamp.

Canada Post announced plans to celebrate roadside detractions by printing four new domestic stamps featuring Canada's eccentric landmarks. The iconic Happy Rock, which warmly welcomes traffic on Highway 16 to Gladstone, has been given special recognition along with Davidson, Saskatchewan's giant coffee pot and cup; Wawa, Ontario's goose; and the Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan puffin in Québec.

In Gladstone area, it is said that stopping to have your picture taken with the Happy Rock will bring good luck as you travel on the Yellowhead Highway. It seems that the Happy Rock has brought good fortune upon the entire community as the town of Gladstone has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years. They have a brand new credit union, a new community hall which is nearing completion and significant housing growth. Gladstone was quick to recognize the housing needs of the many new immigrants to the area and has worked hard to welcome the new owners of Hytek Springhill Farms to their community.

Exciting new developments are progressing all around Gladstone. The Clark family has recently

opened a new 10-unit apartment complex and Mike Vercaigne and his partner Eva Berman-Wong have developed another seven units of housing in the historic Galloway building. In addition, the Kinley family have just completed a large shop and truck wash to service their trucking business which has been a family operation in Gladstone for more than 60 years.

In addition, Gladstone has been declared an age-friendly community and has now been recognized as a leading community on age-friendly issues across Canada. Mayor Eileen Clark has been invited to speak about Gladstone's success in London and Ottawa, Ontario, as well as at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' annual conference in Whistler, B.C.

The progress that Gladstone is enjoying does not come easily. It is the result of hard work and innovative thinking by everyone in the community combined with solid leadership by Mayor Clark and Gladstone's town council.

I invite all members of the Legislature to join me once again in congratulating Gladstone for being recognized with a Canada Post stamp. Thank you very much.

Flin Flon Community Choir

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to share with the House a wonderful cultural event my wife and I attended in Flin Flon.

The Flin Flon Community Choir's production of the musical *Evita* was no less than amazing. The production blended local talent with out-of-town artists. The production involved a huge cast and crew. The three performances took place in the R.H. Channing Auditorium from May the 15th to the 17th.

Written by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice, *Evita* tells the story of Eva Perón, first lady of Argentina. From poor beginnings, Eva used her charisma and ambition to climb the ladder of fame and fortune, eventually becoming the wife of President Juan Perón. Adored as saint-like by the masses of Argentina, Eva Perón was a controversial figure in life and in death.

An equally controversial Argentinian was Ché Guevara, who played a major role in the musical. Ché, played by Terry Pshebnicki, was Argentina's social conscience and in the musical his left-wing populism neatly balanced Eva Perón's right-wing

populism. Both Ché and Evita have become cult heroes globally.

Evita's story makes for a tour de force piece of theatre. The song and dance numbers were remarkably well done, and the performances of Katrina Windjack, Terry Pshebnicki and Tim Spencer were spectacular. *Evita* was produced and directed by Flin Flon's local talent, Crystal Kolt, with her equally talented husband Mark providing musical direction and accompaniment.

Mr. Speaker, I'm continually amazed by the level of artistic skill we have in Flin Flon and in northern Manitoba. I would like to commend the cast, crew, countless volunteers and the Flin Flon Community Choir on a job well done. I would like to thank Crystal Kolt, especially, for taking a chance in the sparsely populated north in a very small city, namely Flin Flon, for creating this larger-than-life production.

Evita was a wonderful example of what the north can offer Manitoba's cultural community. I would encourage all members of this House to take advantage of the incredible creative performances regularly produced in Flin Flon so they, too, can experience the sheer magic produced by such artistic extravaganzas as *Evita*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Physician Award Recipients

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I'm pleased to announce to the House that three doctors from the C.W. Wiebe Medical Centre in Winkler have recently been honoured for their work. These doctors include Dr. Cornelius Woelk, Dr. Margie Hesom and Dr. Don Klassen.

Dr. Cornelius Woelk was presented with the Award of Excellence by the Canadian College of Family Physicians. Dr. Woelk started his career in Winkler over 20 years ago, and is now dedicated to family practice along with local cancer and palliative care programs. This award is presented to doctors who demonstrate outstanding contributions to patient care and other aspects of health-care service and is presented to only two physicians in the entire province.

Dr. Margie Hesom received the Teacher of the Year award, which was awarded by the University of Manitoba's Department of Family Medicine. This award is presented to physicians who provide medical students with teaching services throughout the year. Each year, Dr. Hesom is an influential

mentor to medical students who require training through the local health-care facilities.

* (14:30)

Dr. Don Klassen was a recipient of the Fellowship of Rural and Remote Medicine award which was presented by the Canadian Society of Rural Physicians of Canada. The award is presented to a physician who shows significant contribution to the development of rural medicine programs and also practises medicine across Manitoba and Canada. Dr. Klassen fits this category perfectly as he is very committed to the education, recruitment and retention of rural and northern health-care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Dr. Cornelius Woelk, Dr. Margie Hesom and Dr. Don Klassen for receiving their respective awards. Physicians put a lot of time and energy into attempting to improve the health-care system, and I'm glad to see that their efforts have been recognized. I'm certainly proud to have such well-accomplished doctors practising in my constituency. Thank you.

Ryerson Elementary School Dinner

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, on May 7th, I attended Ryerson Elementary School's second annual community supper. Over 300 people participated in this event as a way to celebrate community in the school.

The theme of this year's dinner was "We Are One," with emphasis on different cultural activities to reflect the diversity of this school's population. Dance was a huge part of this event. The night featured performances by Ukrainian dancers, an Aboriginal drummer, a group of Irish dancers, as well as a couple of East Indian numbers done by the Fort Richmond Collegiate dance club.

This event was free for all volunteers and families and was sponsored in part by a grant from the Healthy Living in motion program. In motion is a provincial strategy to help all Manitobans make physical activity part of their daily lives to encourage healthy lifestyles and wellness. A teacher from Ryerson school led parents, children and teachers in a lively movement routine as part of the in motion initiative.

Dinner included pasta, salad and bread from the St. Norbert Foodland. Dessert was courtesy of grade 6 students and staff members, who baked rice krispie

with gelatin-free marshmallows from a Halal grocery store.

The supper was a great opportunity to recognize the many volunteers who give their time throughout the year to make Ryerson school a friendly place to learn and grow. As a thank-you to all these special people who work to make the Ryerson school what it is, volunteers were each sent home with potted pansies to plant in their gardens.

Mr. Speaker, the evening was a wonderful celebration of community. I would like to thank the principal, Sheena Braun, the Ryerson Association of Parents and Teachers and the staff and volunteers at Ryerson school for all the work they do for the children and families in my constituency. I would like to encourage them to keep continuing their great work. Thank you.

Philippine Canadian Centre of Manitoba

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, as the follow-up to the resolution that we passed this morning, I just want to indicate to members that, in talking with Perla Javate, the Philippine Heritage Council of Manitoba will in fact be celebrating a month of celebrations and PHA-PHCM invites everyone to attend the many different events.

And just to highlight a few of them, it would be: Share Our World, which is Saturday, May the 30th, PCCM at 10 a.m.; a Flag Raising and Opening Ceremony on Saturday, June the 6th, again, at PCCM at 9:30 a.m.; Celebration of Faith, Sunday, June the 7th, PCCM at 3 p.m.; the MAFTI Cultural Evening, Wednesday, June the 10th, PCCM at 6:30 p.m.; a gala evening to commemorate the 111th anniversary of the Philippine independence and the 50th anniversary of the Philippine community in Winnipeg on Friday, June the 12th at the Ramada Marlborough Hotel at 6 p.m.; Taking Control of our-of Your Health, Saturday, June 13th, PCCM from 1 o'clock to 4 o'clock p.m.; a Welcome to Our Bagong Dating, Thursday, June the 18th, PCCM at 7 p.m.; Picnic in the Park on Saturday, June the 20th-Assiniboia Park, that is—at 10 a.m.

And, Mr. Speaker, throughout the year there will be an-many events in which one could always get more information by reading any of the local Filipino newspapers. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances.

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tuxedo, on a grievance?

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and it's always regrettable to have to get up and give a grievance in this House. But, unfortunately, members opposite give us so many reasons to grieve in this House that it's incumbent upon us to properly represent our constituents and make sure that we bring their issues forward in this House, and so there are a number of things that I could grieve on today: the NDP broken promises and wasted money of the past is one focus. Certainly, the photo radar fiasco and the money that the government has decided to keep and not give back to the members of the public who were wrongly ticketed in the first place. There are so many issues with respect to health-care, issues that, despite the record increase in expenditures in the health-care field in our province, we are still faced with very, very long wait lists in our province for diagnostic procedures, for various surgeries, et cetera, and it's unfortunate.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And particular, we saw the outcome of what happens in a health-care system that is not properly managed by the NDP, and we see the things like the emergency room overcrowding and the unfortunate death of a person this year as a result of the NDP's mismanagement in the overcrowding in our ERs.

There have been so many things since the last—the last eight and a half years since I had the privilege to be elected and represent the wonderful constituents of the riding of Tuxedo, which takes in part of Charleswood as well as part of River Heights, and I know that in order to represent them properly it would—it's very important, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make sure that I bring grievances forward in this House on their behalf so that their concerns are heard here at the Manitoba Legislature.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know over the years there have been countless numbers of press releases that have been sent out, often duplicate press releases, sometimes even three or four press releases over years that have to do with the same issue, whether it's the building and the—the building of the Selkirk Mental Health hospital. I do recall—I do recall

for several years that members on our side of the House continuously asked about when the upgrades would be to the Selkirk Mental Health Centre, and time and time and time again the members of the government sent out press releases after press releases after press release and, over a several year period and, finally, I think it was re-announced before three elections or two elections before they finally got around to—to doing this.

* (14:40)

So that's just but one example, and there are so many examples of the endless press releases that are sent out by this government of projects that they announce, and they, they, they increase the hopes of Manitobans out there to say that they are going, they're delivering on all of these projects. But the fact of the matter, and what members opposite don't understand yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the fact that press releases don't actually mean that things get done. Unfortunately, when things are written in the newspaper or they're reported on in the public that these are announcements that are made by the government, by Cabinet ministers, often the public thinks that these things are achieved, and the unfortunate thing, though, is that that is more often than not the case and, unfortunately, Manitobans are being deceived by—being deceived by the government in ways that—by these press releases that are being sent out and giving them the false hope and false impression that various tasks are being achieved when they're not, and there are so many examples of that.

But I know that during a grievance we have but 10 short minutes to talk about things that we are very concerned about with this government. And one of the things that I'm very concerned about for my children, for the families in my constituency, the people who have young children out there is the amount of debt that is increasing in this province because this debt will be put on the backs of our children and our grandchildren and even their children and grandchildren as it continues to rise. And I think it's incumbent upon me, as the MLA for Tuxedo, to stand in this House on a grievance to ensure that this government is held to account when it comes to the rising debt in our province because I want to ensure and—that members opposite understand that it's wrong what they're doing. It's wrong by increasing our debt and offloading this responsibility on the backs of future taxpayers in our province.

It's not the right thing to do in our province. It's the, not the right way to go. So I think what we need to do is look at various announcements that have been made in the past, various things that the NDP has followed through with after several announcements, et cetera, but that I don't feel are in the best interest in Manitoba and could be seen as a waste of money.

I think we look—we need to look no further, of course, Madam Deputy Speaker. Several years ago it was announced the Spirited Energy campaign that started off as a \$500,000 expense to the Province which ended up in the end being almost \$2.4 million only to have the whole thing scrapped in the end. And I think what's unfortunate is that, is that obviously this is a waste of money for Manitoba and this is the type of—this is the way that this NDP government likes to manage money.

I think we also only need to look at the failure to follow the advice and recommendations by Manitoba Hydro to bring the transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Construction of the transmission line on the west side will add some \$640 million to the cost. This again, this cost will be offloaded onto the backs of people like all of our children here, our grandchildren, their grandchildren because of—because of the offloading of this debt on to future generations.

Millions and millions have been dollar, dollars have been spent. I believe it's \$30 million that has been spent on the—or on the building of a, an administration building for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. As if administration is not already enough and not already increasing at astronomical rates year over year in our province, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority administration. As if it's not bad enough now we've got to go out and build another building for, for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in order to house the ever-growing population within that administration.

And I think it's unfortunate because these dollars should be spent on the front line of, of health-care services, that the shortage of doctors that we have and, and the fact that this government is driving some 1,400 doctors out of the province over the last number of years is, is unacceptable, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I think what this government needs to do is figure out what its priorities are. Its priorities are obviously not in the right place for Manitobans. They're not in the right place when they look at

spending millions and millions of dollars on more bricks and mortar out there rather than front-line health care to deliver for Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think—and I think we can go back in time somewhat to talk about some of the things that the, the government has bought in the past, the capital cost for the government sandwich factory. Let's not forget about that. Sometimes year over year there's so many things out there that this government wastes our money on that we forget about the fact that they built, in the past, this \$300,000 on a sandwich factory in our province.

These are not the things that a government should be in the business of building and they should not be in the business of doing in our province as a government, Madam Deputy Speaker, not to mention that there's been various campaigns in our province with respect to advertising campaigns, whether it's in Conservation, \$290,000 spent on the Seeing Green campaign. I think Manitobans would question that.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time has expired.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I, too, rise on a grievance, and my grievance really has to do, Mr. Speaker—Madam Deputy Speaker, with a—with the concerns that I have within the constituency itself, concerns that have been brought to the attention of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) in the past and will continue to be brought to the attention of the Minister of Health, concerns that are really coming from the grass roots of the constituency because members of—residents in the constituency are very much concerned.

And in terms of the backdrop, that concern, Madam Deputy Speaker, I look to the provincial budget and how, since 1999, it's grown from nearly \$6 billion to more than \$10 billion, almost doubling in size during that period of time in the nine years since, nine and a half years since. We've had a doubling as well of the health-care budget within the—within the provincial budget. We've had a doubling of transfer payments from the federal government, from \$2 billion to over \$4 billion.

In spite of all that extra revenue that has come with—to the Province of Manitoba, we've seen a decrease of health-care services within the constituency of Lac du Bonnet, and that's not good news for residents, for people who travel to the constituency and are holidaying there or vacationing there, and we have thousands of Manitobans and

out-of-province residents who come to the constituency to holiday within our constituency and—so that creates an increased demand for health-care services within the constituency, and if it does increase demand for health-care—care services, of course, what that means is that we should have an enhancement of health-care services within our area, not a—a reduction of services.

We've had more than \$2 billion more in our health-care budget since 1999 and cumulative—cumulatively, if you look at the 1999 level and add the increases every year since, you've had more than \$10 billion extra in revenue that has come into the health-care budget since 1999. And, in spite of all of that money, when you add all those increases together, the \$10 billion, Madam Deputy Speaker, what we have seen is a reduction of service within the constituency.

A few years ago, Pine Falls-Powerview emergency department closed for a few weeks over the Christmas holidays because physicians—there weren't enough physicians to keep the emergency care, the emergency department open. We've seen, since 1999, an increase in the wait time for appointments to see general practitioners, family physicians. We've seen the fact that there isn't enough family doctors within our area, and that's evidence. The evidence of that is in the Powerview-Pine Falls emergency closure a few years ago and the near closures of that hospital every year since.

And that's a symptom of a lack to physicians within the constituency. I know that the health authority is attempting to attract physicians for our area. But, I know that also that the entire province is suffering from that same kind of situation. Nearly 1,500 doctors have left Manitoba since 1999. There has to be more done to, not only attract new physicians to Manitoba, but also to keep those physicians in Manitoba that are already here.

We've—I've attended a meeting last week in Lac du Bonnet at the request of the Lac du Bonnet health-care committee, and I commend this group of very concerned individuals, residents in Lac du Bonnet, both the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet, the Town of Lac du Bonnet and from, of course, the R.M. of Alexander.

* (14:50)

I commend them for their initiative to arrange the meeting and to invite people to speak about, about health care within the constituency and, in

particular, within the Lac du Bonnet area, and many residents came forward with anecdotal evidence that really the health-care services within the constituency have declined, in particular, in the Lac du Bonnet area. We—there was a move to reduce the number of ambulance stations by the health authority recently, about a couple of months ago, and I asked a question in question period of the Health Minister at the time, just about a month ago, and I was satisfied with her answer and I commend the minister for ensuring that the best interests of the, of the residents within that particular area are going to be looked after. And as I found out at the meeting, the health authority is moving toward ensuring that there isn't a reduction of the number of ambulance stations from two to one in Pinawa and Lac du Bonnet, but they're moving toward maintaining an ambulance facility in Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa as well. And that's a step forward, particularly when you combine it with the, the statement that the health authority made that they're looking to ensure that there will be full-time ambulance attendants in both facilities, so I'm gratified to see that that is, is moving forward.

There is a—also a proposal of, of a seventy-bed personal care home expansion in the Lac du Bonnet area, in fact in the town of Lac du Bonnet. It's sorely needed. We need to ensure that there are enough beds within that facility, within the facility in Lac du Bonnet, to ensure that residents from Lac du Bonnet and the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet, the R.M. of Alexander in the Bird River area in particular, that they have a place to go to and to stay close to home and creating an expansion of the Lac du Bonnet personal care home certainly is a priority, I know, of the northeast health authority. It's a priority of myself and it—I believe the, the health authority also indicated that it will be a priority as well of, of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). So I'm gratified to see that, but I'm—I've yet to see an announcement in any of the budgets that we've had over the last couple of years. We're hoping that the Minister of Health will make it a priority and ensure that it happens.

What, what also became abundantly clear at that meeting was that we need another hospital in our constituency, in particular in the town of Lac du Bonnet, to ensure that there are emergency room services within the town itself. The town of Lac du Bonnet, the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet and the Bird River area combined is about 5,000 residents, not including, of course, the seasonal residents who come out there every summer and the, the hospital in—there is a hospital in the region. That hospital is in

Pinawa. Pinawa's about 13 to 1,400 residents at this point and they also need their hospital to remain viable. I believe that there's room for two hospitals, one in Lac du Bonnet and one in Pinawa, and to make them both regional hospitals to ensure that there is enough beds and there are enough facilities for emergency room services.

And how do we pay that, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well, there are ways to pay it. We can pay for it in savings and costs of existing developments. As an example, we can do it by scrapping the enhanced driver's licence program, which proved to be a failure. We can do it by ensuring that we build a hydro transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and save another \$640 million to the Province. We can pay for it by not spending a lot of money on advertising, particularly advertising a budget that was delivered more than two months—about two months ago and, and, and is really appearing in almost every TV, every TV's ad space and every newspaper in the province even as we speak today.

It makes absolutely no sense, Madam Deputy Speaker. We can pay for it by prioritizing existing money that's already there. There is money there. We've seen increases in transfer payments up to \$4 billion. We've seen more money in the budget since 1999 in terms of more revenue coming into the Province than ever before: \$6 billion in 1999, \$10 billion today. On an annual basis, we've seen a \$4-billion increase on an annual basis alone. Certainly, there has to be priorities made by government and I would urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that the Lac du Bonnet area, in particular, the personal care home and, of course, another hospital in Lac du Bonnet be built and to make it a priority.

With those few words, I know there's many more things I could grieve about, but with those few words, I would look forward to hearing the house leader, the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak), in terms of what he has planned for the business for the day. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Speaker, could you please call bills this afternoon in the following order:

concurrence and third reading of Bill 33, debate on second reading of Bills 30, 16, 5, 14, 3, 11, 15 and 18?

Madam Deputy Speaker: There has been called for concurrence on Bill No. 33, the appropriation act, and on Bills 30, in second reading, Bills 30, 16, 5, 14, 3, 11, 15 and 18.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by, oh—[interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Bill No. 33, the appropriation act.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 33—The Appropriation Act, 2009

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Madam Deputy Chairperson, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford), that Bill No. 33, The Appropriation Act, 2009; Loi 2009 portant affection de crédits, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) and seconded by the Minister for Advanced Education that Bill No. 33, the appropriation act, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Debate, Madam Speaker, on the third reading of the appropriations act, I'm very pleased to be able to stand and put some words on the record with respect to the appropriations act. As most people in this Chamber recognize, perhaps not everybody in the public recognizes, but the concurrence process deals with two pieces of legislation. One is the loan act which we've talked about, voted against, and the other one is the appropriations act, but one is the loan act, which allows the government to borrow and continue to borrow and borrow some more and actually gives them the authority to borrow some \$2.3 billion, with a "b", more money than I believe is necessary to put Manitobans into hock for future generations. But we not only have the most debt we've ever carried in this province ever in our history, but now under the loan act, which has already been passed by this government, they're now going to have the authority of another \$2.3-billion debt for Manitobans.

Well, the next part of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, not only do we now allow the government to borrow us into, into oblivion, we now have the other section of this particular piece of legislation, which is the appropriations act, which allows the government to spend us into oblivion. They spend, they borrow, they don't save, they don't economize, they aren't efficient, and the government just keeps on going and going and going, but the spending continues to continue to go on and on and on.

*(15:00)

As a matter of fact, it was mentioned earlier, when this government took office, spending on all of the government services was around \$6 billion. Today, in the appropriations bill, that amount is over \$10 billion; monies that has been spent on services that are important to Manitobans, all services that are important to Manitobans, Madam Deputy Speaker, but perhaps not spent in the most efficient manner. Currently, in the \$10 billion, approximately \$4.7 billion of that goes to health care, and we all know that health care is very close and dear to all of our hearts here in Manitoba. It's a service that has to be provided, should be provided, and should have the best and the utmost delivery of service of anywhere in the country, but that's not quite the truth.

We have, as was said by the Conference Board of Canada not too long ago, one of the highest per capita health-care costs in the country. I think at that time we were the second highest per capita health-care costs in the country, but when they went and looked at the service delivery, they found out that in Manitoba, we had the worst health-care service in the country. So we now not only spent the most per person, but we delivered the worst service, and now, under this act, they're going to ask us again in good faith to go along and let them merrily spend about 47 percent of the total budget on a service that they can't deliver, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's wrong.

We also have, Madam Deputy—well, let me just give one of the provinces—promises that the Premier made back in 1999. One of the promises, and I hope they will listen to this, the five commitments to you and your family, and it says quite emphatically, keep this card, we'll keep these commitments.

The first and foremost, as I just mentioned about health care, \$4.7 billion out of a \$10-billion budget, most per capita expenditures, worst service delivery, and here's what the Premier of the day said back then in 1999, the first commitment to Manitobans: We'll end hallway medicine and rescue health care

beginning by hiring more nurses and reopening hospital beds to reduce waiting lists. That was the promise that the Premier gave, and he said, keep this card because I'm going to live up to my commitment.

And what do we find today, Madam Deputy Speaker? A health-care system in shambles, absolute total shambles. ERs, ERs being closed in all of the rural areas. All of the rural areas are going to have ER closures, yes. And what do we have? We still have hallway medicine, and waiting lists. Waiting lists. I have constituents of mine who are waiting over four years for shoulder surgery. Four years of pain and neglect at the hands of this government, but what did he say? We're going to reduce those waiting lists. We're going to provide. We're going to end hallway medicine, \$15 million and we'll end hallway medicine. Four point seven billion dollars later and they can't even get a waiting list in control. That's what this appropriations bill is all about.

And you know what else he said? We'll renew hope for young people starting with excellent public schools and by cutting community college and university tuition fees by 10 percent. They did. They froze tuition fees and destroyed post-secondary education, destroyed post-secondary education. What kind of a reputation does Manitoba have right now, Madam Deputy Speaker? What kind of a reputation do we have in our post-secondary schools? I'll tell you what it is. It's a terrible reputation that we have currently. How many people are going to come from other provinces to go to post-secondary education in Manitoba? None. Zero. They're going outside of the province. They're going to Calgary, to U of C. They're going to the U of T. They're going to Acadia, but they're not going to our schools because this government, unfortunately, spends more money but they don't spend it efficiently, and our service delivery is terrible. They killed it.

Let's go to the last promise that this Premier made in 1999. We'll keep balanced budget legislation and lower property taxes. We'll keep balanced budget legislation. He said that in '99, but he didn't say it in 2007, when we went to the polls, and then shortly thereafter, the Premier of the day, who wanted us to keep this piece of paper and said, we'll keep these commitments, destroyed balanced budget legislation.

We no longer have a balanced budget legislation in the Province of Manitoba. What we have is a shell of what it used to be. We now have a summary budget that has a four-year rolling average. We now

have a Premier (Mr. Doer) and a Finance Minister who can—who can say, well, if there was an act of nature we don't have to balance. If the federal government doesn't pay us the horrendous amount of money that they pay us on an annual basis, if they reduce that, we don't have to balance.

They say we can use Manitoba Hydro and MLCC and MPI. We can use their revenues to balance a budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, but not once did the Premier tell that to the public when he went to the polls in 2007. So he broke that promise.

So he broke the promises of hallway medicine, he broke the promises for our young people, and he broke the promises for our balanced budget.

You know what? He also made a province—a promise—and he spends money in Justice. Make no mistake about it. In this appropriations act, we're going to approve, they're going to approve more expenditures in Justice. But he also said, we'll make our communities safer by tackling the cause of crime with improved youth programs and by ensuring immediate consequences for gang violence and home invasions. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we saw yesterday a horrendous crime on the streets of Winnipeg. Winnipeg has been the murder capital of the country under this government. Our youth crimes have gone out of control, yet the Premier said he was going to control all of that. He has the money in here, lots of money. In fact, from 6 billion to 10 billion over a period of nine years. But they don't know how to manage the budget, nor do they know how to manage their departments.

One other thing that goes on through this appropriations act, \$10.2-billion worth of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. Oh, no. I take that back. Of the 10.2 billion, I'm sure members opposite recognize that approximately \$4 billion of that come from other hardworking taxpayers across the country. Four billion dollars comes in the form of equalization and transfer payments. So it's not just hardworking Manitobans who are feeding this spending frenzy of the NDP on their departments, inefficient departments, Madam Deputy Speaker. But what it also does is it doesn't speak to the 40 percent of the budget that comes from other hardworking Canadians; \$2.063 billion is going to come on the revenue side of the balance sheet in equalization payments. Now, that's this appropriations act. That's this budget that's being reflected in the appropriations act; \$2.063 billion of equalization and, as I hate to stand here and say it, a province that

has always been tagged under the NDP government as a have-not province.

Saskatchewan has worked their way out of that. They don't depend on the transfer payments from the federal government.

An Honourable Member: What about Alberta?

Mr. Borotsik: Alberta is debt free. The member across the way wants to know how Alberta is doing. Well, Alberta is spending money. But they did two things. They did two things, Madam Deputy Speaker. They reduced their debt to zero, and, by the way, I would love to be in Alberta's position. They reduced their debt to zero, and I just suggested that Manitobans' debt is out of control. What they also did during the good years—the last nine heavy economic years that all of the provinces should have taken advantage of—they saved their money. They saved their money. They reduced their debt. Now they have the ability to look after a deficit, and they're all—they're also honest enough to say they're in a deficit.

So they've done three things: saved their money, reduced their debt, and actually admit to the fact that they're spending more this year than they're taking in in revenues. Three things that this government's not prepared to deal with. Can't get rid of their debt because they're addicted to debt, can't control their spending and save money because they don't know how and never have known how to do it, and will not admit—will not admit—today that their budget is in fact not balanced.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

* (15:10)

As a matter of fact, in this budget book, if anybody over that other side has ever had a chance to look at it they'll see that on the core operating statement they have an \$88-million deficit. That also includes a \$20-million pay down of debt which—that's a whole different topic of discussion, Madam Deputy—Mr. Speaker, because now they've reneged on that promise as well. Now they've reneged on that promise, \$110 million was written into legislation, Bill 38, they've reneged on that promise. They put it as \$20 million in the budget. They've reneged on that promise, and now they won't admit to the fact that they're in deficit.

All I ask is just be honest with yourselves, be honest with Manitobans, be honest with us in this Chamber and admit that you're in deficit, because

you are. There's no hiding the facts. You're \$88 million in deficit and that's reflected in the loan—the appropriations as well. So, yes, I would love to be more like Alberta and Saskatchewan and British Columbia. But this government, unfortunately, doesn't know how to manage.

Let's talk about some of the areas where they can't manage. This government has not only put their own operating debt in jeopardy, but now they're putting Manitoba Hydro in jeopardy. Manitoba Hydro's debt is going up. In fact, in this budget, and in the capital portion of this—of the appropriations, Manitoba Hydro is going to borrow another \$800 million this year. It's so bad, the Public Utilities Board have thrown up red flags and said that Manitoba Hydro will not be solvent if they continue to borrow in the fashion that they're borrowing, will not be able to service the debt that they have, and the last—not the last time, but the previous time that Manitoba Hydro went to the PUB, they said, we're going to give you more money on a rate increase because we're very concerned with your financials, very concerned with the financials in Manitoba Hydro.

So they're going to destroy Manitoba Hydro, and that was the last commitment that Premier Doer made—the Premier made, the Premier made, in 1999. He said that he was going to keep Manitoba Hydro and build new partnerships with Manitoba Hydro. He is. But he's also, at the same time, destroying it. And you know how he's doing it? By political interference, Mr. Speaker.

An east-side, west-side debate is going to go on before the next election. Manitoba Hydro is already saddled with too much debt. Public Utilities Board have already identified a serious red flag in their financials. Yet, this government, through its political interference, is going to make Manitoba Hydro spend \$640 million, more money, for a Bipole III that is going to provide less service, lose more electricity and be at a greater risk than if it were on the east side. What a great idea. Let's spend another \$640 million that we do not have, that Manitoba Hydro does not have and let's get more debt. So we're gonna have \$640 million more money expended than's absolutely necessary.

We're also going to spend another \$13 million on an enhanced identification card that is not being accepted by Manitobans, legitimately, cannot be used for travel outside of Canada and the U.S., probably not even into the U.S. But we're going to

spend and waste another \$13 million of taxpayers' money that could better be reflected in savings, retirement of debt and, perhaps, better service—better services.

We also have a government who really enjoys self-promotion. And I've had the opportunity of watching some of the Stanley Cup playoffs and seeing some TV and looking at the newspapers, and I cannot believe the amount of money that is being wasted by this government on self-promotion. They are advertising everything from the not-so-balanced budget that they put forward a number of months ago, they're now advertising HydroBonds and Manitoba Builder Bonds. When I asked the Finance Minister what kind of capital they are wishing to achieve and raise through the Manitoba builders' bond, the Finance Minister said, I haven't got a clue, I don't know, but it's not very much. He said, maybe around \$30 million. Well, when you're out borrowing \$2.3 billion, with a "b", \$30 million doesn't seem to be a lot of money. As a matter of fact, I would like to know what the advertising costs are to advertise a program to raise \$30 million that is going to return almost nothing to the Province. Now, the Province does pay 1 percent on those Manitoba Builder Bonds, which I don't think there's going to be a lot of uptake. There's better bonds at better rates and certainly less risk than a Manitoba bond at the present time.

So, Madam, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the appropriations act is the implementation of the budget, the budget numbers of all of the departments come forward and there's going to be an appropriations bill that we have before us right now voted on in this House, and if members opposite really honestly looked at the inefficiencies of this government, they would certainly not, they would certainly not be prepared to support this piece of legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to put these comments on the record. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House today to talk about Bill 33, the appropriation act, and as the Member for Brandon West did lay out quite clearly, this is, in fact, a spending piece of legislation. And I guess the other thing we should recognize, first of all, is that to have money to spend, you first have to have some revenue, and we realize that the government, this government, this NDP government is very good at

taxing, taxing Manitobans for different levels of taxation, and not just income tax, but any various other types of taxes, a lot of backdoor and hidden taxes, too, that they generate income from. But they have been very fortunate the last few years to have a tremendous amount of windfall money coming from the federal government. In fact, we're talking about a \$10-billion budget, and that's the budget in this piece of legislation that we'll be voting on today. They're going to spend \$10 billion.

And that \$10 billion isn't all going to come from taxpayers, and it's not gonna all come from the federal government. In fact, quite clearly, the Province of Manitoba is not generating enough money to cover that \$10 billion of expenses. So what we're going to have at the end of the year is more debt in the Province of Manitoba, more debt. And I think it's very important to point out, Mr. Speaker, that back in 1999, when this government came into, came into government, our, our, our total—maybe I'll just talk about our general purpose debt. That's really the operating debt that we have within the Province. I won't get into the Crown corporations just yet at least.

General purpose debt at that time was \$7.6 billion. And after this budget year is complete, we expect the budget of the Province for kind of, just our core operations to be \$11.5 billion—\$11.5 billion. And we all know what happens when we have a mortgage. We have to pay money down on our mortgage, and we have to pay interest on our mortgage. We know we're going to have to pay in this budget year—and this again is just core operations—\$250 million—\$250 million of interest alone just on our core operating budget. When we factor in all the Crown corporations and government entities, you know, we're talking of an interest bill of \$766 million, and that's basically interest money that we're paying that can be used for other programs here in the Province of Manitoba, whether it be infrastructure, whether it be health care or whether it be support for rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, when I look at Bill 33 and I look at the line expenditures here, one thing that really came to my mind here really was quite interesting. You know, clearly, about 43, 44 percent of the budget goes into health care. And, as the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) pointed out, it's very important we have, do have good health care for all Manitobans. Unfortunately, we, we haven't seen that,

that investment translate into real effective health care. And we know the government likes to spend money. There's no doubt about that. But it's all about getting value for dollars at the end of the day. And that's all we're asking.

If the—when the government comes to vote today, consider a \$10-billion investment. Let's consider results on that \$10-billion investment, Mr. Speaker.

But one line that was kind of dear to my heart, and I think a lot of members on this side of the House, is Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and what's happening in rural Manitoba. And interesting just in today's *Free Press* they had a, an article that talked about where the province is relative to other provinces in terms of agriculture and Manitoba—and first of all I'm gonna talk about the total cash receipts last year in Manitoba were up fairly substantially, up eight-and-a-half, 8.7 percent to the good, which was a good thing. We need some relatively good, good commodity prices last year. Unfortunately, the rest of Canada was up over 14 percent so we didn't do nearly as good as the rest of the country did.

But here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker, total operating expenses, in Manitoba up 12.6 percent. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if expenses are higher than your income you're gonna lose money. So the bottom line, realized net income in rural Manitoba down 30.7 percent, down 30 percent. The realized net income in Manitoba is down 30 percent.

And I'm sure the minister, hopefully, the minister had time to read this article today because the rest of Canada realized net income was up 63 percent, Mr. Speaker, down 30 percent in Manitoba, up 63 in the rest of Canada. That should raise a pretty big red flag over in—over in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives.

You know, to add some insult—to add some insult to that, you know, we think there's tremendous opportunity in rural Manitoba and I hope the minister shares that vision and hopefully she'll be bringing forward some real policies that are gonna be effective in developing rural Manitoba for the benefit of all because we know we have tremendous social programs that this government wants to spend money on. Now if we're gonna spend money on social programs, we have to generate some revenue and some income from somewhere else and I think

there's tremendous opportunity to generate wealth in rural Manitoba.

If we look at the provincial budget in Bill 33, Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Department represents just over 2 percent of the entire budget, 2 percent. The Premier gets up and talks about us as opposition members going to our coffee shops and talking to our producers and our, our, our rural counterparts out there about what's going on. And I think this was gonna be a really good number that we can take to our counterparts when we get back out to our ridings over the course of the weekend and say, you know, your Province of Manitoba is spending \$10 billion this year but only 2 percent of that is gonna be invested in Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives here in the province of Manitoba.

And it's probably an important thing that we should be taking down to the people that are gonna be at the Sobeys and the Safeway and the IGAs this weekend when they go down there to get their, get their food and give them a message that their government really isn't supporting what's happening in rural Manitoba, Madam—Mr. Speaker.

What about health care? Government members ask about health care. Well, how many, how many emergency rooms do we have closed in Manitoba right now. I, you know, it, it floats around so much we're not sure. Somewhere between 15 and 20 emergency rooms are closed in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. You know we've got, we've got a critical shortage of doctors, nurses, lab and X-ray technicians so we're, we're in crisis management every day trying to keep these facilities running, you know. And we've got—we know the government has dumped a whole bunch of money into ambulances in, in here and across the province of Manitoba but at the bottom line we don't necessarily always have people to run the ambulances to get the people out, pick them up and get them back to an open emergency room.

Certainly, there's a tremendous amount of work that has to be done there and really it's about developing proper policies and procedures to make that effective in rural Manitoba. And we know this summer is gonna be, gonna be very interesting too because we're gonna have people out visiting the parks in rural Manitoba, visiting some of the lakes in rural Manitoba and trying to determine which one of the hospitals is gonna be open in the area is gonna be a challenge. And it's very important that we do have

a, a very good emergency medical system to respond to those 911 calls when they do come in. But those particular facilities and shops are, are very short-staffed, Mr. Speaker. So, we're doing all we can with volunteer service, if you will, to keep those facilities open and to provide a much-needed service to the residents of rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close my—just echoing a couple of comments that the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) made on Manitoba Hydro. You know, it's unfortunate the government doesn't take a, a harder look at its spending priorities, and the notion of spending an extra \$640 million on a west-side line just doesn't make sense.

Last week, when I went home to my constituency, the—I guess it was the grade 5 and 6 class were out running around delivering the low-energy efficiency light bulbs to all the members of the community. So Manitoba Hydro are, are investing quite a bit of money in trying to get us, as Manitobans, to reduce our energy consumption.

At the same time, this NDP government forces Manitoba Hydro to build a line that's going to be at least 400 kilometres longer, and what will happen, Mr. Speaker? It will use and lose a tremendous amount of electricity that could be otherwise sold either to Manitobans or to an export market in the United States.

So, when you try to rationalize this, Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't make sense, and that's exactly what we're trying to do in this budget is to bring some rational debate in spending \$10 billion.

So we'll hope today that the government has some logic when they come to vote on this particular piece of legislation later today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it's always a—a pleasure to be able to have the opportunity to be able to speak about the overall principle of the budget that's been presented by government. As, as members are aware, the Liberal Party ultimately believes that there's a better way to be spending a—those valuable tax dollars that we receive in, in transfers that we get from other jurisdictions.

There is an interesting process. You know, government comes up with its budget, and then they communicate their, their budget to Manitobans, and they do that through a fairly substantial advertising campaign. And I've always found it interesting, and

at times challenging, to get what it is or what sort of expenditures the government uses in terms of just being able to promote its budget.

You know, it was interesting at the part of the budget coming down, I had commented on some of the issues that I felt Manitobans should be aware of, and had one individual that had given me a call and said that, you know, maybe there were some other things that the government is doing that I should be talking about that were positive. And my response to that particular individual was is that, yes, it is important to be, you know, in opposition, to applaud the government where it makes some good decisions, and I like to think, in the past, that that I do do that. Periodically, I will comment in terms of where that I believe the government is moving in the right direction.

But one of the things I indicated to this particular individual was that you can count on the fact that the government will spend thousands of dollars in terms of promoting what it believes is the highlights of its budget, Mr. Speaker. And, true to form, as years have gone by, the government does spend money. I don't know how much they spent this time around and, you know, I look to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), and in anticipation that, at some point in time, we will be told how much money has actually been spent on the promotion of this budget.

* (15:30)

But it was interesting, you know, one of those ads that came out was March the 28th, 2009, in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the title of it reads, and the title of it reads, *Manitoba Budget 2009. Steady. Balanced. Building Manitoba's Future*. And, you know, when you're paying for advertising, you want to put that wonderful, positive spin on it, whether it's accurate or not.

But there's one thing that really kind of struck me in, in reading the article, and it, it's—one of the points in it is keeping health care a priority. And then the third point under that particular title, it states, and I quote—actually, it's the—I want to make sure that it's accurate here. Now, I'll read the, the three, the three points under the health care. First one is: "Increased funding to attract and retain more physicians and specialists, especially in rural and northern Manitoba."

On that particular point, Mr. Speaker, you'll recall today in, in question period, I, I raised the issue in terms of just the number of doctors that

actually leave our province. On average, through the life span of this government, you're talking in excess of two doctors a week leave the province of Manitoba and, you know, in my discussions, and I've had the opportunity over the last number of weeks to have a good number of discussions with health-care professionals, and I've shared those discussions with the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), saying that, look, we have doctors that are actually leaving our province not only because of just, there are other opportunities in other jurisdictions, because of the sense of frustration that they have with the government and the policies of our regional health authorities, and the government just kind of sidesteps the issue.

Other jurisdictions are, in fact, trying to address it by having, in particular, I look to a province like Alberta, and I suspect that there are others, by having these regional health authorities come before a standing, standing committee. The government tries to give the impression through government tax, or through public tax dollars, that we're attracting and we're retaining more physicians when, in fact, we are losing physicians, Mr. Speaker.

The second point: The Artiste—a first in Canada—will provide high-precision, non-invasive surgery to patients, and, yes, there, there have been, you know the Gamma Knife, and I know the former Minister of Health would quite often talk about the Gamma Knife and, and there are, you know, innovations that are, that are taking place which are really making a, a difference in terms of the quality of, of health care that's in fact being, being delivered. There might be some areas of concern but as, as a whole, you know, I'm, I'm comfortable with that particular point.

The third point: Funding has been increased to hire more emergency room staff and new ambulances to the provincial fleet. Well, Mr. Speaker, those are the three points.

The first one, I have a bit of a difficulty with. The third one, I have a great deal of difficulty with, Mr. Speaker, and you gotta keep in mind that these are—these ads are actually paid for not by the New Democratic Party. They're paid by the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba, and if you take a look at what it's stating, that third point, funding has been increased to hire more emergency room staff, and then you'll hear what the government is saying about emergencies. We're investing millions of more

dollars in Seven Oaks emergency and Victoria Hospital emergency and the capital infrastructure.

The reality of it, Mr., Mr. Speaker, is that as much as they try to give that positive spin, the types of services that are taking place in our emergencies has actually diminished, and the future is not looking good for those community emergency facilities.

So, on the one hand, the government, much like the, the super headline at the top of the article, steady and balanced, and we know what that is trying to imply. Inside, if you look into what is actually happening, the government is indeed using tax dollars to try to mislead Manitobans as to what is actually taking place in their, in their budget, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I felt that, you know, I would comment on the bill, and, you know, the interesting thing is—and it's very telling—we can talk inside this Chamber and members of the government can belittle comments that are made by members of the opposition. After all, they can easily shout it down. They can easily vote against what members are talking about in the opposition benches, after all they have 36 or 35 MLAs in the government benches.

The reality—the reality of it is is that to what degree is the government that confident that what it is doing is acceptable to the public. The public, I believe, Mr. Speaker, if afforded the opportunity where you have, you know, one government member versus one opposition member and they can talk about an issue, for example, exactly what I pointed out those three advertised points I would welcome.

I really and truly would welcome MLAs from the government benches to be able to go to a meeting, a genuinely called public meeting, maybe it's even in the riding of the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger), not a meeting where we're trying to stack something, and let's—let's put the facts on the record, you know. I wonder to what degree and, you know, in part I believe that maybe some of the government members were not aware of what was happening at the emergency at Seven Oaks Hospital.

I don't believe that the constituents in north end Winnipeg, if they were informed as to the reality of what's happening, would be very happy with what the government is saying in this particular article, advertising in which they paid for, because it is misleading. And the ironic thing is, Mr. Speaker, is the government Minister of Health, the government Minister of Health says that I'm the one that's misleading. In reality it's the government that is

misleading, and that's why, you know, inside the Chamber they can feel confident and bold and brave, because they have the numbers. But, in reality, take it to the street and to our communities and that's where they will find out that's the problem, because the spin will only take you so far, and this is one of those issues in which I'll take to the election doors.

And I thank members for the opportunity to be able to put a few words on the record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill No. 33, The Appropriation Act, 2009.

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

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order. Is the House ready for the qu—the question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill No. 33, The Appropriation Act, 2009.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Blaikie, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski,

Lemieux, Mackintosh, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wowchuk.

Nays

Borotsik, Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Faurshou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 34, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 30—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll move now on to second—second reading, and we'll deal first with Bill No. 30, The Budget Implementation Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, standing in the name of the honourable member for the Lakeside.

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the—for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler)?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it's been agreed to? Okay, that's been agreed to.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it's a pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 30, but, unfortunately, I can't say that because Bill 30 really does not provide Manitobans with the kind of leadership that they're expecting from this government, and, certainly, it's not fulfilling the obligations and the promises that were made by this government to Manitobans just a few short years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province had indicated clearly that there were some good things that were done by the former administration, and the Filmon years were good years in the sense—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Now the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) may have a different view of the world, but we'll let Manitobans judge over the course of the

next few months and years as to who was right. Mr. Speaker, in the year, in the coming years—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Well, we should talk about elections at another time. Because I think the Brandon—the member from Brandon East should rethink his comments. And you know, the world is unfolding as it should—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Derkach: —and I think we'll hear more about the 1999 election as time goes on.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's focus our attention on Bill 30. Because this government has now taken an unusual step, and, perhaps, one that has been unprecedented in that not only is this the BITSA bill, as we call it in the Legislature, but what has happened is the government has injected, in this bill, a step that is way beyond the scope that this legislation should speak to. And that is, that they have now reneged on paying back the debt that this Province has on paying back on the debt. And not, not only have they done it for this year, but they're committing through this bill, not to have to pay down the debt on their, until their mandate is finished.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is misleading Manitobans, and that's not an unusual step for this government. We've seen that in the past and we see it time and time again. But, if, in fact, the government wanted to reduce its payment on the debt or not pay the debt at all, there are other opportunities in legislation that you can do this.

Why would they introduce this in the BITSA bill? To mislead Manitobans in thinking that all of this bill is to do, is to implement the issues in the budget. But it goes beyond that, Mr. Speaker, and that's where this government is deceiving Manitobans, because I don't know how many Manitobans take a great interest in the budget implementation act; it's simply a bill that is almost a housekeeping bill that comes before the Legislature each and every year to implement the issues of the budget.

But this year it's very different and the government has tried to slide this in under the, the title of the BITSA bill. And, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to agree with the government on this, on this approach. But more importantly, I think we have to show our resistance to this, because it destroys the very principles that we stand for, and that is that we

have to pay down the debt that we've incurred in this province.

And we—I can go back to the Pawley years, when we had huge, huge debts that that government imposed on the people of Manitoba, and then we started to calculate the interest on a daily basis. Well, Mr. Speaker, this government, this administration has surpassed what even the Howard Pawley administration did in terms of what it's costing Manitobans on a daily interest basis and what it has cost Manitobans in terms of debt. It's not just, as I've said before when I stood in my place, it's not just our children who are going to be paying this debt, it's going to be our grandchildren who are going to be saddled with the debt of this government.

* (16:20)

And can you imagine, can you imagine, not being able to balance your books when you have increased your budget from, I think it was \$5.4 billion when we left government, to today? It's way over \$10 billion, \$10.2 billion, I believe it is today. Now, out of that \$10.2 billion—well let's go back. Out of the \$5.4 billion, there was a very small portion that came out of the federal government in terms of transfer payments. Today, that is almost 40 percent of their budget. And I think it's about \$3.7 billion that comes from the federal government into the hands of this government to be able to run this province, Mr. Speaker, and yet they can't—they have an inability to be able to balance the books of this, of our Province.

As a matter of fact, they have to dip into the Crowns to be able to balance the budget, and the Premier then can stand in his place and say, but we've balanced the budget each and every year. Yes, on the backs of Manitoba and Crown corporations, on the backs of other people who have worked very hard to try to build up the resources of this province, and this province has become a have-not province simply because they can't control their spending.

Now, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) says, let's call an election. He may eat his words if he were call—to call an election today because, as a matter of fact, Manitobans are getting wiser to the tactics of this government. Not only, Mr. Speaker, were they misleading people in 1999 when they tried to steal from the taxpayer money that actually belonged to the taxpayer through their little gimmicks in the election, but today they are misleading Manitobans by telling them that we've got a balanced budget, by telling them that we're—you

know, all finances are fine, while at the same time in a budget implementation bill, they're committing not to have to pay any debt down not just this year, not just next year, but until their mandate is done in 2011. And as far as I'm concerned that's, that's deceitful.

And, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are smarter than what this government gives them credit for, and I think they will see through what this government is trying to do. Just weeks ago, just a few short weeks ago this government came forward in this House with a budget, and in introducing the budget they were once again telling Manitobans that they were committed to stay the course, to continue to pay down the debt that has been incurred in this province. And rather, and rather than going back and rewriting the legislation that is appropriate for this kind of, of a step, they have tried to slide this aspect of not having to pay down the debt into the budget implementation act, and I think that in itself is deplorable, and, certainly, is misleading to all of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, why are we postponing the repayment of the debt? The budget says that they've got a balanced budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) says that everything is fine in Manitoba, but what are they—so why all of a sudden in three short weeks, or thereabouts, there was this sudden change that all of a sudden we can't meet our obligations so we have to bring in legislation that absolves us of having to pay down our debt on an annual basis? And what kind of homework did the Minister of Finance do on the budget if, in fact, three weeks after he introduces a budget, he has to change course in a dramatic way?

Now, to the NDP this—and to this government, this is normal, a normal course of action. Why worry about your debt? Worry about what happens today. Don't worry about tomorrow because we, we won't be here, and that's the way that they have conducted themselves, Mr. Speaker. There is very little regard for the taxpayer to begin with because every time you turn around, this government is either imposing a new tax, it's imposing a higher tax, and, oh, and here's a little tax that they can take off, they will to make themselves look good, but, basically, a family of four today in Manitoba is paying far, far more in taxes than any of our neighbours are.

And the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) can't shake his head and say, no, that's not true,

because all he has to do is look at the statistics, and, in fact, the figures show that Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario pay less in taxes than Manitoba does, in—with a family of four.

So, Mr. Speaker, where are we going? We're paying higher taxes than anywhere else in the country. We're relying on the resources of Saskatchewan, Alberta and other jurisdictions in terms of transfer payments. We're expecting that they should carry us. We can't stand on our own two feet under this, under this administration, and it's no wonder that people are looking at us and wondering why it is that a province who has such a rich history, and—and we should stand up proudly in the past because we were able, in very difficult times, the early 1990s saw a greater amount of recession in this country, in this province than we had seen since the 1930s, and yet, during that time we were able not only to balance the books in this province, but, indeed, to start paying down on the debt. And we brought in legislation—we brought in legislation that forced government to pay down the debt, regardless of who was in that premier's chair. But, unfortunately, it wasn't enshrined to the extent that future premiers couldn't change the law, and this Premier (Mr. Doer), although he tried to live with it for a few years, finally his spending habit got to him and this year he said, I can no longer live with the commitment that I had made in terms of balancing the books in this province, in terms of continuing to pay down the debt. We have to change course because I can't stop spending money.

Mr. Speaker, there are times when we have to spend money to get that economy stimulated. I think we've seen that big time in the United States. Is the formula going to work? We're really not sure. We're seeing our federal government taking a similar approach in terms of trying to stimulate the economy, and, yep, we should do it in Manitoba.

But, Mr. Speaker, but we also have to pay attention to where our debt is and where our obligations are and, in terms of legislation that Manitobans supported in terms of paying down our debt on an annual basis so that in the future this province can hold its head up high along with other jurisdictions and say we, too, can stand on our own two feet.

Alberta is doing that. We've seen the economy in Saskatchewan start to boom, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan, of course, is investing in its

resources. They're—they're able to capitalize on their markets, whether it's in oil or in potash.

But, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba what do we talk about? Well, we talk about increasing the cost of taking a hydro line around the west side instead of a shorter route down the east side that's going to cost another half a billion dollars to the ratepayers of this province, and we think we're doing something really good. If we were really committed to seeing this province grow, we would look at the efficient steps that could be taken in this province to get this province moving ahead. We could be developing our resources.

Mr. Speaker, why isn't the government looking at developing the resource of potash in this province? We know that the markets for potash are better now than they have been in the last 30 years. Saskatchewan is developing at least two new potash mines, as we speak. But where—[interjection] Pardon me?

An Honourable Member: Let's talk about what happened to potash in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Derkach: Let's talk about what happened to potash in Saskatchewan. There are two brand-new mines being developed, as we speak, and, Madam, Madam, Madam—Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Saskatchewan is looking at the long term. They're not looking at next year or today. They are moving ahead in developing the resource because they know the markets are there, and the need for food in the food production in this world is increasing, not decreasing.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this Province, it's always got an answer for everything. You know, and I want—and I want to focus for a minute on the water—the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) because—[interjection] You know, here's a minister, unfortunately, no matter what portfolio she takes, she can muck it up in a hurry. Well, she's got the Water Stewardship under her purview and, you know, we've got—out in western Manitoba right now we've got Thomas Lake that is drowning. The cottages are starting to get flooded because she can't get her act together to decrease the water level in that lake. Then we've got a series of three lakes at Strathclair that are flooding hundreds of acres of farmland. They're flooding provincial roads. They're flooding municipal roads, and this minister can't get her act together to—to help those municipalities out. The only thing they do—the only thing they do is they

send out more staff out there to take a look at the situation, and I'm sure she's paying good mileage for those staff to drive out there and to come back to Winnipeg.

As a matter of fact, at Thomas Lake, the bright idea was that we're going to take those tube-tube dikes and we're going to prevent the water from entering the cottages. Well, by the time they got the tube dikes out there, you know what happened? The water was already in the cottages, so there was—they were of no value. So they then put—so they brought them out there and then they hauled them back to Winnipeg because they couldn't put them out. Now, this is the kind of management we have under her purview in terms of trying to help constituents out in my area.

* (16:30)

Now, well, let's talk about Shellmouth Dam. Sure, I, I'm ready to talk about anything. Now, here's the minister—here's the minister who talks about the Shellmouth Dam. Well, let me tell you a little bit about that. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said, you know, we see some development happening out there. Now, between us and Water Stewardship, we're gonna also develop the lake. So they've opened up two, three new cottage developments out at Lake of the Prairies, but what they, they've forgotten about: but where's the sewage gonna go? Where's the sewage gonna go?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Well, well, now, we're just gonna have to dump it on somebody's field because there's no room in the Inglis lagoon, there's no room in the Roblin lagoon, so what are they going to do with it? Well, maybe we'll have to just sneak it out on some farmer's field for a while until we can get our act together. There's no agreement that's been signed between the Minister of Conservation and the, and the Boulton Shellmouth municipality so that they could increase the size of their lagoon to accept the sewage.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's—I can talk about any issue that this government seems to bungle up and they do it in a big hurry, so—but let's get back to Bill 30.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Because I know that pretty soon, Mr. Speaker, you would probably call me on relevance here, so I have to get back to Bill 30.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, we've been—but you know all of this, all of this has to do with budget, no matter what you look at, whether it's water stewardship, it takes money—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: —to address those issues or whether it's Lake of the Prairies, it takes money to resolve those issues, Mr. Speaker, and this government keeps spending the money, but we really don't know where it's going because we keep getting further and further and further in debt. And now it's to the point where the minister can no longer make repayments on the debt that he has been—that he's obligated himself to. That is in legislation, and only a few short weeks ago they said they could make payments on their debt, and then, all of a sudden, in the budget implementation act, they have come forward and tried to slide in an amendment in this act that will absolve them from having to pay down their debt.

But, Mr. Speaker, why skip the minimum payment? This is a minimum payment that has to be made. And even at that, if they were to make their minimum payment, I think we could probably swallow hard and say, well, in this economy, maybe that's the best this government can do, knowing that they don't have very good management practices, we might, we might allow them to, to get away with it. But, when you say that you're not going to pay any of your debt down, that can't be tolerated, in my view, and I don't think Manitobans want to tolerate it because it shows the ultimate in irresponsibility.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, whether—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. All members—order. Order.

All members that wish to make a contribution to this bill will have the opportunity. Just be a little patient. You'll all have your turn. The honourable—order. Order. Order.

The honourable Member for Russell has the floor.

Mr. Derkach: Well, I thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) because he's encouraging me to focus my thoughts on him, specifically, because he's the minister who was the architect of this legislation.

And so, and so, Mr. Speaker, I'm gonna call on the Minister of Finance to start taking his job a little more seriously than he has been because when you look at how this government authorizes the waste of money, you have to go back to the Minister of Finance and ask him to take some responsibility for it. I, I just simply go back to the Spirited Energy campaign.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Has he ever heard much about that? He heard about much spirited energy in, in this province? There's still, there's still some old banners hanging on some buildings in this province, but they're starting to look a little tattered, Mr. Speaker. They wasted \$3 million of taxpayer money on a, on a, on a rebranding campaign that flopped. It flopped big time and I think Manitobans are back to the slogan of Friendly Manitoba where they were before because that's what Manitobans want. The government tried to force its way in a different way. They spent \$3 million of taxpayer money and they got nothing for it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's go a little, a little further. Let's go to the enhanced driver's licence. Now, has anybody got an enhanced driver's licence in here yet? No, no one's got one in here yet, and I don't think any Manitoban has one yet, but already they have spent something like \$13 million on an enhanced driver's licence that nobody wants and nobody needs. Now, Saskatchewan cancelled their program, but, oh no, not us in Manitoba, we're going to push ahead with it and you know we're just going to drop more money. We're going to throw more—

An Honourable Member: Good money after bad.

Mr. Derkach: —more good money after bad, and at the end of the day, this is going to be like the Spirited Energy campaign; you won't hear much about it anymore, but the government will have made its mark in terms of spending \$13 million—I don't know on who—but on trying to push something that nobody wants.

An Honourable Member: What about the vote tax?

Mr. Derkach: Well, let's talk about the vote tax.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Well, there's another waste of money. Now, first of all, they got caught in 1999. They got caught big time in 1999 by trying to pay their union buddies off for working in the campaigns, and they had to repay Elections Manitoba something like

\$76,000, which, you know, in the big budget that this government runs, isn't a lot of money, but it's still taxpayer money.

But, Mr. Speaker, now the government had to devise a new scheme on how they're going to get their hands on some of that money. So they came in with the vote tax. Now this is under the purview of our First Minister. You know, he's the proud minister who has taken responsibility for the election finances act, and he stood up very boldly in this House and this is what he was going to do. Little did he know that this was going to start to haunt him in other ways, and yesterday we saw it in committee. He looked pretty glum in committee yesterday when, in fact, he was caught at his own game.

Now he's a big ethics commissioner who is going to be the ethics conscience person of his party. So, if you were going to step out of line, he was going to put you back into line. Well, we saw where his ethics are. I think we saw it clearly last night, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]*

Well, we could talk about who has and who hasn't ethics, and I think last night it was proven who doesn't have ethics, Mr. Speaker, but—oh, oh, we can talk about individuals that aren't here to defend themselves. Let's talk about those who can defend themselves, like the First Minister here—

An Honourable Member: And the Finance Minister.

Mr. Derkach: —and the Finance Minister.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: First of all, your turn is coming.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Derkach: But let's do one thing at a time. Let's defend ourselves in this House, first of all, and I want the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) to tell us whether, in fact, he told his Finance Department that his party was defrauding the taxpayers of this province of \$76,000. He knew about it.

An Honourable Member: He got a letter.

Mr. Derkach: He knew about it.

An Honourable Member: He got a letter.

Mr. Derkach: He asked for a letter. He got it—that absolved him from it, so he knew—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: —an illegal act was committed. Now did he go back to his Finance people and say, there has been an illegal act committed by our party, and I want you to investigate it because it's taxpayer money that's being spent illegally by our party? I don't think he said that.

I don't think he advised them, the Department of Finance, that, in fact, that's what had happened. I think he kept his mouth shut, and he was happy to have the letter in his pocket that said, you know, I'm innocent. I'm not guilty here because I've got a letter that says I'm not guilty.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are going to know more about this as we proceed down the road, and we're going to be happy to share it with Manitoba. But let's talk about more wastage of money. What about the rerouting of the bipole line?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Derkach: Well, \$640-million worth of wasted taxpayer, ratepayer money that's going to be spent on building a bipole line around the west side of the province—\$640 million. Now, even the Hydro officials can't defend this, and, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are offended by the fact that this government doesn't have a care for how it manages the money, the scarce dollars that our taxpayers and our ratepayers give to this Province and to our corporations to run these events.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will judge this government, but it is up to us as a responsible opposition to underline what this government is doing, and we intend to do that with Bill 30. Now, if the minister thinks we're just going to fall over and he can steamroller over us, that's not going to happen, because we intend to make our opposition known far and wide in terms of this government breaking a very fundamental principle and a fundamental law in this province, and that is to make sure that we pay back our obligations and the debt that has been incurred in this province over time. And so that our grandchildren—our children, our grandchildren and maybe our great-great-grandchildren don't have to be saddled with a debt that has been borne by an irresponsible government, in my view, a government who can't stop control its spending, a government who is getting 40 percent of its budget from the federal government and from other provinces and yet cannot control its spending to the point where it says: Yeah, we've balanced the budget. We've just taken some money out of

Manitoba Hydro and now we've got a balanced budget, but we don't have to pay back our debt. Don't ask us to pay back our debt.

* (16:40)

Well, Mr. Speaker, in my view, that's foolhardy. And I think we're going to hold this government to account. As much as 19 members or 21 members of this House can hold this government to account, we are going to do it because it is our obligation and our responsibility and we intend to fulfil it.

And with those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): I move, second by the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), that Bill 30, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, be adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Just information for the House: the bill is already standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), so when a bill is already standing, it doesn't need to be adjourned, 'cause it's already standing in the name, so—but—we're mo—

Bill 16—The Police Services Act

Mr. Speaker: We will now move on to Bill No. 16, The Police Services Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

Is the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, it's been agreed to. It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina.

The honourable Member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 16, The Police Services Act, amending the—and changing the former police act, which had been with us in Manitoba for several decades and had been in long need of review and in long need of update. I had the opportunity over the last number of years to recommend to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) the need to change the police act to bring it into accordance with modern policing, with modern law enforcement and while there was

initial resistance from the government—and, in fact, some mocking, one might call it, about the suggestion—I'm glad that the government has come around to seeing the need to revise the police act.

I first of all want to, want to thank the many police officers that we have in our province, both working with the national RCMP and with the municipal police forces, those who might be special constables and, really, anybody working in a security position tasked with trying to protect the public in one shape or another. And they do a remarkable job each and every day when they leave their homes as men and women looking to protect those of us who might find ourselves in need of their service. And when they leave their homes each and every day, they do not know, and their loved ones do not know, the sort of dangers that they might encounter on a day-to-day basis. They do not know the sort of devious element and people who they might have to confront and might have to go into situations where they have little information and little ability, in some instances, to discern the danger that they're heading into. And it takes a remarkable person—a special kind of person, I believe—to fulfil that sort of a role, not unlike the firefighters that we have in the province of Manitoba, not unlike the paramedics, and all of those who do very difficult jobs to either protect our safety or to help us in a time of need, Mr. Speaker. And so the need to change this act was apparent for many years to ensure that the modern needs and the real circumstances that police officers and others face on a day to day could be reflected and could be responded to by those who need to operate under the police act.

Of course, the, the government only decided to act on this issue when the, the sad circumstances regarding the Taman case and the East St. Paul police force and the various issues that flowed from that, when that came to light, and then they recognized that there was a need to ensure that there was a modern police act in place. And all of us, I think, remember and will always remember the terrible circumstances around the death of Crystal Taman, and if there's some good that can come from tragedy, we're glad that this and perhaps other pieces of legislation and changes can at least be that reflection in the long run and can be a lasting testament and a lasting legacy.

There are a number of issues within the police act that we could address, Mr. Speaker. In particular,

the decision by the government to implement boards on all municipal police forces throughout the province of Manitoba. The decision to put in a police commission. The decision to have a special investigative unit. And I've appreciated very much the comments that I've received from police officers, from police chiefs, from municipalities and from others regarding the changes within the police act. I did have the opportunity to solicit opinions from various of, various of these individuals and organizations, and I was pleased by the response that I got and very thoughtful comments. You can tell that those involved in law enforcement or those working in municipalities care deeply about the protection of their citizens and those that they are elected or those that they are hired to serve. They take it very, very seriously, and I want to publicly thank them for the opinions that they brought to me in terms of our decisions and our discussions around this particular bill.

I, you know, thought with interest around how the municipal police forces work and interrelate, and, you know, when you go to the various communities that have their own municipal forces, whether it's a Morden or a Ste. Anne, or Brandon, or, of course, Winnipeg being the largest in the province of Manitoba, there really are different experiences. There really are different ways in which the police forces interact with the community. Some of that is because of the natures, the nature of the community and the different needs for law enforcement in those various towns and those various cities, and some of it simply is the nature of the councils that they interact with. And it's hard to sort of have a cookie-cutter solution for different communities that might have very different needs and very different experiences, and in many cases, these communities have very long-term relationships with their police forces and have very good and positive relationships. And I was glad to hear that.

It's difficult sometimes, I know, for individual police officers and for forces more generally, to hear about the challenges that sometimes happen on law enforcement, and we know that there are, are, tragic situations and sometimes situations beyond the control of the police, but that come to light in a very public way and don't always reflect well on police officers. And that can be hurtful to those officers involved, particularly if they didn't do anything outside of the normal course of their duty, and it can be hurtful for the force overall.

Morale can be a challenge. I think sometimes there are police officers—and it can be difficult to recruit police officers, not only because of the danger involved in that particular job, but because of the scrutiny, the public scrutiny that's involved with being a police officer these days. And so with those challenges in mind, I was heartened when I talked to some of the different local police forces and municipalities to hear that there are some very good experiences happening in the province of Manitoba, that there are some very positive relationships between communities and their law enforcement.

And I actually think, Mr. Speaker—I don't have any data or surveys to back this up—but I believe intuitively, and speaking to individuals, that there is a good respect for law enforcement and for police officers and that most people realize that the vast, vast majority of those who are serving as law enforcement officers or as special constables are doing the job to the best of their ability with good faith, with good intention, and with all the skill and practice that they've had instilled in them through their training. And I think that that's true right across Manitoba, that there is generally that feeling, and in the municipalities that I have had the opportunity to visit with, I think, generally, the councils feel good about their law enforcement where they have a municipal force. Not that there aren't challenges from time to time, and we see those very publicly, but, as a general statement, I think things are working fairly well, so we have to be careful about the prescription that we put in place, the cure that we try to put in place, that it doesn't actually cause more harm than good and force some areas into situations where there really isn't a need for a change.

*(16:50)

You know, one of the things I would have liked to have seen in the police act was more discussion about a police college. Manitoba is one of the few provinces that doesn't have a centralized training system for law enforcement, for special constables, for those who might be working as conservation officers, anybody who's dealing in a quasi or in a very real issue of authority over individuals. Most other provinces have this central police college, training college, where you can train individuals how to use firearms, in training them in course of arrests, training them in how to handle different situations, so there's a uniform training standard. And I think that that's an important lesson that we've learned from other provinces; that if you can apply that

uniform training standard to all these different officers, to all these levels of law enforcement—there's a growing level of law enforcement, Mr. Speaker, whether it's special constables or cadets—if you can apply that uniform training standard to the needs of those various individuals operating in those roles, you get a better outcome and you don't have sort of a patchwork of training that I think we have now.

Individual training centres, I think, are doing as best a job they can, but it's hard to get that uniform standard if you don't have that one centre. And the experience in Alberta, I think, that's been trying to develop that police college, that uniform training centre, to have individuals and companies come in and actually do the training if they'd like and then to have the municipal police forces contract out with the police college for those services and there's a role for the provincial government to play, as there should be, in policing, as recognized in this particular piece of legislation. So that is missing from this bill and I think it's something that shouldn't be missing and really should be there, Mr. Speaker.

The, the issue of a police college I've raised over the last couple of years. I haven't got the sense from the government that they're opposed to the idea, but just that they're not prepared to move forward at this time, and that's not unlike a lot of ideas that we brought to the House. In fact, there's almost a—there's almost sort of a pattern that happens; we bring forward an idea on the justice system and the government tries to mock it and discredit it and say why it wouldn't work, and then they start to consider it and then they do it and then they try to take credit for it at the end of the day. And there's a lot of different examples of how that has worked over the last couple of years.

Electronic monitoring is one of those situations, Mr. Speaker, where we talked about the need for an electronic monitoring system to ensure that offenders, whether they're high-risk car thieves—or hopefully that we could apply to gang members as well—that they have this electronic monitoring device. If they're not going to be in prison—and certainly those who, who would be better fit for incarceration should be incarcerated, but—those who are going to be released but still pose some threat or potential threat to the public should have electronic monitoring. The government said they couldn't do it. I remember the former Minister of Justice, the now Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) saying it couldn't be done because the batteries didn't work,

and there was all sorts of other issues: that GPS wasn't a proven technology, even though we had GPS on tractors and in farm equipment in rural Manitoba, even though batteries work in almost every other sort of case in Manitoba.

There was a thousand different excuses about why electronic monitoring couldn't work. And then on the eve of the election, the 2007 election, on the government had a conversion on the road to Damascus—or perhaps a conversion on the road to the election, thinking that it might become an issue—and quickly announced a pilot project, that they were gonna do a pilot project on electronic monitoring. But in the announcement, the Minister of Justice, the current Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak), talked about how he was sceptical, didn't think it was going to work, but sort of felt that, you know, they were going to throw it out there, I think to remove it from the election discussion. Fast forward a year and half or two years and now the government is saying, well, it's actually worked fairly well, that there are some successes, they want to continue on with the program. So you can see the movement that we've had, from the initial criticism of the opposition for bringing forward the idea, to a sceptical launch of the program to try to stop any sort of public discourse on the issue, to realizing, actually, that it should have been done.

Now, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I'm just happy that it's happened, that it's an improvement for Manitoba, that it's good that we're doing it, but it should have really happened years ago, and if we didn't have to drag the government into these things year after year there would've been so many more improvements in a much quicker pace, and the police college is no different in terms of this particular act. Had the police college been committed to long ago, we could have had this system up and running or at least close to up and running and had this uniform training, because, you know, the act talks about uniform standards and that's something that I've been very supportive of, the need to have uniform standards for individuals who are acting as law enforcement, special constables and other areas. But it seems to me that it's diminished to have uniform standards but not uniform training, because, really, the, the standards that are put in place, you have to rely on those who are doing the training to apply them equally and to ensure that there's a measured and equal response, and what better way to do that and what more important reason to do it than for our police and through a police college.

So I am cautiously optimistic that the government may yet decide to go in the, in the direction of a police college. They might want to sort of let the public forget where the suggestion came from. I don't think that that should be their reservation. They shouldn't be worried about the fact that opposition members bring forward ideas and the fact that they reluctantly take them on. That's okay. I ultimately think that Manitobans expect the opposition to bring forward creative and reflective and responsible ideas, and they expect the government then to react and to respond and to take on those ideas where they have merit and to not worry so much about who receives the credit for them as this government seems to be fixated upon.

And so we'll wait and see the outcome of that, whether or not, in fact, that's the case. I think the government has indicated that they're going to be putting that question to the new police commission that's going to be established under this particular piece of legislation, that they'll leave it to the police commission to decide whether or not there is a police college. I think, ultimately, that the police commission, although they're not yet appointed and not yet approved through statute, I ultimately think that the police commission is going to see the wisdom and the merit of having a police college. They'll probably look at the various other police colleges throughout Canada as they should and to see how they're operating, and I think that they'll find a strong level of success.

I know that the government had some degree of public consultation on the, on the police act. I'm not sure that, that, what, perhaps—that they were—got sort of results and the sort of responses that they were expecting or hoping for, but, certainly, it's appropriate to go to the public and have those discussions with them. You know, maybe there should have also been a follow up and have more public discussions after the fact about the act.

I'm sure that the minister and the government would say that that's really for committee and the discussion can happen there, and while our legislative system in Manitoba is unique and does offer that opportunity at committee for the public to come and make presentations, the reality is it can sometimes be difficult for individuals to find their way to a committee hearing. There's scheduling issues. Often there isn't a lot of notice around when the committee hearings are held and so that's a bit of a challenge. And there simply are just some people who don't find it a very comfortable experience to

come and speak before a legislative committee, and so that's a reality that has to be recognized as well. So there may have been some merit in taking this bill back to the community just so it—as it had the input originally before it's drafted to say, well, this is what we've developed and is this something that you find to be reflective of the sort of police services that you would expect both in your community and throughout Manitoba.

But that didn't happen. I suppose it's not too late for that to happen, Mr. Speaker. I've tried to, in my own way, do some of that through the outreach and consultations that I've had with municipal officials and with police departments, and I'm going to continue that in the coming weeks, to continue to have those meetings and to continue to have those discussions to see if we can improve upon the bill and to make it even stronger, because we know that the former police act wasn't amended for many, many years. There had been no significant changes for decades, and I would hope that this act would get a more aggressive and robust review, but it may not, and so it's important that we get it right the first time because it's going to have to live as a legacy for many, many years and to operate with our police officers who are doing such a good job.

And so we'll take some considered time on some of these issues and ensure that it gets done the proper way and gets done the appropriate way. It may be that the government would like to move the bill quickly and other bills, but I always think it's better to take a little bit of extra time and get the bill right, because we know that there's sometimes unintended consequences to legislation that gets passed; things

that happen that we would not have wanted to happen with the passing of a particular piece of legislation. And so we have to do all that we can to ensure that those unintended consequences don't happen, particularly when it comes to something like the police act. So due diligence is important, Mr. Speaker, and I wouldn't want the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) to insinuate, as his leader has at sometimes, that bills aren't moving fast enough because it's always better to get it right the first time than to have to go back and try to correct it after the fact.

And so we'll ensure that those who need to hear about the act, to the best of our abilities, do actually hear about the act and have input, and I'll be pleased to share that input with the Minister of Justice. You know, we sometimes have discourse that is quite fruitful and productive. It's different than the discourse that we have in question period at times, but outside of the context of question period I'm happy to speak with the minister about the different things that I've heard from law enforcement and from municipal officials about how this act can be strengthened, and I suspect he may be open to some of those changes and to some of those suggestions, as a good minister would.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have 12 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 26, 2009

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