

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

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 16, 2006

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that Stuart Murray, the honourable Member for Kirkfield Park, has resigned his seat in the House effective September 7, 2006. I am therefore tabling his resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Matters of privilege must be raised at the first possible opportunity and a prima facie case must be established as to how it affects the privileges of us as members.

The matter I raise results from comments made by the honourable Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin), at a committee meeting on the very last day of the session, June 12, 2006. I first became aware of these comments while the Legislature was in recess, reading the *Hansard*, and so I raise this issue today at the earliest possible opportunity.

The matter which I raise revolves around our rights as MLAs as a collectivity, and I would refer you to page 95 of Marleau and Montpetit, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. To save time, I will not read the citation as you can consult it in making your ruling.

The crux of the matter is the expectation that all honourable members are expected to conduct themselves in such a matter as to not bring the integrity of this Chamber into disrepute. We all know that it is fundamental principle in our parliamentary system that government not only operate but be seen to be operating such that no minister of the Crown uses his or her position to advance his or her personal interests, and that where a government brings forward legislation which affects the personal interests of a minister, that to avoid any perceived or

real conflict of interest the legislation should be introduced and handled by another minister.

On June 12, 2006, the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs spoke on Bill 32, of the last session, The Real Property Amendment Act. As the minister indicated at the time, the purpose of the bill is to facilitate the transfer of provincial lands to the federal government so that they can more easily be transferred to First Nations communities. At committee on June 12, 2006, the minister said, and I quote: "So as the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and also being a First Nations person, I have always told groups that I have a vested interest in these lands, on OCN anyway, the First Nation I come from, be transferred to OCN's control and authority as soon as possible."

I would like to congratulate the minister in being very forthright and aboveboard in making very clear the potential conflict of interest he has in regard to him being the minister responsible for the bill. The minister is the sponsor of this bill, having introduced the bill at first reading on April 11, and introducing the bill at second reading on May 31. The minister clearly recognizes the potential is there for his First Nation and, by extension perhaps himself, to benefit from the legislation. But, having recognized the potential for conflict, the minister should also have handed this bill to another minister of the Crown for sponsorship to avoid any conflict of interest, real or apparent. I also note that the minister did not make clear either at first or second reading that he had this potential conflict.

Mr. Speaker, whenever ministers sponsor bills from which there is possibility of deriving a personal benefit, either real or apparent, the standards and dignity of this Chamber suffers. This in turn undermines the dignity of all honourable members, and this, I believe, is a prima facie case of a breach of privilege.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the matter of privilege raised today by myself regarding the possibility of a conflict of interest regarding The Real Property Amendment Act be referred to a standing committee of the Legislature.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the member is right that the privileges ought to be rarely raised. This has now become a regular occurrence amongst the leader of the opposition. I remember two sessions ago, the matter of privilege was where the member was sitting in the Legislature, followed by a filibuster by the member opposite saying the Member for River Heights did not have the opportunity to speak. Now the member rises on a question. The member who is a doctor, who stands up in this House on a regular basis and talks about medical matters and talks about benefits to doctors and talks about those matters, he has the gall, the audacity, to stand in this Chamber and accuse a minister of the Crown, who happens to be a First Nation background, something he is very proud of and respects in this Chamber, and suggests that by virtue of bringing forward a bill he is in conflict of interest. I say shame on the leader and the Member for River Heights.

By the member's own definition, virtually half of us couldn't speak in this Legislature or sponsor bills. Agriculture, teachers, Mr. Speaker, there are provisions in the legislative act dealing with conflict that say if you are a small percentage that a total individual who takes advantage of a particular pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in a matter, you are not a subject of privilege, you are not a subject of conflict.

Mr. Speaker, further to that, the idea of conflict of interest is that members are aware that someone may have an interest, or an indirect interest, and that the public is advised. We fill out forms every year. We make pronouncements every year that point out what our interests are.

The absurdity of the member's argument, Mr. Speaker, if I wanted to, could be taken to unbelievable lengths. If the member wants, perhaps, I can't speak on this matter of privilege because I am trained as a lawyer. Or the Leader of the Opposition couldn't speak on this matter. Or the House Leader for the Conservative Party couldn't because he is trained in a particular matter.

But the audacity on the first sitting of the Legislature, when there are matters to debate, when there are matters of importance, when the very Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), has been complaining and complaining that this Chamber isn't sitting often enough or isn't talking enough, Mr. Speaker, to stand up again, on the first day, not about where he sits, but this time attacking a member of the

government because of what? Because of his background for sponsoring the bill that he not only has the right to sponsor, but is proud to sponsor and is part of his duty to sponsor, and to suggest because of his background that he has no right in this Chamber to sponsor on a bill on property rights is absurd and wrong.

This matter ought to go no further, and I suggest the member should apologize not only to the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), but to all members of this Chamber for raising a matter that is not only inaccurate, but offensive, offensive to myself and to other members of this Chamber. The member who, I believe, trained as a medical doctor, and who has on many occasions raised medical doctor remuneration issues and has not stood up, Mr. Speaker, and discussed his conflict of interest on medical remuneration issues, I daresay has never been called on that. In fact, he has used his background and his knowledge often in this Chamber to talk about issues. To suggest that the Member for The Pas—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When dealing with a matter of privilege, the member should be debating the prima facie case and not get into debate of the issue. I haven't decided yet if it will go forward or not.

* (13:40)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, so, in conclusion, on the face of it, not only does the member not have a prima facie case, but the member in fact, I think, is impinging upon the rights of all members of the Chamber, all members of the Chamber, by making that kind of statement. I am being kind and gentle in this regard because I think what the member has done today is inappropriate, inaccurate and wrong.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same matter of privilege?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on the same matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to follow those kind and gentle comments from the member opposite.

I would say that in fact this is a very serious matter without speaking to the substance of the allegations that were raised by the independent Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). It is in fact clear that any allegations of conflict of interest are very, very important and they are very serious. It

does affect all of us as individuals and all of us individual members. However, I do think that there is in fact a better avenue for this to come forward. We do have in this province a conflict of interest officer. I know under his act that he is given the powers to bring forward and to have an investigation and to in fact bring forward a formal recommendation when a member has a complaint, so I might suggest without speaking to the substance of the member's allegations that he in fact bring it forward to the conflict of interest officer, and it be dealt with at that level.

Mr. Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I'm going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities, and I will return to the House with a ruling.

PETITIONS

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Wendy Capri, Chuck Fritsch, Ted Harasym and many, many, many others.

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

Committee Report

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs

Fifth Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): I wish to present the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Tuesday, April 18, 2006, at 12 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

Thursday, June 29 at 8:30 a.m. at 10:35 – 405 Broadway (in camera)

Thursday, July 13 at 1 p.m. at 10:35 – 405 Broadway (in camera exit interview with Auditor General Jon Singleton)

Matters under Consideration:

Recruitment and Selection of the Auditor General

Committee Membership:

Committee membership for the April 18, 2006, meeting:

Mr. Derkach

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Hawranik

Ms. Irvin-Ross

Ms. Korzeniowski

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Mr. Maguire

Mr. Martindale

Mrs. Mitchelson

Mr. Reid

Mr. Swan

At the April 18, 2006, meeting, your committee elected Mr. Reid as Chairperson.

At the April 18, 2006, meeting, your committee elected Ms. Irvin-Ross as Vice-Chairperson.

Committee membership for the June 29, 2006, meeting:

Mr. Aglugub

Mr. Dewar

Mr. Goertzen

Ms. Irvin-Ross

Ms. Korzeniowski

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Mrs. Mitchelson

Mr. Reid (Chairperson)

Mr. Reimer

Mr. Swan

Mrs. Taillieu

At the June 29, 2006, meeting, your committee elected Ms. Irvin-Ross as Vice-Chairperson.

Committee membership for the July 13, 2006, meeting:

Ms. Brick

Hon. Mr. Chomiak

Mr. Cummings

Mr. Eichler

Mr. Goertzen

Ms. Irvin-Ross (Vice-Chairperson)

Mr. Jha

Ms. Korzeniowski

Mr. Martindale

Mr. Reid (Chairperson)

Mr. Schuler

Agreements reached at the April 18, 2006, standing committee meeting:

It was agreed that Mr. Lamoureux be authorized to attend in camera meetings of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs considering the Recruitment and Appointment of the Auditor General of Manitoba.

It was agreed that Legislative Assembly staff be authorized to attend all meetings of the External Executive Hiring Sub-Committee and the Legislative Affairs Sub-Committee.

Motions Agreed to at the April 18, 2006, standing committee meeting:

THAT this committee recommends that an Executive Screening Committee consisting of Don Potter, Shirley Strutt and Bill Fraser be appointed, the mandate of this external committee will be established by the Sub-Committee of the Committee on Legislative Affairs.

THAT a Sub-Committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs consisting of four government members, two official opposition, one independent member, to be determined and named provided to the Clerk's Office as soon as possible, be struck to establish the mandate of the external committee. The sub-committee may also undertake other duties it deems necessary in order to fulfil its responsibilities in the hiring process.

Agreements reached at the June 29, 2006, standing committee meeting:

It was unanimously agreed to accept the report of the sub-committee.

It was unanimously agreed to recommend that Carol Bellringer be appointed as Auditor General for the Province of Manitoba.

Motions Agreed to at the June 29, 2006, standing committee meeting:

THAT the committee authorize the Chairperson to advise the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba of this appointment once the offer has been accepted, prior to presentation of the committee report in the House.

THAT the committee authorize the Chairperson to ask the Speaker to inform all MLAs in writing of this appointment and issue a press release once the offer has been accepted, prior to presentation of the committee report in the House.

Sub-Committee Report

At the June 29, 2006, meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs the sub-committee presented its report.

Sub-Committee Meetings:

Your sub-committee met on the following occasions:

Friday, April 28, 2006, at 12:30 p.m.

Monday, May 1, 2006, at 11 a.m.

Thursday, May 4, 2006, at 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 23, 2006, at 12 p.m.

Monday, June 19, 2006, at 4 p.m.

All meetings were held in camera at the Woodsworth Building (1035 – 405 Broadway).

Sub-Committee Membership:

Mr. Hawranik

Ms. Irvin Ross

Mr. Lamoureux

Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Mrs. Mitchelson

Mr. Reid

Mr. Swain

Your sub-committee elected Ms. Irvin-Ross as its Chairperson on Friday, April 28, 2006.

Your sub-committee received a membership substitution during the meeting on Monday, June 19, 2006:

Mrs. Stefanson for Mr. Hawranik

Staff present for sub-committee and panel meetings:

Susan Scott, Legislative Assembly, Director of Human Resource Services

JoAnn McKerlie-Korol, Clerk Assistant / Clerk of Committees

Rick Yarish, Clerk Assistant / Clerk of Committees

Sub-Committee Agreements:

Your sub-committee reached an agreement during the meeting on Monday, June 19, 2006, at 4 p.m.

It was agreed to recommend to the Legislative Affairs Committee that Carol Bellringer be appointed Auditor General.

Advisory Panel Activities:

As agreed to by your committee, the following individuals served as members of the advisory panel:

Don Potter

Shirley Strutt

Bill Fraser

The advisory panel met on the following occasions

Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

Monday, May 29, 2006

Monday, June 5, 2006

Friday, June 9, 2006

Friday, June 16, 2006

Monday, June 19, 2006

All meetings were held in camera on the 10th floor of the Woodsworth Building (1035 – 405 Broadway).

The advisory panel considered applications for the position of Auditor General as follows:

Twelve applications were received for the position.

Four individuals were interviewed for the position on Monday, May 29, 2006.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

2PPCLI Casualties

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, I have a statement for the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the lives of five members of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry second division from Shilo, Manitoba, who have been killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan since the House last met. This August, Master Corporal Jeffrey Scott Walsh and Corporal

David Braun were, while on duty in southern Afghanistan. On September 18, in Kandahar province, a suicide bomber took the lives of Private David Byers, Corporal Shane Keating and Corporal Keith Morley. Corporal Morley was born and raised in Winnipeg and leaves behind a family in this community.

Members of this House have paid tribute to these fallen soldiers at commemoration and memorial services held at Shilo, Manitoba. The hundreds of people in attendance at these heartfelt, respectful memorials are a testament to these men and women.

On behalf of Manitobans and this House, I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of these brave men. To all the service women and men who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and to their families and friends in mourning, I would like to offer and express our gratitude for their service and our regret for their loss of life.

Mr. Speaker, after other members have made their statements, I would ask that this House join in a moment of silence to recognize these deceased soldiers.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for that statement and just to indicate, on behalf of members of our caucus in opposition, our support for the comments made today and our support for taking a moment to pay tribute to these five outstanding young Canadians who have fought and died in order to advance the causes of civil society, human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

They certainly carried out their duties with honour. Their passing is certainly sad for all family and friends who know these individuals, and I guess the consolation, Mr. Speaker, is that they did so in pursuit of greater and higher goals. So I want to add my voice and support the Premier's request that the House take a moment of silence and recognize these soldiers. Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join all the other members of the Chamber in recognizing the contributions of our soldiers and, in particular, of course, the soldiers who have been based in Shilo. It

is clearly a tragedy to have lost five members, five people, who have served and who have worked and lived in Shilo and who have made a contribution to our province as well as to our nation.

I was able to join the Premier (Mr. Doer) at the service in Shilo for four of these individuals. Certainly, in talking to members of the family and to other soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, I have a real impression of the extent of their commitment and also the extent of their sadness and sorrow. So I join with other members in extending condolences to family and friends, and extending a recognition of the major contributions that these five have made.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to have a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the table and ask them to assist me in welcoming Tamara Pomanski, our newly appointed Clerk Assistant, Clerk of Committees, to the table.

I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us Mr. Binx Remnant who is the former Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

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

I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Bea Caldwell of Brandon and Doris Elgert of Portage La Prairie. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

In the public gallery we have with us 20 retired teachers.

Also in the public gallery we have from Dufferin Christian School 15 grade nine students under the direction of Mr. Rob VanSpronson. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Children in Care Hotel Placements

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just at the outset in acknowledging leaders' latitude, I wonder if I could just briefly pay tribute to the late Reverend Harry Lehotsky. I know the Premier and other members of this Legislature, including the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), were in attendance at a very fitting and poignant service yesterday at Calvary Temple. I just want to publicly convey my condolences to Virginia Lehotsky and the three very fine sons who spoke about their father's legacy yesterday and simply put on the record my condolences to the family and, certainly, my sadness personally at this great loss for our community.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. In 1998, the Premier, who was then Leader of the Official Opposition, got up in this Chamber and said, and I quote, "It is this Premier who was responsible for the care and custody of children under The Child and Family Services Act. He cannot wash his hands of his responsibility."

In April of 1999, there was an average of 28 children placed in hotels, children who were in the care of the Province of Manitoba. On August 31 of this year that number had grown to an all-time high of 166 children staying in hotels under the watch of this government. A nearly sixfold increase in the scale of this crisis since 1999, 166 kids have been denied a caring, loving foster home as a result of this NDP government's years of neglect.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, we learned that children were being displaced from hotels in order to accommodate the Grey Cup. In response to these terrible stories, and nothing was done until these stories made their way into the media, the government rushed out showing a momentary bit of interest in this challenge with no plan and no consultation with the multimillion dollar announcement. Then, by yesterday, the issue would appear to again have fallen off the government's radar screen. It was barely referenced in the Throne Speech, the fact that we have a crisis in our Child and Family Services system and that we have 166 children now in hotels.

Given his statements in 1998, will the Premier stand by his word and will he, and I quote, take responsibility for the care and custody of children

under The Child and Family Services Act. Will he demonstrate that he has his priorities straight and will he take personal responsibility for getting involved in solving this growing crisis for children in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the allegations made by members opposite last spring about the issue of devolution and the allegations made by members opposite last spring about a failure to track, adequately, children in our Child and Family Services system resulted in two independent reviews. It also resulted in a very, very assertive effort of social workers to do due diligence, on the tracking of children in care. In fact, the social workers over the summer met and accounted for 14,999 children in care. Contrary to the allegations made by members opposite last spring, they were able to track and hold accountable the placements of all of those children.

During that period of time the social workers and the front-line workers were spending a considerable amount of time dealing with allegations made by members opposite. They were able to track kids. The number went up unacceptably high in hotels. I have been critical in the past. I think that the decision and the recommendation from the Child's Advocate in the early '90s to close all the receiving homes, Mr. Speaker, has had an unintended consequence through their government and through our government of having too many children in hotels.

The issue of the Portage allegation was a meeting set up for social services agencies, not a transfer of kids out of the city. There was mention yesterday of the fact that the independent reviews have supported the devolution of children to Aboriginal agencies. Mr. Speaker, 85 percent of our kids in care are Aboriginal children. Members opposite sat on a commission of inquiry and did not implement that report. The number of children are down from when the independent review took place.

Yesterday we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —in the Speech from the Throne reiterated the \$42-million investment in children in foster care. I do accept responsibility that the cuts that were made in foster care by the Tories were not reinstated, were not adequately—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The cuts made were not adequately reinstated in our seven years in office, in spite of the 80 percent increase in funding to child protection. We have now instructed, and the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) has moved ahead with advance money in this budget year for more foster care. There is absolutely no question that kids in temporary care, some of them are going to go back home because they are held there for safety reasons pending assessment, and some of them are going to foster homes.

We are putting more money in foster homes. What I said in '98 is what I agree with today. There shouldn't be kids in hotels. If we have to have foster homes, short-term foster homes and receiving homes, that is necessary for children's care, not hotel care.

Mr. McFadyen: The fact is the Premier can play the blame game all he likes. He can try to deflect attention away from his personal statutory responsibility for children in care in Manitoba, and the Premier can attempt all he wants to deflect. The fact is he has had more than seven years to deal with the issue, and in those seven years the problem has grown sixfold of children in hotels. Mr. Speaker, it is about time the Premier stopped playing the blame game and started getting on with the very serious job that he has in front of him, of dealing with this very serious and growing crisis in our Child and Family Services system.

He can try and deflect it to questions of devolution. What we are talking about today are matters of—

An Honourable Member: Oh, oh. Now you've moved on.

*(14:00)

Mr. McFadyen: We are not moving off of devolution, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: We are not moving off of this government's bungled handling of the devolution matter, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly another very serious issue in our Child and Family Services system. But it is about time that the Premier stopped

playing the blame game. He has been Premier for seven years and he needs to get on with the job.

The Premier knows, as we all do, the number of kids in care in Manitoba has gone up dramatically over the years for whatever reason, and he knows that there has not been a corresponding increase in the number of foster families available to take care of these children. When he was on the other side of the House, the Premier called children living in hotels a scandal and a disgrace, and he accused the government of the day of abandoning Manitoba's children. Now the problem has increased almost sixfold. As this crisis has deepened over the last seven years under this Premier's watch, what have they done? They have spent record sums of tax dollars on ad campaigns designed to boost his party's sagging approval ratings.

Given the millions in tax dollars that he is now spending in an attempt to re-elect his party, will he demonstrate that children in Manitoba come before taxpayer-funded political advertising? Will he cancel his political "Spirited Energy" ad campaign and redirect that money into a campaign to encourage more Manitoba families to get involved as foster families so that we can get on with dealing with this very serious crisis?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the business community has participated and put out a considerable number of ads on the same proposal. I want to thank them for their ideas, for their initiative, for their forward-looking investments. If he looks across the street, he will see Great-West Life sponsoring a promotion. If he will look down the street, he will see other companies. Perhaps he should look at that.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that over the years we were critical, and the members opposite now are critical. The recommendation that was implemented from the Child Advocate has had unintended consequences in Manitoba. The closing of the six receiving homes has resulted in an increased number of children in hotels. We are now establishing short-term shelters for children. We have reduced the numbers by 40 in the last four weeks, and we are committed to having more foster care.

I do accept responsibility that the cuts made in foster care, that were initiated in the '90s, we did not fully reinstate those cuts. We had five increases in funding for foster parents. I take full responsibility for the fact that we didn't fully reinstate the Darwinian cuts made by members opposite. Mr.

Speaker, we have now gone beyond the Tory cuts, and we will continue to seek out safe places for children.

I do not agree with children being in hotels. I do know that some of them that take short-term shelter are there for evaluation and aren't going to a foster home. They are going back to their own community and back to their own family. But for those children that need foster care and can't go back to their own home, foster spots and spaces should be available, and we are going to make that a priority. You are right; we should have done it earlier. Members opposite shouldn't have cut foster parents.

I just want to make a point though, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite took a shot at social workers in his statements last week. The members opposite said those social workers didn't know where the kids were under devolution, and so they went out, as a matter of due diligence, based on allegations made by members opposite, and reidentified 14,999 children, one runaway, a 16-year-old, out of 15,000 children. Perhaps, if members opposite weren't saying the sky was falling, there wouldn't be as many kids in hotels today.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Premier that it was Peter Olfert, the representative of the social workers working in his system, that said that the devolution was mismanaged and was a fiasco for the Child and Family Services system. It wasn't members on this side of the House who were making that claim by ourselves.

Coming back to the issue, this very serious issue, of children in hotels in our Child and Family Services system in Manitoba, we have asked the Premier if he would take the initiative, if he has got \$1.6 million to spend on political advertising on "Spirited Energy," why not take a portion of that and set it aside for a campaign to recruit foster parents. He hasn't responded to that suggestion. When he was on the other side of the House, we know that the Premier said that hotels don't solve problems with dysfunctional families; they cost too much, and surely we can find safer and warmer places for our kids than hotels. That is what the Premier said in 1998.

Speaking of warmer places, Mr. Speaker, we have just learned that the Premier now plans to make yet another trip to California, his second California junket in the span of three months, to speak about the film industry immediately after the end of this record

three-week session here in Manitoba. We know that this mission, a letter issued by his own department of trade and investment, the trade and investment branch has issued a letter saying companies participating in the mission are naturally welcome to be part of the Manitoba delegation for the entire week. However, participation may duplicate a similar type of mission that we did to Texas in January 2005.

So, given that he is duplicating a trade mission with his second trip to California in three months, and we know that the Premier has this responsibility to travel when there aren't burning issues and a crisis to deal with at home; but, given the crisis in Child and Family Services, given that it is his second trip to California in three months, given that his own government says that it duplicates work that was done in Texas last year, will the Premier cancel his taxpayer-funded California junket? Will he demonstrate, clearly, that Manitoba kids come ahead of photo ops with the Terminator? Will he put off his trip, and will he deal with the crisis in Child and Family Services until such time as this House can be satisfied that a solution is at hand?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, first of all, my attendance hasn't been confirmed. There are a number of businesspeople involved in a bioscience and biotechnology mission. It does not include the governor of California. Texas is actually different than California. One is directly south of Manitoba; another one is on the Pacific coast. I know the member opposite doesn't understand that. In terms of taxpayers' trips, when he worked in the office of the Premier, they spent \$35,000 a year going to Switzerland, at Davos. We have very little trade with Switzerland. We have a lot of trade with California, and we have a lot of trade with Texas, so I think the member opposite shouldn't act holier-than-thou.

Mr. Speaker, we are spending, not the number the member opposite raises, we are spending \$6 million more on foster children. Just in terms of veracity of statements this member has no credibility. Last night on the news, on CKY News, the member opposite said Ontario recently came out with their report on long-term energy vision. There wasn't a single mention of Manitoba in it. The member opposite is deceiving Manitobans. There were a number of mentions in that report. I ask him to apologize and withdraw that statement immediately.

Throne Speech Tax Competitiveness

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has confirmed for the House that his California trip takes precedence over dealing with a crisis in Child and Family Services. The itinerary, which is on his own government's Web site, says, "Manitoba group breakfast with Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon." This is the itinerary that's been published and is being circulated to businesspeople around the province, and we know—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just know that members opposite seem to think that this crisis in Child and Family Services is a laughing matter. The Premier wants to get up and make flippant remarks about California and Texas. I think the Premier should show some leadership, that he should stay behind until the problem is solved, and at such time he has the opportunity, as every Premier must do, to travel the world, if need be, in order to promote Manitoba. But while we have a crisis, it is his responsibility to stay put.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on a new question. We had a Throne Speech yesterday from the government and we heard very little new in the way of forward thinking from this government. We had comments from leading members of the Manitoba business community which described the Throne Speech as extremely disappointing, doing nothing to make Manitoba more competitive specifically in regard to taxation.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* said today that business leaders were unhappy about the lack of tax cuts in the speech and say there isn't much here to make business want to invest in Manitoba. These are representatives of the business community in Manitoba.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, and I quote, we have such an unfriendly and overly high tax—

* (14:10)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: We have an unfriendly and overly high tax burden in Manitoba where we have payroll taxes and high corporate taxes. Businesses can't expand and businesses can't create opportunities for graduating students. It is little wonder so many of them are being attracted westward.

Dave Angus of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce echoed that sentiment and said that Manitoba is very tax uncompetitive.

Clearly the Premier does not listen to leaders in our business community as tax competitiveness has been identified to the CFIB, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, businesspeople and chambers of commerce as the most trusting challenge facing our Manitoba economy.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally admit that his economic policies are failing and will he commit today to real tax relief for Manitobans before he does further damage to Manitoba's competitive position?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite are quoting some of their personnel that have made comments. The member opposite, when he was working in the former Premier Filmon's office, in his website he said he was responsible for the tax-cutting strategy of the Filmon government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, he sure was responsible for the tax-cutting strategy. The property taxes in Manitoba went up 68 percent under his tax-cutting measures. When we came into office the small business tax rate in Manitoba was 8 percent. It is now 3 percent, the second lowest in Canada.

When we came into office the individual income tax, the middle income tax rate, was 16.4 percent. It is going down to 13 percent, a 22 percent reduction. When we came into office, the corporate tax rate was 17 percent. It is going down to 14 percent on January 1, 2007. In fact, our government in seven budgets has actually lowered taxes more than any other government in the provincial government in Manitoba in the history of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition stated, and I quote, it was on television last night, it was right out of his mouth, his words: Ontario recently came out with the report on their long-term energy vision. There wasn't a single mention of Manitoba in it. That is absolutely false. Will the member apologize? There are eight references to Manitoba in it. He is wrong eight times.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see the Premier warming up to be Opposition Leader and I want to just thank him.

I know the Premier and his government are obsessed with the 1980s and the 1990s, no fewer than 12 references in yesterday's Throne Speech to the 1980s and the 1990s. Mr. Speaker, let's fast-forward to today, to 2006 and beyond for Manitoba.

Now what we saw in yesterday's Throne Speech was next to nothing in terms of tax relief for working Manitobans, tax relief for the businesspeople and companies that create jobs and opportunities for Manitoba. As Manitoba virtually stands still compared to our neighbours, our neighbours race ahead, including the province of Saskatchewan which has just cut their provincial sales tax rate by two points.

So we had three tax cuts referred to in yesterday's speech, all of which were contained in last year's budget. One tax cut idea that came out of our annual general meeting two weeks ago, and tax cut led income splitting that came out of the federal Conservative government in Ottawa. Clearly, there is no long-term plan. Clearly, there is no clear thinking on the part of the government, and, clearly, there is no commitment to address the growing tax gap that exists between Manitoba and our neighbours.

If this is all that the Premier has to offer then Manitoba will continue to be the highest-taxed province west of Québec. It is a shameful record, Manitoba today. The world is not standing still even though this government may be. Manitoba is falling further and further behind in terms of tax competitiveness, Mr. Speaker.

When will the Premier wake up? When will he commit to an aggressive tax relief strategy for working Manitobans and for the businesspeople that are going to build a future for young people in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: I can handle the arrogance of the Leader of the Opposition who has already got himself, as part of the divine right of king's philosophy of the Conservative Party, elected to the office of Premier in this province. I remember the last leader in this House who had that kind of arrogance and, Mr. Speaker, it didn't bode well for that individual in the '95 election.

But the only thing worse than the absolute naked arrogance of the member opposite is his false statements on Hydro. He said yesterday on television that Ontario recently came out with the report on the long-term energy vision. There wasn't a single mention of Manitoba in it.

Will he stand in his place, apologize, admit he was wrong, admit he was wrong to the people of Manitoba? He should not have made this statement.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, again the Premier is full of sound and fury and signifying nothing. I think if anybody owes this House an apology it is the Premier for claiming that there were zero patients in Manitoba hallways when we know that there were many, many Manitobans languishing in Manitoba hallways last spring. The Premier owes this House an apology. He owes Manitobans an apology for misleading them about patients languishing in hallways more than seven years after he promised that he would get rid of the problem in six months.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's Throne Speech the Premier has learned some lessons. His big commitment is that he is going to do something by 2019, presumably in the hope that he will be out of office by the time he has a chance to break that promise.

Mr. Speaker, report after report has made it evident that Manitoba is rapidly losing ground to other western provinces. There were no new tax cuts announced in yesterday's speech. No signal, no indication that this government of Manitoba recognizes that we have a problem when it comes to tax competitiveness. We have an editorial in the *Winnipeg Sun* today saying that there were no plans announced or declarations made about the need to make Manitoba's tax rates more competitive with its neighbours.

In recent weeks, even Saskatchewan has taken aggressive steps. We have young people leaving for greener pastures, Mr. Speaker, in the form of places like Yorkton and Saskatoon.

What is the government's response? Only to recycle tax cuts already announced in the last budget. Mr. Speaker. Manitobans are tired of this do-nothing NDP government. Why won't the government take steps to make Manitoba more competitive so that young people view themselves as having a future right here in Manitoba?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite voted against the small business tax going from 8 to 3 percent. The

members opposite voted against their high taxes being lowered by us from 17 percent to 14 percent. The members opposite voted against our reduction in the middle-income tax bracket. Members opposite voted against—oh, big swagger, they raised farmers' taxes, but when we lowered farmers' taxes, they voted against it, Mr. Speaker. Of course, they are not with the farmers when it comes to the Canadian Wheat Board either.

Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite uses the term, "full of sound and fury and signifying nothing," I would point out that the only member opposite yesterday whose words meant nothing was the member opposite who falsely said, and I quote, it was on CTV last night and I am sure it was on other TV stations: Ontario recently came out with the report on long-term energy vision. There was not a single mention of Manitoba in it.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong. He is making false statements to the public of Manitoba. It was his first Speech from the Throne. Will he stand up and apologize?

* (14:20)

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, if there's any apologies needed in this House, it's from the Premier to apologize to the shareholders of Crocus who have been plundered of their savings.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter here written to the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), from which I would like to quote: I have been retired 12 years and this Crocus Fund was an important part of our retirement fund which we depend on. I know there are many, many people who are in exactly the same situation. Why is our government not addressing this issue? Are we just a voice in the wilderness?

My question is to the minister responsible for the Crocus Investment Fund. Why will he not call an inquiry?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we've debated this question several times. There has been a 245-page Auditor's Report with special powers under the new Auditor General's act that we brought in to specifically go into venture capital funds to see what's going on, to follow tax dollars wherever they go. We have an ongoing investigation by the RCMP; we have an ongoing investigation by the Manitoba Securities

Commission; and we have an ongoing investigation by the Canadian revenue collection agency. We brought in the best class-action consumer protection legislation in the country which allows for the fees of lawyers to be controlled and regulated by the judge to allow consumers to take action when they feel a private corporation has done something against their shareholder interests. That's why we are not calling an inquiry. We have these mechanisms in place—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cummings: Talk about arrogance, Mr. Speaker. None of those inquiries will address the culpability of this government.

I have a letter here, Mr. Speaker, directed to the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). It says that: I am a single mother trying to put my son through university. I was counting on that money invested in Crocus to help with those exorbitant costs. Worse yet, the funds that I invested in Crocus, I am still paying on the loan that I took out to buy. Why will this government not call an inquiry?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we did to protect people such as the individual, the mother who the member mentioned, was to ensure under the legislation that the rate of return was the primary focus in any venture capital fund. That confusion was created by members opposite when they had a very fuzzy set of objectives.

Now, with respect to her son or her children going to university, we've kept their tuition fees the third lowest in the country. We brought back the first bursary programs in this province so that going to university is affordable, and when they now graduate and stay in this province they can get 60 percent of their tuition rebated. That mother, that child, is far better off today than they were under the previous government.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, that kind of comment is cold comfort to that single mother. I have a quote here from a person who wrote to the now-Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh): We feel betrayed by our government because of the way it has handled, promoted the Crocus Fund. We'd like to see this Crocus scandal purposely put on the public agenda.

Will he answer these people by calling an inquiry?

Mr. Selinger: First of all, Mr. Speaker, the member calls the tuition fee rebate, the member calls tuition

fee reductions and the member calls bursaries cold comfort. They're actually cash in the pocket of students and their families. There is a big difference between our policies and their policies. We have done all the things required to ensure the sloppy legislation and the horrible arrangements in terms of economic deals. The \$34 million of losses that were entered into under the previous government cannot occur again by having clear objectives, proper monitoring and tighter legislation to control venture capital in this province. We are making sure that every Manitoban has lower taxes and better services for the future.

Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund Board Vacancies

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, retired teachers have gathered a number of times on the front steps of the Manitoba Legislature in the last couple of years asking for this government to take their issue of fair COLA seriously. Yet this government has turned its back on retired teachers.

Mr. Speaker, it's been more than a year and a half since the previous chairman of the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund resigned from the board and, as we understand, that chairmanship has not been replaced. There are also, as we understand, still vacancies on the board.

When will this minister take this situation seriously on behalf of retired teachers from Manitoba and replace those people on the board?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): We indeed take the issues of retired teachers seriously, and we have been very active on the file with respect to teachers' pensions. We've opened the act four times in our seven years in office, Mr. Speaker, and each time with the opening of that legislation we have made improvements to the teachers' pension fund. We have funded the unfunded pension liability which resulted in a credit rating increase here in the province of Manitoba, a \$3.2-billion unfunded liability that we inherited from some previous governments, and we are now funding them.

Mr. Speaker, we do take the issues of teachers' pensions seriously and will continue to work. I mention that to the teachers, that we have taken steps and will continue to take the next steps to improve the pension funds for teachers in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, there are several retired teachers here in the gallery today and several members on this side of the House who see this issue as a very important issue for retired teachers in Manitoba. Certainly they are aware of these vacancies and I am sure would be happy to help you out with those vacancies and actually sit on that board.

Certainly this minister has to take this situation seriously. When will he appoint a new chairperson to the board of TRAF and fill the vacancies that are currently there?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite were really concerned about teachers' pensions, why did they not put one nickel of employers' money into that plan during the entire period of office from '89 to '99 when they were in office?

Every single year that we have been the government we have put millions of dollars, hard cash, into an account for teachers' pensions. We have also improved the ability for teachers who were on maternity leave to buy back service. We have put cash into the fund. We have improved the benefits, and we have also increased our contributions by 1.1 percent, matched by the teachers.

Our measures are tangible. Our measures are real. Their rhetoric is hollow. Their contribution was zero for 11 years.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we have a new session, a new round of refusals by this government to call an inquiry to acknowledge its share of responsibility for the millions of dollars that hardworking Manitobans lost in the Crocus Fund.

The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), seems to have indicated he is interested in moving toward accepting his party's share of the responsibility in the Crocus fiasco, so why won't the Premier do the same?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite takes his little sidewinder at the Leader of the Opposition, he should recall that I think all of us do not like the situation when the shares were halted two years ago and the values went down. I certainly think that all of us want to see some of the companies that are successful. We've heard reports on National Leasing and other

companies that have value, return some shareholder value to the people.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the co-investment the member opposite made when he was in the federal Cabinet for Isobord has turned out to be the worst investment made. The federal government and the member opposite, the Member for River Heights, was there at the Isobord announcement. Premier Filmon was there at the Isobord announcement. At least three or four of the members opposite were there at the Isobord announcement.

We are not perfect like all the members opposite, but the one co-investment we had with Maple Leaf Distillers we have since—the member opposite said we would not get a nickel back. We have got all the money back plus the penalties, plus the interest with Maple Leaf Distillers. At least in terms of MIOP loans, the \$35 million lost by members opposite, we have not lost. We are making money on those loans.

The member opposite was involved in a co-investment in the largest loss in the Crocus Fund, so he should be very careful when he throws out allegations around this House, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is trying to divert attention from the fact that his government has repeatedly demonstrated an inability to figure out what a red flag or a conflict of interest is. Red flags were waved in front of the Premier's government with Crocus. They deliberately ignored them. They're made aware of conflicts of interest and they ignore them. They actually come out and acknowledge conflicts of interest and yet take no action.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that the failure of his government to grasp what a red flag means and that this is a leading reason for the loss of millions of dollars by Crocus shareholders?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that investments that Crocus made in companies that were successful were reasons why the Crocus Fund was reported to be doing well in some points. I remember media reports about the sale of the interests in the Angus Reid corporation here. I stated in a very positive way that I also believe that investments that were made in companies that lost money is the reason why shareholders lost money, as they would in any other mutual fund.

The member opposite was involved in the granddaddy of them all, the Isobord plant. We weren't involved in that. I would point out the member was there, you know, talking about turning straw into gold. Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, that did not happen, and for any member that invested in that share and thought that that was going to happen, I think it is regrettable.

The prospectus says the provincial government will not be responsible for any investments, does not endorse any investments. When civil servants were getting promotional material in their paycheque, we stopped, during the former government's years, we stopped that because we thought it was inconsistent with the prospectus. So I think all of us want to see the Crocus situation go forward with some of the companies that have value for the shareholders; but, certainly, the investments that lost money, the member opposite should take a good look in the mirror.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, for seven years this government has been running the province too recklessly. Right from the start, in 1999 and up to the 2003 budget speech, this government was pushing Crocus. In the early years of its mandate, this government had letters going out with people's paycheques pushing Crocus Investment even more than Canada Savings Bonds.

I table a letter, which is an extract of a letter I've received from a hardworking Crocus investor, a government employee. She received Crocus signup sheets with her government paycheque, Crocus literature with the Premier's old union, the Manitoba Government Employees' Union. She believed what she heard and read. Will the Premier do the honourable thing and admit to his government's responsibility in the Crocus fiasco?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises some issues that we have dealt with before the shares were suspended. The issue of putting promotional material in paycheques was started before we were in government, and we stopped it after we were in government.

The issue of having union reps paid for by individual unions or the government or by Crocus, I don't know the financial arrangement. We also put a stop to any civil servant going out on leave promoting this fund because it was inconsistent, in our view, with the prospectus that said that the government does not support any investments in Crocus.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite, I participated in the announcement of Maple Leaf Distillers; we got all our money back. The member opposite participated with Crocus and Isobord; it lost \$35 million. He participated and promoted Crocus more than any other member in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Funding to Literacy Programs

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, Martin J. Adler said, "Reading is the basic tool in the living of a good life." This quote is inscribed near the entrance to the Millennium Library.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The fire alarm is on so I would advise all—

An Honourable Member: Shut off the alarm.

Some Honourable Members: Fire alarm.

Mr. Speaker: The fire alarm is on so I would advise all members to leave the building.

If I could just have everyone's attention, it was just a false alarm. To be fair to the members that had followed my instructions and left, we will ring the chimes for one minute to allow the members to come back and then we will proceed with Members' Statements.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker: Order.

We will now revert to Members' Statements. I had recognized the honourable Member for Burrows, and because of the fire alarm interrupting we will allow the honourable Member for Burrows to start over again.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Reading is the basic tool in the living of a good life." These are Martin J. Adler's words which are inscribed near the entrance to the Millennium Library.

Apparently, the federal Conservative government doesn't believe in literacy or the good life because they recently cut \$17.7 million from the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program. In Manitoba, this has resulted in a cut of \$780,000 to adult literacy groups. These cuts have forced the closure of nine literacy programs in Manitoba, a shift in public policy that is totally unacceptable to the Manitoba government's mandate.

Without these literacy groups and their valuable volunteers, the wider socio-economic disparities that contribute to and arise from literacy inadequacies are not seriously being dealt with. We know that low literacy levels are a significant barrier to economic and social well-being. This limits people's ability to participate fully in the workplace and in broader society.

The effects of low literacy levels reproduce themselves. On average, those children who have parents with higher levels of education and literacy score significantly higher than those children whose parents have little or no education. This is significant for immigrant youth, especially children from war-affected countries where parents and guardians do not have the skills to engage their own children in their basic learning needs.

Mr. Speaker, these outcomes from literacy disparities are real. One out of every seven Canadians scored in the lowest literacy level in a recent federal survey. Forty-two percent of adults in Canada have literacy skills below the level considered the minimum to fully participate in a knowledge-based economy such as ours. In the face of these realities, the Manitoba government is dedicated to recognizing the contributions that literacy makes to our province. Currently, we provide funding to over 30 adult literacy centres and other community agencies.

The federal Conservatives' funding cuts have undermined the importance of reading and literacy to the lives of citizens of a democracy by taking away their ability to access self-help training programs. The federal government is taking away the very tools that citizens need to function as benefiting contributors to our society. Shame on them.

Louis Riel

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of Louis Riel, who has come to be seen as a combination of a martyr and a hero in the eyes of many Canadians. Today we commemorate this man on Louis Riel Day as he played a key role in the opening up of Canada's west.

While he is a controversial figure in the history of our province, the life and actions of Louis Riel shaped our province and for that we respect and acknowledge the great impact that he had on the province. Many Canadians, particularly the Métis, have reclaimed him as a heroic patriot, founder of Manitoba and a father of Confederation.

Louis Riel was the first great Métis leader in Canada, but it is also important to recognize that he fought for rights and representation for all Manitobans in the national government. It is important that all Manitobans recognize the contributions that early Métis settlers made to the creation of the province of Manitoba.

The feelings of western alienation that Louis Riel first championed are still an issue today. While the message and how it is delivered has changed in the 136 years since Manitoba joined Confederation, his feelings of western identity and the need for Manitobans to speak up and demand fair treatment are still carried forward today.

We all have a responsibility to remember the legacy of Louis Riel and continue to strive towards a nation that is built on tolerance, fairness, co-operation, sharing and generosity to all people. Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure to attend the Louis Riel Day ceremonies this morning with my leader, Hugh McFadyen, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the House on this very important occasion. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing another member I'd like to remind all honourable members, when making a reference to a member in this Chamber, it's to ministers by their portfolios and other members by their constituencies or the titles they hold.

Addictions Awareness Week

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker I rise today to speak about National Addictions Awareness Week. Addictions can have devastating consequences for individuals, their families and their friends. During Addictions Awareness Week, we bring attention to the problem of addictions and encourage people to make healthy living choices.

In October 1987, the federal Minister of Health and Welfare Canada, the Honourable Jake Epp, proclaimed the third week of November of each year as Drug Awareness Week. It was later expanded to encompass all addictions, not just substance abuse problems. While we are often familiar with substance addictions, process addictions are also a problem. They are an addiction to certain mood-altering behaviours such as gambling, excessive work habits, eating disorders and shopping. Their effects range from burnout, poverty and suicide to diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

The theme of this year's National Addictions Awareness Week is "The Courage to be Me." It focuses on process addictions and creating a safe and violence-free physical and social environment for children. When individuals choose to make positive changes in their daily life, they are then able to become role models for younger generations. This is how children can be raised to be healthy, active adults.

In this province, the Manitoba Addictions Awareness Committee is made up of 13 organizations who support community efforts to promote healthy choices about substance use, gambling addictions and other related issues. Every year they prepare a resource kit for schools, communities and workplaces and contribute to the physical health and health education curricula of students from kindergarten to grade 12. The Manitoba Addictions Awareness Committee also presents annual awards of distinction which recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding work in raising awareness around addictions. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all honourable members to promote prevention and education in their schools and communities as we highlight the difficult subject of addictions during this important week. Thank you.

Canadian Federation of Independent Business

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I take this time to extend on behalf of the House congratulations to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business on its 35th anniversary which it is celebrating here in the Legislature today.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been a strong advocate for small businesses across Canada and has played an important leadership role for over three decades. The provincial chapter here in Manitoba has advocated on behalf of its 4,800-plus members and has worked tirelessly to represent them and to create opportunities for them. Small businesses showcase the true entrepreneurial, innovative and hardworking spirit of our country. They are an important aspect of our economy and play a huge role in creating stronger communities, yet they continually face challenges in the new competitive global economy.

Having an organization that is so dedicated and committed to promoting their rights and expressing their interests is essential to ensuring that this valuable aspect of our society continues to thrive and to grow. I congratulate them on 35 years of work

well done and wish them continued success in the years to come. Now please join me in welcoming them here to the Manitoba Legislature to celebrate this important anniversary.

Louis Riel

Mr. Tim Sale (Fort Rouge): November 16 is Louis Riel Day, Mr. Speaker. This day commemorates a Manitoba leader whose life continues to inspire generations. Louis Riel was a man known for his devotion not only to the Métis people, but to Manitobans and to the ideals of justice, freedom and minority rights.

Plus tôt aujourd'hui, j'ai eu l'honneur de placer une guirlande à la cathédrale de Saint-Boniface à la mémoire de ce grand homme.

Translation

Earlier today I had the honour of placing a wreath at St. Boniface Cathedral in memory of this great man.

English

Riel, a devoted member of his community and a leader within the Red River settlement, understood that rights are something to be protected and cherished.

* (14:50)

As a leader in his community he was well aware that the rights of his people could be overlooked when negotiating entry into Confederation. Recognizing this potential, he worked to form a provisional government that drafted a list of rights. This list encompassed the priorities of the Red River settlement such as the protection of the French language and the protection of Métis land. It was these concerns that formed the basis of the Manitoba Act creating our province in 1870.

This year our government looks forward to continuing our work with the Manitoba Métis community and to expanding educational initiatives such as the Louis Riel Institute's Adult Education Program and the Standing Tall Program.

En nous souvenant de ses contributions à sa communauté et à notre province, et de ses grands idéaux, nous reconnaissons le prix qu'a payé Louis Riel pour ses convictions.

Translation

In remembering his contributions to his community and to our province, and his great ideals, we

acknowledge the price that Louis Riel paid for his convictions.

English

His life and his death are a legacy that reminds us of how thankful we ought to be for all those who continue to work tirelessly to protect their communities from injustice and who devote their lives to guarding minority rights. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Consideration of the Speech of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor (First Day of Debate)

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at the Fifth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to have moved the 2006 Throne Speech and speak in support of it. I believe it is a Throne Speech that develops a long-term plan and vision to address the challenges of the 21st century. This Throne Speech focusses on strategies to address the sustainability of our environment while ensuring that our economy continues to flourish and grow.

Since the voters of Manitoba chose us to lead this stunningly beautiful province seven years ago, we have continued to rebuild the health care system, focussed on ensuring we provide student-centered learning experiences in the early and secondary education systems and provided incentives for post-secondary education students to achieve their lifelong dreams of graduating from college or university.

This Throne Speech sets the stage for our province to capitalize on the opportunities presented to us while ensuring strategies are in place to address the challenges our province faces in the future, indeed continuing to build on Manitoba's clean energy advantage by committing to build the 1,250-megawatt Conawapa dam and ensuring that our infrastructure needs are prioritized for the highlights

of this year's Speech from the Throne. Further commitments were made to combat crime, increase immigration to 20,000 people annually in the next decade and invest in our youth.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to welcome our new interns, Emily Grafton, Christine Esselmont, Marie MacLellan, Akosua Matthews, Brendan Boyd and Arne Thorlacius. These young adults have achieved honour and distinction in their academic pursuits and are to be commended for their interest in politics.

I would encourage all MLAs to read their résumés which show a depth of knowledge about a wide array of different subject areas and a commitment to improving community life as demonstrated through their volunteer efforts.

These interns will prove to be a great addition to the Legislature and undoubtedly will be of great assistance to all members of this House.

I would also like to welcome our new pages who will be assisting with our work in this Chamber. *[interjection]* I will stop for a moment.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: As agreed to by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick) who has the floor because under normal circumstances we do not interrupt members that do have the floor, but she has agreed to allow me to introduce the Honourable John Baird, who is the president of the Treasury Board.

I would like to welcome you on behalf of all honourable members to our Manitoba Legislative Chamber.

* * *

Ms. Brick: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome our new pages who will be assisting us with our work in this Chamber. The position of a page requires patience and an ability to memorize names, as well as great map-reading skills to navigate the corridors of the Manitoba Legislative Building.

Akosua Matthews, who was the recipient of the St. Norbert MLA award in 2003 at Fort Richmond Collegiate and served as a page in the Manitoba Legislature, is now one of the interns for the Conservative caucus. It is my hope that the pages in the Legislature may someday follow the lead of Akosua Matthews who has decided that she would like to pursue a career in politics.

In my travels across the province, I have had the opportunity to talk to many pages who speak very favourably of their experiences in this building and refer to them as some of the most interesting times they have spent.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to welcome back the table officers. Over the last three and a half years I have had the pleasure of chairing numerous different committees for the Legislature. I want to thank the table officers for the fabulous job they do in assisting me with maintaining decorum and respect in these meetings. The Clerks for the committee always handle themselves in a very professional manner and provide well-researched advice to the chair that helps to maintain the success of our meetings. I would especially like to thank JoAnn McKerlie-Korol, who is no longer working as a table officer, and I would like to welcome Tamara Pomanski to her new position.

Mr. Speaker, our government has always taken a proactive approach to dealing with the challenges of living in a changing world. In the last three and a half years I have had the opportunity to attend several budget consultation meetings in both rural and urban settings. Without a doubt, the issue that resonates most often with Manitobans is health care. His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor admirably summed up our government's progress in health care and delivering better care sooner to Manitobans wherever they are in the province. Working in partnership with Manitoba's health care providers, educators and administrators, the strides that have been made, as His Honour noted, in training more professionals, expanding services in rural and northern locations, and in bringing down wait lists and wait times have been remarkable. The announcement that fees for inter-facility ambulance trips for patients living outside Winnipeg will be eliminated is yet another step in making our health care services more accessible.

New, expanded and upgraded medical facilities have played a large part in our progress. The \$100-million redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre is the largest such project ever in the province's history.

For a health care system to function well three things are required: a building to adequately house the patients, staff and equipment; health care equipment including CT scanners, dialysis machines, laser treatment machines and many other pieces of equipment; and lastly, and probably most

importantly, adequately trained and compensated staff who are motivated, interested and compassionate in the delivery of health care services to their patients.

The Manitoba government has been working hard on improving all three of these areas. New, expanded and upgraded medical facilities have played a large part in our progress. The \$100-million redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre is the largest such project ever in the province's history.

* (15:00)

We can also point to the rebuilt Brandon Hospital, something which the previous government promised repeatedly, but never delivered. Work has begun on the redevelopment of the Selkirk Mental Health Centre for those living with acquired brain injury and mental illness, and construction has begun on the \$30-million state-of-the-art cardiac care centre at the St. Boniface General Hospital. Across the province a total of 66 health care facilities have been expanded and modernized since we came to power.

Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled that my constituents will soon be seeing the benefits of an investment our province is making to expand the Emergency and Oncology departments of our local Victoria General Hospital, as well as providing the staff and patients with a library and a meditation room.

Now there is more good news for the community as the Mature Women's Centre begins its work in the Victoria General Hospital next month. Our government is contributing \$1 million to see the program relocated from the Health Sciences Centre to the Victoria General Hospital, purchase new equipment and hire additional staff. The centre will operate as a nurse-managed model of interdisciplinary clinical care, providing research and community linkage to a variety of other services. It will assist women with dietary and exercise support and osteoporosis screening and education. As Lois Glover, a nurse clinician with the centre, says, women often assume the role of caregiver for critically ill spouses, aging parents or sick children, so maintaining the health of this group is extremely important. Empowering mature women with knowledge, resources and support will allow them to make their own best choices for health care, resulting in a stronger community.

In terms of equipment for health services, we've installed 17 new or replacement CT scanners across the province and five MRIs. We were the first

province in Canada to acquire a gamma knife which reduces recovery time for brain surgery. There are now 116 new state-of-the-art ambulances, which will be serving communities across Manitoba. We've created a new command and control centre for our rural and northern emergency services in Brandon that ensures that the closest available ambulance is dispatched to emergency calls.

In terms of health care professionals, we can boast that there are now 200 more doctors practising in Manitoba than there were when our government came to power. We can expect that the number will grow thanks to our increasing capacity to train physicians. This will go from 70 to 100 seats, and our financial incentives for new physicians to take up practice in Manitoba will help us provide more doctors. Our government has more than quadrupled the number of nurses graduating since 1999 from 201 to 818. Not only did we reinstate the diploma RN program, which was cancelled by the previous government, but we also expanded nursing programs at the universities of Brandon and Manitoba, the University College of the North, Assiniboine Community College and Red River College. In the last three years alone, we added a further 190 technologists to our system.

All in all, Manitobans have solid grounds for placing more confidence in the province's health care services, and their confidence will grow as we continue to innovate and make strategic investments. As someone who is the vice-chair of the recent Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Task Force, and someone who has spent 25 years working for the City of Winnipeg in a variety of services, including the delivery of recreation programs, I am heartened by the announcement in this Throne Speech that legislation is being introduced to entrench Manitoba's Healthy Child Strategy in law. This strategy is working to provide Manitoba children with safe, stable and nurturing home environments, to ensure that they enjoy the best possible outcomes in later life.

Using the best evidence-based research available, the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet has established parent/child coalitions for parenting support, nutrition counselling and literacy programs, as well as the first prenatal child nutrition program in Canada, and a Baby First home visiting program for new parents. Just last June, it was singled out by the Health Council of Canada as an innovative and effective model for early childhood development.

The honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), who headed the Healthy Child Cabinet Committee for a number of years, was presented with a national medal earlier this month for his unparalleled efforts to improve the lives of Manitoba children by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. The Healthy Child Initiative is an example of a program that has been working very successfully as a community-driven initiative that allows area residents to identify the programs that they would most like to see funded.

The Fort Garry community network has assisted with funding to the following programs in the St. Norbert area: The Ryerson Family Centre, the south Family Resource Centre, the Parc La Salle Parent-Tot Centre and the Centre de la jeune enfance de Saint-Norbert at École Noël-Ritchot. These programs have all proved to be hugely popular and well attended by children in the area.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of our Healthy Child Strategy is part of our government's Healthy Child portfolio, about which I would like to say a few words. Yesterday, the day His Honour delivered the Speech from the Throne, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* published the dramatic results of one of the longest and largest studies of aging, involving nearly 6,000 males, over a period of 40 years. While many of the habits which contribute to longevity have been known for some time and, indeed, successfully promoted by our Ministry of Health Living, this study showed the dramatic consequences of adopting healthy habits.

The study was complex, and so I will mention just one set of figures that emerged from it. It found that men who drank excessively, were overweight, suffered from high blood pressure, smoked and had high levels of sugar and triglycerides in their blood would have only a 22 percent chance of living until 85.

However, those who drank little or no alcohol, were of healthy weight, did not smoke, exercised regularly, had normal blood pressure and normal blood sugar and triglyceride levels had a 69 percent chance of reaching 85. The study also pointed out that marriage is a risk factor. Men who were married tended to have an increased life span.

These research results highlight the significance of yesterday's announcement that our government will be expanding the groundbreaking work it has already done to recreate conditions and support

behaviours that help our citizens make healthier choices in their everyday lives.

While our government cannot act as a marriage broker, there definitely are things we can do to encourage the adoption of healthy living strategies. As a grad of the U of M with a Bachelor in Physical Education, and being a strong believer in health living, I have instituted seniors' fitness programs that have been hugely successful at the Eagles Club, and recently, following that success, a new program in Fort Richmond. This program has seen 70 people come out so that they can have a healthier life. I want to congratulate them.

One of the things that we can do is promote the development of recreation trails. As the Throne Speech mentions, our government will continue to partner with the Manitoba Recreational Trails Association and make further investments in the next phase of the Trans Canada Trail through Winnipeg. This is a particularly satisfying announcement for me, as I was responsible for introducing a resolution that passed unanimously urging the development of a trail system in Manitoba and acknowledging the hard work of hundreds of volunteers on these trails.

When our Premier announced a \$1-million contribution to the Manitoba portion of the Trans Canada Trail last September, the well-known broadcaster and chair of the Trail Foundation, Valerie Pringle, was in attendance. All Manitobans benefit from this, she said. Where there are trails, there is economic development and tourism, and it enhances the whole community. Manitoba is an example of that.

My own constituents now enjoy the recreational and health benefits of the Sentier Cloutier Trail, built with the help of many enthusiastic volunteers and a contribution from the provincial Community Places program. These trails have proven to be very popular.

I would like to especially thank Janice Lukes, Groupe Action Saint-Norbert and the Cloutier Drive Residents Association for ensuring this was possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus attention on the growing need to address the looming future crisis our planet is facing as it becomes increasingly stressed by the results of increasing environmental waste. It is no longer disputable that our planet is undergoing a change. We are facing serious future problems as a result of global warming.

Last year, I had the unique privilege of visiting the Canadian icebreaker, the *CCGS Amundsen*, which was in harbour in Churchill, Manitoba. The *Amundsen* serves as home to a group of scientists who work on behalf of ArcticNet, which is a network of centres of excellence of Canada that brings together scientists and managers in the natural human health and social sciences.

*(15:10)

These people work in conjunction with their partners in Inuit organizations, northern communities, federal and provincial agencies and the private sector to study the impacts of climate change in the coastal Canadian Arctic. Over 100 Arctic researchers from 27 Canadian universities and five federal departments collaborate with research teams in U.S.A., Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, Spain, Russia, Greenland and France.

According to ArcticNet, the ongoing studies show that the Earth's climate is warming, and the increase in average global temperature predicted by climate models will be amplified at Arctic latitudes. In Canada, climate warming will have tremendous environmental, social-economic and strategic consequences that will be felt first, and most severely in Arctic communities and territories. The reduction of coastal sea ice already hinders traditional hunting by Inuit, First Nations and Métis people and reduces the habitat of the unique Arctic fauna while increasing the exposure of coastal communities to storms. In the Arctic coastal environment, warmer temperatures and permafrost thawing are already disrupting transportation, building foundations and other infrastructures.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of dismay that I listened to the introduction of the Clean Air Act by the federal Conservative government. The proposed legislation is intended to eliminate Canada's previous commitment under the international Kyoto Protocol to start reducing greenhouse gases by 2008, with a new target to cut such emissions in half by 2050. How ironic that no later than three weeks later on Thursday, November 4, 2006, a Canadian-led research team called for a revolution the way the oceans are managed. These researchers have concluded that 29 percent of fish and seafood species are at a risk of being depleted if the world does not address the way in which fishing practices are undertaken. Boris Worm, head of the international team and a fisheries biologist at Dalhousie

University in Halifax, stated: "It has been tough slogging and we are dealing with ecosystems under significant change due to temperatures."

A warming trend is evidenced in the waters on all three Canadian coasts. To hear the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Environment Minister, defend the strategy the minority government is putting in place at the United Nations yesterday in her five-minute address to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, by blaming the previous Liberal government for leaving behind a mess in Canada was disheartening and showed the lack of importance our current federal government places on this file.

Outgoing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on voters to punish politicians who fail to fight for the environment. In his address to the conference, he stated that the climate change issue was one of the world's most pressing problems. Kofi Annan stated that climate change is not just an environmental issue, as too many people still believe; it is an all-encompassing threat, he said.

Robbie Robertson, an Aboriginal singer, has a song that states: We are standing at the edge of the world. Come on, brothers; come on, sisters; we are going to shake this town.

Mr. Speaker, our government has recognized the potential stated in the song, and, shown by evidence documented by Dr. Barber of the University of Manitoba, who helps to lead the team working on the *Amundsen*, we are working hard to address this situation today to head off future problems.

I am very proud to be a part of this government where our green and growing strategy has received international recognition.

Last year U.S. *BusinessWeek* magazine put Manitoba's climate change policies first among states and provinces in the world, and the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance awarded Manitoba the top grade in Canada for promoting and supporting energy efficiency. This Throne Speech continues on the good work our government has already done to date by providing \$2,000 rebates on the purchase of hybrid vehicles; increasing support for public transportation to help restore the 50-50 cost sharing formula between the provincial government and municipal governments—and the City of Winnipeg will receive \$12.6 million additional dollars of funding to support this undertaking; expanding on the very successful Power Smart programs to target

specific communities for retrofitting projects; and strengthening our protection of Manitoba's rivers and lakes by introducing the first ever limits on the application of phosphorus.

Moreover, our government has been very supportive of encouraging residents of Manitoba to undertake activities that encourage reducing, reusing and recycling.

For the last year and a half I have served as an active member of the Manitoba Round Table for Sustainable Development, serving as a subcommittee member on the composting committee. We are working towards the development of a seminar for businesses to encourage more active participation in composting initiatives. The government of Manitoba has been promoting the use of vehicles that are powered by alternate fuels.

On September 21, 2006, I was thrilled to join with students and teachers from Acadia Junior High and Fort Richmond Collegiate for a ride on the new hybrid fuel cell bus. This bus is a prototype, and the only one of its kind in the world. It is designed to use clean energy and promote the wave of the future in alternative fuel development, and it is developed right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, by New Flyer Industries.

Last month, I was pleased to join with other participants for the National Alternative Fuel Vehicle Day at Canad Inns in Polo Park. This trade show and seminar, which drew participants from across Canada, was sponsored by the Province of Manitoba. Shaun Loney, from the Energy Development Initiative with the Department of Energy, Science and Technology of the Province of Manitoba, spoke very eloquently about the fabulous initiatives being undertaken to encourage the use of fuels, including biofuels, as an alternative fuel source for transportation vehicles.

Ken Thomas from Hydro expanded on how Manitoba government's commitments to reduce greenhouse gases are being implemented by vehicles in the Hydro fleet. Without a doubt, Manitoba's biggest contribution to reducing greenhouse gas will be the development of the Conawapa dam.

The North American market is open for business. Manitoba Hydro has just announced a new, 10-year power sale arrangement with Northern States Power in Minnesota worth over \$2 billion. The new agreement, which will run from 2015 to 2025, shows the type of agreement that we can undertake.

Manitoba's position geographically is an excellent location to be a leader in the sale of clean energy. Burning coal to produce electrical energy is an obsolete idea, and the need for new power sources south of the border, and east and west, has been clearly demonstrated with the recent brownouts and power outages we have seen.

As our climate continues to get warmer, the need for energy to run air conditioners will continue to expand. Environmental sustainability requires the promotion of economic activity that is ecologically efficient, raises the level of society's economic welfare, and can be maintained over the long term. That is why the Manitoba government is partnering with businesses and communities to fuel economic growth that will capitalize on our clean energy and natural environmental advantages. We are building on the growing realization that measures to promote environmental sustainability can contribute to economic growth, and that enlightened economic growth can in turn contribute to environmental sustainability.

The Conawapa dam announced in yesterday's Throne Speech is but one part of our strategy. While the members opposite cry out at every opportunity for more tax cuts to spur economic growth, our government has rolled up its sleeves to implement the broad-based growth strategy framed with the help of the Premier's Economic Advisory Council.

We have been reshaping post-secondary education for the 21st century, targeting training programs in the cutting-edge industries that we want to encourage in Manitoba, such as digital multimedia communications, aerospace technology and medical sciences. We want to prepare our youth for jobs that will put the province at an advantage in the new economy.

Our government has also been encouraging research and putting this research in the hands of investors and entrepreneurs. Research in the emerging fields such as energy development, health care innovation, biotechnology and new food products has been paying off for Manitoba businesses in the last couple of years.

I would like to mention just one example of the kind of development that our government aims for, one that is happening in my own constituency. That is the new facility that DMT opened just last May at the U of M Smartpark.

DMT is a Winnipeg-based information technology company that specializes in the development of industry-leading entrepreneurial solutions for the automotive industry. It is a fine example of the ability of Manitoba's entrepreneurs to succeed and to be competitive in today's global marketplace. Over the last three years, Smartpark has stimulated over \$100 million in capital development, and is home to well over a dozen growing companies in high-tech sectors like information and communications technology, engineering and advanced materials, health and biotechnology and agriculture and nutritional sciences.

Our government's economic savvy can be seen in the numbers. Manitoba has created an average of 6,483 jobs a year, 126 percent improvement over the 1990s. More than half of the jobs created between 2000 and 2005 were in the private sector. Manitoba's unemployment rate averaged 4.8 percent in 2005, the second lowest in the country and the lowest since 1976.

* (15:20)

More youth are working in Manitoba today than at any time during the last decade reversing a disturbing trend that started in the 1990s. Our average youth unemployment rate in 2005 was the second lowest in the country.

Statistics Canada projects that this year Manitoba will lead all provinces in capital investment with over 14 percent growth, more than double the national growth of 6.1 percent. Since 2000, Manitoba's capital investment is estimated to have grown by 44.6 percent, the third biggest growth rate among the provinces behind only Alberta and British Columbia.

Only last week the Conference Board of Canada in its quarterly *Provincial Outlook* entitled its section on Manitoba simply as "Good News Story." It went on to say that Manitoba will enjoy solid growth over the next term supported by a stellar performance in several industries. Overall, real GDP growth is expected to reach 3.3 percent in 2006. These are the kinds of good things that happen when your economic vision includes but is not limited to tax cuts.

Mr. Speaker, fighting crime will continue to play a big role in the agenda of this government. I was so pleased to join with several of my colleagues recently at the Ralph Brown Community Centre for the announcement of several new Lighthouses sites.

For the last three years I have been working very hard, along with a group of dedicated volunteers, to develop a youth program in the St. Norbert area. I was so excited to hear that La Barriere Crossings School in St. Norbert will be home to a new Lighthouse program. Our government is committed to providing positive alternatives to gang involvement by the youth of our province. For example, the Throne Speech presented by His Honour continues our commitment by pledging to open five new Lighthouses sites, bringing this number of sites across the province to 50; expanding on the Police in Schools program; working hard to ensure Manitoba continues to be a leader in dealing with the issue of Internet luring and child pornography; and further developing the very successful Turnabout program.

Mr. Speaker, revitalizing our cities and ensuring that our infrastructure and transportation needs are being addressed is a priority of this government. The constituents of St. Norbert are pleased to have four major projects either recently completed or under construction; the expansion of the Red River Floodway to increase security from floods and protect the environment, the redevelopment of Highway 75, the reconstruction of the south Perimeter bridge to ensure safety and enhance traffic flow, and finally, the Kenaston underpass which eases traffic congestion thereby reducing travel times.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not express my very sincere appreciation to the constituents of St. Norbert who have elected me as their representative. I want to express my gratitude to them for giving me this opportunity. It is a profound honour for me to be elected to this House as the first member of our party to represent St. Norbert.

In 2003, after being elected, I was provided with the honour of seconding the Speech from the Throne for the first sitting of the 38th Legislative Assembly. Since that time I've been provided with the opportunity to co-chair the Capital Region Committee, serve as the vice-chair for the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures All-Party Task Force, chair numerous committees for the Legislative Assembly and work very hard for my constituents.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of St. Norbert for the trust they have shown me by electing me to be their representative. It is indeed an honour to serve my neighbours and friends as their representative in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for The Maples, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from the Lifesaving Society the Rescue Commendation Award recipients. They are from Souris, Manitoba, and I would like to introduce them to you: Brian Parham, Dan West, Randy Carlisle, Ken Kempthorne and Brad Rowat.

On behalf of all honourable members, I would like to welcome you here, but these are the guests of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat).

* * *

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to second a motion on the Speech from the Throne, and I am very pleased to follow my colleague, the Member for St. Norbert.

Before I continue, however, Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the Member for St. Norbert's welcome to our new legislative interns. They have been working hard and enjoying their experience here.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I also want to welcome as well the new pages. I hope their time here in the Chamber will be a pleasant experience. Also the table officers, I want to thank them for the occasional professional advice whenever I needed to chair something.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this Throne Speech continues to meet today's challenges and builds on a long-term plan. I believe this speech continues the vision and strategy this government has promoted since the voters turned to us to lead this great province seven years ago. Since we were elected in 1999 we have been called upon to guide Manitoba through a changing world. This Throne Speech acknowledges the challenges and opportunities our province faces in the future. Indeed, building Manitoba's clean energy advantage, investing in Manitoba's youth, and increasing immigration along with new legislation on qualification recognition were all highlighted in this year's Speech from the Throne, while further commitments were made to combat crime, deliver better health care sooner, revitalize cities and grow rural and northern Manitoba. Our government has

always taken a pro-active approach to dealing with the challenges of living in a changing world. We do this to protect the interests of all Manitobans and to position ourselves for a brighter future.

This government has reinvested in health care facilities and programs that were cut during the 1990s. Indeed, over \$1 billion has been invested to build and modernize our health care infrastructure since 1999. I am especially pleased that Seven Oaks Hospital will benefit from our forward planning as we work to renovate its emergency room. The groundbreaking for this project is scheduled to begin within a few months. The effort we have made over the last seven years to train and keep health care professionals in the province means that Seven Oaks's new emergency room will have nurses and doctors to work in it. Since 1999 our human resources strategies have contributed 200 more doctors and 1,300 more nurses practising in Manitoba. In addition, 200 more specialists have been recruited to work in the province. This is excellent news for the special units such as the oncology and the dialysis unit in Seven Oaks Hospital. Our health care strategies also have resulted in an overall decrease in wait times and wait lists. Manitoba is not only innovative in its approach to health care, but also in its approach to emergency management.

Manitoba was the first Canadian province to develop a climate change action plan, and we pushed the federal government to ratify the Kyoto Accord. As a result, Manitoba is seeing a remarkable growth in new renewable energy, a new initiative to reduce the harmful greenhouse gases. Manitoba has become the North American leader in geothermal installations, and the first wind farm has already been completed in St. Leon. A future target of 1,000 megawatts from wind energy has been announced. We are also moving forward with the Wuskwatim and Conawapa dams, and we reached a new 10-year power sale agreement with Minnesota.

Additionally, we are expanding our ethanol production, and we will be updating the bio-fuel act and expanding biodiesel production in Manitoba. Our commitment to diversifying our energy sources has ensured that, despite living in a harsh climate, Manitobans pay some of the lowest rates in the country to heat their homes. Because Manitoba Hydro is publicly owned, Manitoba benefits from low energy costs and dependable high quality energy to power homes and workplaces. Our government has reiterated its commitment to keep Manitoba

Hydro owned by Manitobans for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Along with a green-based energy strategy we are also working to protect our environment and the natural beauty of Manitoba. We have created the new water protection framework that calls on all Manitobans to do their part in cleaning up our lakes and waterways. We are supporting the development of technologies that will support environmentally sustainable livestock operations, and we continue to protect Manitoba's water from proposed diversion projects that could introduce foreign biota.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also trying to employ our green strategies at the local level. For example, in The Maples, the Seven Oaks Hospital is participating in a unique water-saving project. Clean water, a by-product of the hospital dialysis unit's filtration of city water, is used to supply steam sterilization for surgical instruments and supplies. This project has reduced water usage by 15 percent daily, which is equivalent to 5,800 gallons per day.

A new emphasis on competitiveness, training and trade will focus attention on areas where there is great demand for workers. We have made some important progress by reversing steady population losses and recording a net population gain. During the last six years we have steadily increased our labour force, but, of course, more needs to be done. Fortunately, Manitoba's low unemployment and competitive living costs are factors helping to attract newcomers. So are our innovative strategies on immigration.

An important component in supplying the skills our economy needs is international immigration. A large part of this province's economic growth is due to the growth in immigration. Immigrants have chosen to make Manitoba their home and to contribute to its economic health. In the coming months, Manitoba will reach the target we set at settling 10,000 newcomers annually thanks to the concerted efforts of governments, employers, educators and communities. Our programs have been so successful that we plan to double the current level in the next decade by adding an additional 1,000 immigrants to the target each year for the next 10 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, The Maples is a favourite destination of new Manitobans, and I know how important immigration is to the economic health of my constituency, my city and my province. I am therefore very pleased that we will be making even

more efforts to settle and integrate newcomers into the province. New funding will be provided for settlement services and targeted training.

Additionally, new legislation will be introduced to spur the recognition of qualifications, a cause that is very important to me.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to maximize the benefit of immigration we need to ensure that immigrants can fully utilize the skill they brought with them. In the year 2000 a national conference on Canadian immigration was convened, and one of its recommendations was, and I quote: Government, business and professional associations need to co-operatively address the issues surrounding accreditation.

Barriers are created when the skills and education of immigrants are not recognized and their economic and social contributions to the community are not maximized. We must create a society that appreciates the skill and expertise that immigrants bring into Manitoba and we must provide recognition of their skills in order to make them feel welcome. We must ease their transition into a new place, a new environment and help them restart their lives and careers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is dedicated to the well-being of our communities and the families that comprise those communities. Accordingly, we will introduce legislation to enshrine our Healthy Child strategy which will ensure the continuation of youth and early-years programming implemented since 1999. As a former chair of a day care facility, I entirely support our objective to strengthen child care options, and I know that child care centres in my constituency and everywhere in Manitoba appreciate investments we are making in our children.

I am pleased that our government will be increasing access to the Manitoba Legislature for citizens with disabilities. The construction of a Tyndall-stone ramp at the front entrance will improve access for those who have difficulties climbing the steps. In my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to report that The Maples is a host to both the Bill Arnott and the Tranquility housing co-ops for people with wheelchairs and with other disabilities. It is important that we work to ensure accessibility for all citizens.

We will continue to enhance community support services for seniors, making it possible for older

Manitobans to stay in their own homes and live life on their own terms. We will be expanding a popular program that provides safety audits to seniors and safety aids such as deadbolts, peepholes and non-skid bathmats.

It is important for everyone to feel safe and secure whether they are in their homes or outside being active which is why we are working hard to continue to reduce crime rates. We have a three-pronged strategy to reduce crime, that is, prevention, presence and consequences.

In order to help prevent youth crimes, we have created many after-school youth recreation programs, including the popular Lighthouse programs. In my constituency, the Maples Youth Activity Centre has schools and community places open six days a week for youth to gather and have fun in a safe and supervised environment. We have also invested in our police forces, providing resources for additional police so that they can maintain a greater presence in Manitoba communities. Additionally, we introduced Turnabout, the only program of its kind to provide both help and firm consequences for children under 12. To date, 90 percent of the youth sent by police to Turnabout have not re-offended and the program is viewed as a leading model across Canada. Finally, last month we have launched the new Spotlight Program, which provides intensive supervision to youth involved in gangs, and also provides services to youth to help them transition out of gang life by returning to school, finding a job and dealing with substance abuse.

Our government has recognized the need to revitalize our cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are in a record construction boom, and it is important that we plan for the future by investing in our cities today. In The Maples, the Amber Trail area is experiencing a housing boom. We have also invested in recreational trails, and I know the people from my constituency benefit and enjoy the Hearts in Motion walking trail in the area.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled that our government continues to make Manitoba an attractive place for companies to do business, and affordable for individuals by lowering income tax rates. Lowering the middle-income tax rate to 13 percent represents a 22 percent cut since 1999. The announcement that seniors will be allowed to split eligible pension income when doing their provincial income tax will save pensioners an estimate \$11 million annually. I know that my constituents, and indeed all Manitobans, appreciate having more money in their pockets.

**(15:40)*

Mr. Speaker, it is my opinion that The Maples represents Manitoba in a changing world more than any other constituency in our province. It serves as a virtual cultural mosaic inhabited by skilled and talented people from all over the world and from all walks of life. I am proud to have been given the opportunity to represent the constituency of The Maples, and I want to thank them for their continued support and confidence in me.

Mr. Speaker, our government is dedicated to inclusion and diversity. By including new Canadians and, indeed, all Manitobans in our hopes and dreams for the future, I believe that we can build a strong Manitoba in a changing world. I believe that this Throne Speech outlines how we can achieve that. Thank you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 16, 2006

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