

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

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

Vol. LXIII No. 5 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, November 22, 2010

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
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ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 22, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 3—The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act
(Denying Compensation to Offenders
and Other Amendments)**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister responsible for Healthy Living, that Bill 3, The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act (Denying Compensation to Offenders and Other Amendments); Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes (refus de versement d'indemnités aux auteurs d'infractions et autres modifications), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill contains several amendments to part 5, Compensation for Victims of Crime of The Victims' Bill of Rights Act. These amendments will provide the victims' assistance program with the ability to deny benefits to individuals with criminal convictions for serious offences. These amendments will also provide greater clarity in terms of the benefits for victims, family members and witnesses affected by crime.

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

**Bill 201—The Personal Information Protection and
Identity Theft Prevention Act**

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I move, seconded by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 201, The Personal Information Protection and Identity Theft Prevention Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Taillieu: This bill governs the collection, use, disclosure and destruction of personal information by organizations in the private sector. It also establishes a duty for those organizations to notify individuals who may be affected when the personal information the organization has collected is lost, stolen or compromised.

Mr. Speaker, it has now been five and a half years since I first introduced this bill. We have seen advances in technology, social networking sites and alarming breaches of personal information. Personal information is the new currency in the crime of identity theft and identity fraud. Protecting this information is very important. I urge the government to support this bill and fill the gap in privacy legislation in Manitoba.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting the Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect

the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by B. Durston, G. Sylvester, C. Pittman and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Bipole III Project

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts, regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable and cost taxpayers an additional—at least an additional \$1.75 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with a shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by H. Vanstone, G. Foxon, L. Diow and many, many more Manitobans.

Rapid City Reservoir and Catwalk

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Province of Manitoba has a role in providing maintenance to artificial water reservoirs.

The purposes of the Rapid City reservoir are: water conservation, recreation, stock watering as well as maintaining water levels in wells.

Due to the low water level and the amount of vegetation in the reservoir, it is no longer usable for recreation activities such as canoeing or swimming.

Due to the amount of silt buildup and vegetation in the reservoir, the use of the Rapid City Fish Ladder, needed for the natural upstream migration of fish, is inhibited, reducing the fish count from 2,300 in 1999 to 15 in 2008.

The catwalk structure spanning the Rapid City spillway, used by children to get to and from the school, was damaged when planks were incorrectly pulled from the spillway by the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation and has yet to be replaced.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider dredging the Rapid City reservoir as soon as possible.

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider replacing the Rapid City catwalk structure as soon as possible.

* (13:40)

This petition is signed by B. Finlay, K. Atkinson, B. Hales and many, many others Mr. Speaker.

Bipole III Project

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days

later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable and cost ratepayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We position the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with a shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory reprovalls, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this is signed by F. Taylor, R.H. Moar and B. Morriseau and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those involved in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Uliczko, J. Gilarska and L. Konieczna and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Murdoch Mackay Collegiate, we have 28 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Dudek. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Lord Selkirk School Division Youth Parliament, we have 29 grade 7 students under the direction of Ms. Katelyn Blais and Ms. Esther Van De Wall. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cardiac Surgery Program Nursing Staff Requirements

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): We were concerned to learn on Friday, for those 127 Manitobans and their families who are currently waiting for cardiac surgery, to learn that at St. Boniface Hospital, which has a specialized program in cardiac surgery, that there was a high number of patients waiting, that the program was unable to meet those patients' needs, and that this happened as a result of a shortage of cardiac nursing staff.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) how it is that they could've failed so badly to ensure that these patients awaiting cardiac surgery would get the care they need by having the appropriate levels of cardiac nursing staff available to care for these patients, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health): It's extraordinary that the member opposite, who

presided over a decimation of nursing in this province, that saw 1,500 nurses eliminated, would now be standing up and saying, gosh, you've trained 2,500 more nurses in Manitoba since you've been in government—

An Honourable Member: And that's not enough.

Mr. Chomiak: And that's not enough.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the cardiac program, it was in tatters during the '90s. We had to rebuild the program. We've doubled the number of surgeons. We've doubled the number of cardiologists in the program. Let me repeat again, we didn't close the medical school, to the member opposite; we doubled the number of cardiac surgeons; we doubled the number of cardiologists; and the wait list times are within the framework set up by Koshal, who looked at it and made recommendations to it that we followed.

Mr. McFadyen: And nowhere in that fog of misinformation and irrelevance was there anything that would provide comfort to those 127 people currently awaiting cardiac surgery.

We've got a shortage of nurses in the cardiac program according to the St. Boniface Hospital. They say, and I quote, there are a high number of patients waiting for surgery. We're not able to meet their needs currently because of staffing vacancies.

How is it, Mr. Speaker, that after spending \$30 billion over the last 11 years, they can continue to fail Manitoba families and particularly those on the waiting list for cardiac surgery?

Mr. Chomiak: Firstly, Mr. Speaker, we will not do what the Leader of the Opposition said, and that is to balance the books in one year and eliminate half a billion dollars in one year, which would mean no doctors, no nurses, no police officers would be hired. We do not intend to go back to that weird and very difficult time in Manitoba history.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the cardiac wait lists that we put on—we put out as a result of the Koshal recommendations—shows a wait list of 127, which is within the recommendations of the Koshal report. And I might add, we aren't cancelling weeks and weeks of surgery, as happened when the member opposite was chief of staff to the then-premier of Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Once again, in this desperate fog of misinformation coming from the Iraqi information minister, we have no response to the—

Mr. Speaker: Iraqi—order. All members by now should know that all members are honourable members and they should be addressed as such. I ask the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to withdraw that comment.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that comment.

Mr. Speaker: Please continue.

Mr. McFadyen: In response, Mr. Speaker, what those 127 families are looking for is some explanation as to how it is that 11 years in, the government has not been able to meet staffing requirements for an important area like cardiac surgery, and rather than providing responses in the House that would be akin to those that might be provided by the Iraqi information minister, why won't the minister provide a direct response to Manitobans that's clear, focused, relevant and deals with the immediate issue before us for those 127 Manitobans and their families currently on the waiting list?

How could they have failed so miserably after spending some \$30 billion over the last 11 years? Why do we have this problem in our cardiac program after 11 years of NDP government? How could they have failed?

Mr. Chomiak: Therein, Mr. Speaker, the question and the comments by the Leader of the Opposition shows the reckless—the way—the reckless fashion in which the Leader of the Opposition and the now-Conservative Party, which used to be a Progressive Conservative Party, but which is the mean-spirited Conservative Party, ought not to ever be in power in this province again. Reckless, mean-spirited.

* (13:50)

I remind the member, there are no patients over the medically recommended bench times that were not in place during the reckless, mean-spirited years of the Tories, Mr. Speaker. We have doubled the number of cardiac surgeons. We have doubled the number of cardiologists. We have 2,500 more nurses now.

When the member opposite was the chief of staff to the then-premier, Mr. Speaker, this is a reason why the reckless attitude and the reckless comments of the member ought to be—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

**Crocus Investment Fund
Accountability**

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, the minister knows better. I—we know that they're desperate as they approach an election campaign. But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that he knows better than what he's saying.

Mr. Speaker, we—on another matter, we know that Crocus collapsed over five years ago. Thousands of Manitobans lost a lot of money. Insiders knew that Crocus was heading to a liquidity crisis, but they were not forthcoming with the people of Manitoba. Those people deserved forthcoming, honest answers about what was happening at Crocus; they didn't get them from those who had inside information.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there was a rushed Auditor General's report and that to date there has been no accountability for what happened in connection with this massive failure to disclose to Manitobans.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Will there be accountability at any time in the Province of Manitoba for the massive failure to those people who they owed a duty to, a duty of transparency, a duty of honesty, a duty to protect their incomes? Will there be accountability, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): Well, in the last answer, the Leader of the Opposition called my colleague here a terrorist. You know, Mr. Speaker, that's pretty unacceptable for members opposite, but that sort of shows you the desperate levels that this leader—that the Leader of the Opposition will stoop to. Nothing is too low for him; he's at the bottom of the barrel.

And I will say to him, Mr. Speaker, that in this situation, I think that Manitobans look clearly at what this government is doing and the way we have addressed each of these situations, and they would not go back to the reckless steps that the members opposite have taken.

Mr. Speaker, they'll look very closely at what the members opposite said, where they're going to reduce the budget by \$500 million—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is a charming individual who is not a terrorist. The Iraqi information minister is similarly charming. He actually lives in the United States now; I think he's doing quite well. He never was a terrorist, but he did have some disconnect with facts from time to time. That's the only issue where there's a comparison.

And so I want to just say—I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the government: Can they address the issue of accountability to those thousands of Manitobans who have lost money, who have never seen accountability on the part of those people who owed them a duty, those insiders who knew that Crocus was headed for a liquidity crisis? Will there be accountability, or are we just going to get more silliness from members opposite?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): It's a little disconcerting that the member opposite would dismiss the work of the Auditor General, which was one of five lenses under which the Crocus Investment Fund had been examined, and for him to dismiss it was rather disconcerting, Mr. Speaker, and reckless, but we're getting used to that habit from members opposite.

And we're very pleased that 95 per cent of the court-approved interim distribution to shareholders has been claimed by Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. This represents \$51.6 million, and we're very pleased that this has been addressed thus far.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the incorrect information arises from the fact that the Auditor General's report was done—and it was deliberately done to see if the fund could be revived. It was deliberately done in a very rushed and a very cursory manner. It never looked into issues of accountability, and the former auditor general was very clear in that report that it was designed to be done quickly, it was designed to skim the surface to see if the fund could be saved. It was never done to establish accountability for those insiders who failed to make disclosures to investors.

And I want to ask the government today: Will there be accountability to the—for those thousands of investors who lost money, not just for the sake of their interests, Mr. Speaker, but for the sake of future investors in Manitoba companies who want to know that directors and insiders have a duty to disclose

relevant information, because if there's no accountability for Crocus, there'll be no accountability going forward and thousands more people will run the risk of losing money as a result of their failure? Will there be accountability? Yes or no.

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, and certainly the Auditor General's report, the Manitoba Securities Commission investigation, the RCMP investigation—this has been looked at through five different lenses. The process has been in place now for court-approved interim distribution to shareholders.

As I said, 95 per cent has been addressed. The government is encouraging the remaining shareholders to contact Deloitte and Touche to claim their fair share of the distribution that might be outstanding. We brought in legislation and acted on the recommendations of the Auditor General, and it was our government that has put accountability back into the Crocus act. It was their government that introduced a false—a flawed act.

Football Stadium Cost and Funding Options

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question. Manitobans are looking for accountability and transparency in terms of how their tax dollars are being used. We see this government failing in health care. We see this government failing in terms of accountability for people's pensions. On the same day as they put out information about pensions, Crocus shareholders are being told that they—there may never be accountability for their losses.

And on the issue of accountability to the taxpayers, here we are, Mr. Speaker, 236 days since the original stadium photo op and no answers for taxpayers about what they're going to get by way of a facility, what it's going to cost and who's going to pay for it.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger), 236 days since the photo op, with ongoing concern on the part of taxpayers, ongoing concern about—in terms of the impact on the Blue Bombers, when are they going to provide some clarity on three basic questions: What are we getting? How much is it going to cost? Who's going to pay for it?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Deputy Premier): Well, I know, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite,

although he didn't support the arena when it was being built, he criticized it, but he then came out and drank martinis with everybody.

We know that the member opposite would really like to see the stadium fail. That's just their agenda. Well, our agenda is different, and we have said we support—we want to see a first-class football stadium built. We want to work with the different partners, and that is what we have said that we are doing. And I would ask the member to just be patient, all of the details will be revealed. But I can tell the members opposite that even though they won't move this province forward, even though they killed the arena—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, and again under the category of misinformation, the arena debate took place before I was elected and so I don't know where she gets her information from. But I am happy to say the last time I was at the MTS Centre, I was joined by several NDP Cabinet ministers, including the former NDP leader who got up and gave a toast to the private MTS here in Manitoba at the MTS Centre. I remember the former premier paying tribute to the great success of the publicly traded private MTS at the MTS Centre at a recent public event.

I really like the MTS Centre, but what I'm wondering, and what taxpayers are wondering, what Bombers fans are wondering, is when is this government going to show just a modicum of management, of responsibility and transparency on the issue of the stadium and let everybody know what are we going to get, what's it going to cost, who's going to pay for it? Why are they struggling so much with those three basic questions?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, I'm glad the member corrected the record that he was not in the room with the Conservatives when they were making the decision not to support the arena, Mr. Speaker, and that he was probably there with them drinking wine when the arena was built. We know he was there, but we know his colleagues that he sits with now did not support the arena.

* (14:00)

I want to make it clear that this government is working in partnerships with all the partners to find a solution as to find a way to move this project forward. I would ask them to be patient. The solutions are out there. We're working with partners, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our government is not going to do what the members opposite would do. We know that his party is against saving the boreal forest. They're against—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: We're no closer to any kind of a response on the issue before us in terms of the stadium deal. We're now at 236 days since the original photo op and no amount of fog coming from the member opposite is going to move us closer to dealing with the real issues here.

We have Manitobans from all walks of life, people from across the province who are following the issue, people who are interested in the success of the Blue Bomber football club, who want to see something done at the existing stadium and yet are left waiting as the government flounders around on this file.

Why have they failed on the count of telling us what we're going to get, what it's going to cost and who's going to pay for it? Why such failure to address these three important questions for the people of Manitoba?

Ms. Wowchuk: On one hand the Leader of the Opposition says he wants to see success and on the other hand he says—he's been out there, Mr. Speaker, he's been out there slamming this project. He has never—he wants to see the Bombers succeed. For the Bombers to succeed the Bombers need a stadium, and the Bombers are at the table. The Bombers are at the table as a partner, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know where the member opposite wants them to play, but the stadium that we have now is very outdated, very outdated, Mr. Speaker. There is need for a new stadium and the members opposite continue to be the ones who are against this project because that's all you can see from them. They continue to criticize the stadium just like they criticize all of the other good—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Phoenix Sinclair Death Public Inquiry

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's been five years since the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair and we know that nothing this House can do can bring back that young girl's life, but what this government can do is to ensure that the lessons are learned through a public inquiry, lessons that would ensure this tragedy doesn't happen again.

This Minister of Justice seems content to stall this inquiry while a legal moon shot to the Supreme Court takes place by one of the convicted killers. Why won't he just admit today that the criminal damage has already been exposed through a trial and he's simply trying to mitigate the political damage by stalling this inquiry?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern. This is a terrible case, and, indeed, the promise has been made. There'll be a full inquiry to get all the circumstances surrounding this tragedy and to also continue to make improvements in the child protection system in Manitoba. But the member from Steinbach ought to know that there remains the possibility of an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court of Canada can do any one of a number of things. If they were to entertain the appeal and if they were to hear the appeal, they could actually order a new trial of that case. And the concern is that an inquiry could very well taint—could damage that evidence, and could, in fact, impact the successful prosecution.

So, like the member opposite, I want this to go forward, but not at the expense of properly prosecuting this case, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Our fear is that the Minister of Justice doesn't want this to go forward at the expense of their government and political damage, Mr. Speaker.

It's already been said that there's legal wrangling over the funding of a possible appeal. The executive director of Legal Aid is now saying, perhaps in an unprecedented statement, that he would be shocked if funding was approved because this appeal has no merit. It's a waste of time; it's a waste of money.

Mr. Speaker, the appeal is not grounded in the facts of the case. The criminal facts around this case have already been exposed. Legal Aid doesn't believe that there is grounds to fund this desperate appeal and all the while the lessons that could come from this inquiry go unlearned and children are at risk.

Doesn't it seem strange to the minister that the only people who are benefiting from this ridiculous delay are the members of his government?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, let me say very clearly that we are not going to put a headline or a sound bite

ahead of making sure that justice is done and there is a successful prosecution in this case. There exists the possibility of an appeal to the Supreme Court. There exists the possibility of the Supreme Court undoing the judgment and ordering a new trial.

In Manitoba it has been the consistent practice that inquiries of this type do not go ahead until the criminal proceedings are finished. We are not going to proceed until we are certain that the avenue of appeal to the Supreme Court is done. We are doing that to protect the prosecution of this case. We do take it seriously and we will continue to improve child protection in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Appointment of Commissioner

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, the government is protecting its own interest when it should be protecting the interest of children.

He knows full well that once the commissioner is appointed there is much work to be done. There needs to be a mandate established, terms of reference, the commissioner needs to get organized, establish a schedule for the inquiry and have the legal experts in place for the inquiry. Perhaps this minister is hoping that all of this will take place after a judgment is rendered on this government in an election to come.

But this government needs to be sure and needs to determine why it is that Legal Aid is saying that this is a crapshoot. That this particular appeal is simply a Hail Mary and shouldn't be going to forward. And he needs to appoint the commissioner. Instead of me and him debating in this House, appoint the commissioner and let the commissioner decide if the inquiry should go forward.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I'll tell the member opposite—I'll explain to the member opposite for the third time. There is a pending appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada which could result in the conviction being overturned and a new trial being ordered. We are not going to take the risk of that occurring. Certainly, I believe most Manitobans are hopeful there will not be an appeal, and if there is an appeal, it will not be successful. But we are not going to put in jeopardy the successful prosecution of this case.

The commission of inquiry will be appointed. That commissioner will be given the right and the ability and the control to structure the inquiry the way the commissioner believes should be done to get

to the bottom of this tragic situation. We are going to move carefully and properly to continue to improve child protection. We're not going to be seeking headlines like the member opposite always does, Mr. Speaker.

Student Attendance Rates Enforcement

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): After 11 years of watering down Manitoba's education system, the Education Minister thinks she's found the key to solving Manitoba's dropout rate, which is now the second highest in Canada. In a desperate move, the minister was looking at new legislation to keep kids in school.

I ask the minister: How can she explain—how is she going to enforce her new law requiring kids to stay in school until the age of 18?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to improve on our public education system by increasing the number of programs and services that we have in place. Last year in our budget we provided \$600,000 for a Student Success Initiative in three school divisions, and that provides teacher mentors to school children in grade 9 where we know that that is where they sometimes become disengaged with schools. Those teachers are working with those students to engage them in schools.

And I just want to remind members opposite that \$600,000 program that we implemented last year in our budget, they voted against it.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada have clearly shown this NDP government have failed our children. Under their watch we've gone from middle of the pack to having the second highest dropout rate across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have had fines in place for a number of years for children under 16 not attending school, but school divisions have never enforced that. Does the Minister of Education really believe that fining parents is the best way to keep our kids in school?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we should provide an education system that supports our students. And we believe that if we provide programs and services for students that can meet their educational achievement level that we can keep more kids in school and keep them engaged in school.

* (14:10)

Maybe he missed the front page of the *Winnipeg Free Press* on Friday where students said this is a good idea. Maybe he didn't consult with anybody. Has he talked to any educators about this?

And I just want to remind him that the fines that are in place right now in The Public Schools Act were fines put in place by Premier Duff Roblin in 1965, and the last time I checked, he's a Tory.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, after 11 years of inaction, this certainly appears as desperate window dressing on behalf of the NDP. Now, we know the government doesn't keep absentee rates. We know the government hasn't done their due diligence on this particular file.

I'm asking the minister: How is she going to enforce her legislation and why has she refused to do the proper due diligence on this file?

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, we will work with our education partners to develop this legislation—unlike, I might add, what went on in the '90s when there was historic underfunding, when there was no money put into the teacher pension account, when they fired 700 teachers, when—and I just want to remind them that our mandatory phys. ed. program, they called it a gimmick. Well, their minister of Education, during their watch, wanted to cancel recess. Shame. So we're going to continue to make our public education system in Manitoba reflect a public education system that is going to make our students successful.

We've increased our graduation rate to over 81 per cent. We're going to keep working at it and make it the best education system in the world.

Livestock Producers Compensation

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, many Manitoba livestock operations were hammered by excess moisture this year; made it very difficult for producers to gather feedstocks, pastures, forage stands were damaged and there were herd health issues as well during the wet conditions.

In mid-August this Minister of Agriculture promised Manitoba cattle producers a compensation package by the end of August. Mr. Speaker, it's now the end of November, no aid has flowed. The minister will concede that he has failed on this file. Will he tell the livestock producers, today, how much they're going to get in aid and how the package is going to flow?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's about time you asked a question on agriculture. It seems for these folks across the way everything else is a priority except rural stuff and agriculture recently. So I congratulate the member for Lakeside for coming forward on that, but he needs to be careful on what he comes forward with because we know that—we know it's been a tough year for the livestock producer and the grain guys in terms of the amount of water that we've received this spring and summer.

We know that, and I've offered to work with members across to work forward on that, and that's what we're doing. The problem right now is we're waiting for his federal cousins in Ottawa to sign on the dotted line with us, because we're ready to go.

Mr.—Minister Ritz was in Winnipeg at the end of last week. We talked about that. He promised to move as quickly as he could—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, time and time again we have called for this government to do something in regards to the livestock producers in this province. The minister tries to blame the federal government for his failure to address this aid package.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, did he ask for freight assistance? Did he ask for head payment? Did he ask for funding for pastures, restoration of pastures? What is this government prepared to do for our livestock producers without blaming the federal government? Take some leadership on this file and do the right thing and announce the package.

Mr. Struthers: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we've talked to the federal government about everything from tax deferrals, which, to the credit of the federal minister, he did announce; it included members—a constituent of the member opposite, and we've worked with the federal government on that. We've talked about a per head payout with the—along with the federal government. We've talked about a tax—or a travel—transportation subsidy with the federal government. They've been co-operative, working with us. The people who seem to be out of step are members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, what we see is a tired desperate government that don't know what they're doing. They don't know leadership. We've asked time and time again. The minister goes out and puts

out a press release that he's met with the cattle producers. There'll be a package by the end of August. There has not clearly been that happening.

What we've seen is a failed tired government that's not prepared to step up to the plate and fight for those producers. I say, shame on this government. Let's get this matter dealt with, get it out to producers and table it before the end of the week, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Struthers: Well, I would—the advice that I would give my friend from Lakeside is to pick up the phone and phone Gerry Ritz himself and get updated on that.

I would also suggest that if he's suggesting we move forward with a package without the federal government and put up 40 per cent of a program, then he should answer to his own constituents as to why we put a smaller program out than what we can actually come up with.

I would also suggest he pick up the phone and phone the head of Manitoba beef producers and talk to him, because the last time I talked to Major Jay Fox, he said we were on the right track. So you guys need to get your act together.

Family Physicians Proposed Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite will remember, this spring, Liberals tabled The Family Physicians for All Manitobans Act. It provided for responsible, incremental targets to ensure that all Manitobans have a family doctor.

Well, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. It worries me that this government and its policies of poor management will end up doing more harm than good.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) will note that the Liberal bill on this matter provided for targets for Manitobans that could be trusted and were incremental, not pie-in-the-sky promises that can't be kept, like this government.

Why is the government continuing to try to implement policies with bad management on a matter of such vital importance to Manitobans?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, you know, the credo of the medical profession is, first, do no harm, and I think that if we had followed the advice of the member for River Heights on so many issues, we would have

been in complete contravention of that particular saying.

Mr. Speaker, a net gain of 405 more doctors since 1999—a net gain of 405 doctors—including 111 rural doctors and, actually, what's more significant is the fact that we're putting in place a program that'll provide—take steps so that by 2015 Manitobans will have access to a family doctor.

It's not perfect, Mr. Speaker, but a lot better than the paper put out by the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there's now—under this—after 11 years under this government, 180,000 Manitobans without a family doctor. That is a terrible track record.

The Premier knows that he's made a promise in this Throne Speech about doctors and nurses that he's not going to keep. In the 11 years the NDP have got worse not better: the child—the children in Child and Family Services, more problems, not fewer; the rate of diabetes, higher, not lower; poor management policies; hallway medicine not ended. Quickie nurse practitioner clinics that bypass family doctors are not the answer to ensuring every Manitoban has a family doctor.

Why is this government more concerned about an election promise than delivering better care for Manitobans?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Speaker, clearly, the leader of the party is out of touch. Let him walk around the city of Winnipeg. Let him look at the Health Sciences Centre redeveloped—the largest capital development in history. Let him go to Brandon where the new Brandon General Hospital is. Let him go to the 40 or 50 facilities developed—renewed across Manitoba. Let him talk to the medical—to the Manitoba medical college and ask about where—how we developed 445 more doctors, including 111 in rural Manitoba.

Does he think that the doctors, the more doctors that we have in Manitoba, are doing less than more, Mr. Speaker? Is that what the member for River Heights is saying? Is he saying that the 2,500 nurses that we've trained since 1999 are doing less rather than more? Is he not aware we've expanded—plus, he promised—he promised—95 per cent of Manitobans would have a family doctor. What 5 per cent are you going to cut out? What 5 per cent are you ignoring?

Mr. Gerrard: Spin, spin, spin, spin. After 11 years this is a government with poor management style and zero accountability, setting targets that they're not going to meet.

* (14:20)

When Brian Sinclair died in a hospital waiting room, this government's response was spin before accountability.

When Joe McLeod, a 69-year-old Alzheimer's patient, languished in a jail cell instead of a care home, Minister Oswald cowered in silence.

Now the Premier (Mr. Selinger)–

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members should know by now that all members in the–*[interjection]* Order. All members in this House are addressed by their constituencies or ministers by their portfolios, so I ask the co-operation of members to address members by constituents or ministers by the portfolios they hold, not by their name.

Mr. Gerrard: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government is proposing quickie nurse practitioner clinics which even many nurse practitioners say is the wrong thing to do. After 11 years of poor management policies that have failed to provide the most basic needs for Manitobans, why is this government making promises that it won't keep?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it's basically called innovation. It's basically called when you expand the number of doctors in the ERs, you put in two-channel ER services so those kind of patients that just have more simplistic procedures can be dealt with without having to wait hours and hours in an ER or after hours in clinics. You put in place a variety of options to try to get to the fastest health care to the patients as fast as possible in the appropriate way by the appropriate person.

A pharmacist prescribing prescriptions is another example, Mr. Speaker. Is he against that too? Is he against every single effort to innovate, to lower waiting lists that are lower than they were in 1999, to increase the number of doctors, to increase access? After all, access is the key, and getting the right service to the right person at the right time is what we're doing through innovation, and if he doesn't believe in innovating–thank you.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Impact on Waterways

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, Selkirk residents are outraged that the Conservatives are now against the planned North End treatment plant. Selkirk residents are concerned about the health of the waterways in this province; too bad the opposition is not.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Water Stewardship: Could he explain to the House what this plan would mean for the health of the Red River and the health of Lake Winnipeg?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Minister of Water Stewardship): Well, very clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Tory plan is bad news for Manitobans. The Tory plan is bad news for those of us who are concerned about protecting Manitoba's water. I refer specifically to a statement made in the House last week by the Conservative Party who would cut \$500 million out of the infrastructure that's there to keep urine and E. coli out of our water. I don't know what the fixation is of the Tory party on putting urine and E. coli into the water in the first place, but, you know what, it's not a good plan for our water; it's not a good plan for Lake Winnipeg.

Other cities in the watershed are taking this seriously. They're investing and keeping their urine and E. coli out of our watershed; we should do the same thing here, Mr. Speaker. We should invest in investments and infrastructure that are to keep urine and E. coli out of our water. I don't know why–

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Shellmouth Dam Flooding Compensation to Farmers

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): The question was worse than the answer.

Mr. Speaker, farmers living below the Shellmouth Dam were unable to get their crops in last spring and have been unable to harvest their hay crops this year. One farmer I spoke with during the weekend told me that 700 acres of hayland was not harvested on his farm because of the artificial flooding of the Shellmouth Dam. We saw legislation passed in this House almost two years ago, and it has not been proclaimed.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture when this legislation is going to be proclaimed and when can producers below the Shellmouth Dam receive some compensation or have their problems addressed as a result of the artificial flooding that has been going on all summer and, indeed, last winter from the excess moisture that we have had in the Shellmouth Dam.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I appreciate the question from the member for Russell. I think he's put his finger on something that is very important that we have been working with those producers towards. A number of departments from this side of the House have been working to make sure that farmers are treated fairly in that region of Manitoba. We all know that right across the province it's been a tough time and that a lot of moisture has fallen all across the province and that we do need to work with farmers to put a package forward.

In this case—*[interjection]* The member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik) pretends to be some kind of an expert in this, but he doesn't know anything about it, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, we have been working with the farmers in the member's constituency to make sure that they are treated fairly. I know that there are both grain and oilseeds issues and pasture land issues that need to be attended to. We've been working with the farmers in the area, and we will be coming forward with a package in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Cliff Dearman and Don Pepe

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, it takes an ear to the ground and a tremendous commitment to give the kind of support these past mayors, Cliff Dearman of West St. Paul and Don Pepe of Winnipeg Beach, have given their residents.

These two former municipal leaders have put in over 30 years of municipal service between them. Cliff Dearman served for 15 years as a council member, reeve and mayor in West St. Paul. He decided not to run in this past election but should be proud of his fellow councillors and the work that they've invested in the area.

Cliff and I worked on a number of projects, such as the new ambulance station, and Cliff was

instrumental in bringing the innovative tube dikes to better protect the residents' homes from flooding. He was a tireless champion and advocate of the Sunova Centre recreation facility, which he calls a jewel of West St. Paul.

Don Pepe served on town council for 17 years, the last two terms as mayor of Winnipeg Beach, and during his time, Don fortified connections of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, and he played an instrumental role in planning the 120-site RV park and the Gateway Foundation's assisted living project, celebrating its grand opening this week.

While he's now stepping down to spend more time with his family, he vouches that, and I quote: Acting as mayor has been a true honour, end quote, and that he's, quote again, enjoyed every minute of it, end quote.

We have worked together on a number of projects in Winnipeg Beach and it's been a pleasure to do so.

When people devote such passion and energy to their communities, they get results for their communities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, both Cliff Dearman and Don Pepe should be proud of their accomplishments. Thank you for your vision and advocacy for your communities. Thank you, Cliff and Don, for your hard work. Thank you for making your communities—thus Manitoba—a better place to live. And, Don and Cliff, I know that your hard work—again, thank you for your hard work, and I know that your retirement from public life will be equally as fulfilling.

And I ask the members of the Chamber to join me in congratulating two former mayors and reeves who have served our community well in Manitoba and who are joining us in the gallery today.

Kraft Celebration Tour in Pinawa

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): I congratulate the LGD of Pinawa for being selected by the Kraft Celebration Tour. The Kraft Celebration Tour contest invited Canadians to demonstrate why their communities deserve a \$25,000 award to use for improvements to their recreational infrastructure.

Pinawa was selected from over 400 entries across Canada for one of only 10 prizes. The community will use the money for renovations to the Orville Acres Arena. The arena will be getting a

much-needed refurbishment, including a cement floor, which will make it possible to use the arena year-round.

Brent Stokes, a member of the arena board, was the one to get Pinawa involved in the contest. He submitted an essay to the Kraft selection committee describing why Pinawa deserved the \$25,000 prize.

As part of Pinawa's prize, TSN broadcasted live from Pinawa on August 23rd for a special hour-long edition of *SportsCentre*. Pinawa residents were thrilled to welcome *SportCentre's* popular hosts, Jay Onrait and Dan O'Toole into their community.

August 23rd was celebrated with a number of festivities in Pinawa, including Pinawa's birthday fireworks display, sporting demonstrations and a free barbecue. Crowds of people braved the rainy weather to attend the event.

Twenty communities across the country were shortlisted for the \$25,000 prizes. Communities were paired off and went head-to-head in an online voting competition. The one with the most votes at the end was the winner. Pinawa voters had to compete against other communities which were much larger than Pinawa. Nevertheless, during the 24-hour online voting period, Pinawa was able to out-vote those other communities.

After its stop in Pinawa, the Kraft Celebration Tour continued through western Canada to complete the journey begun in Bay Roberts, Newfoundland. The tour stopped in nine provinces to hand out the \$25,000 prizes.

Again, I would like to extend my congratulations to Pinawa, and we look forward to seeing the improvements to the Orville Acres Arena.

* (14:30)

Transcona Downtown Revitalization

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by welcoming the students and teacher from Murdoch MacKay Collegiate who are here with us here today.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about some recent positive changes taking place in the constituency of Transcona. Of particular note are the downtown Transcona revitalization project and the active trails project.

This past summer work began on revitalizing Transcona's business district along Regent Avenue

between Winona and Kanata. The Downtown Revitalization Streetscape Strategy is a product of a three-year commitment made by the Transcona BIZ board of directors, the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba.

When the project is completed, visitors travelling along Regent Avenue will pass through an entrance archway which announces the beginning of Transcona's downtown district. As residents and visitors alike make their way through the downtown area they will notice the newly renovated storefronts which have been designated to provide an old English town feeling.

Other notable improvements under this strategy include road work, sidewalk replacement and new streetscape elements such as the installation of banner poles with solar lighting, wind turbine flag poles, new bike racks, benches and trees.

Transcona also benefited from a \$20-million investment by all three levels of government towards the construction of a large system of active paved trails this summer. The trails will serve to connect neighbours in Transcona to one another, while also providing cyclists greater access to and from other parts of Winnipeg. Together the trail covers more than 12 kilometres.

A significant aspect is the—of this investment is the extension of the existing Transcona Trail. This multi-use pathway now connects the suburban areas in eastern Transcona with other Winnipeg communities.

Taken together, these pathways will improve the active living options of families in the Transcona area and throughout the city of Winnipeg.

I would like to personally thank Councillor Russ Wyatt, Transcona BIZ folks Glen Fuhl and Wendy Galagan, together with Transcona Trails folks Val Cousineau, Gail Kauk and Jim Bromley for their work and dedication to improving the quality of life in the Transcona community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Manitoba Theatre Centre, which has now received the royal designation.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre was founded by John Hirsch and Tom Hendry in 1958 when they set out to establish a professional theatre with mass

appeal. MTC was Canada's first English-speaking regional theatre and soon became a model for regional theatres throughout North America.

MTC plays a vital role in enriching the lives of Manitobans through quality, community-based theatre entertainment. Theatre in our province inspires all Manitobans to experience the cultural aspects of our community. The Manitoba Theatre Centre has given Manitobans the opportunity to experience first-hand the great writers, actors, directors and other crew members who have come to our province for theatre. It is great to see that theatre in our community is being enhanced, as it provides tremendous artistic value to our lives.

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre presents over 250 performances annually for more than 150,000 theatre lovers. It is Canada's largest regional theatre and provides this province with great entertainment, culture and an opportunity to experience the arts. Manitobans take great pride in the arts in this province and what it has to offer, and a royal designation will strengthen Manitoba's role as a cultural district in North America.

Since 1958, this company has engaged audiences and brought some of English theatre's best works to Winnipeg. In October, Queen Elizabeth II bestowed the theatre with the title of "royal," an extremely prestigious and exceptional designation. In Her Majesty's 57-year reign, Queen Elizabeth has only bestowed 45 royal designations. This is Manitoba's third royal designation as the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair have also received the honour. The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is only the second theatre in North America to receive this rare title.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members of this House will join me in congratulating the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre on its recent royal designation. As a cornerstone of arts in Manitoba, the recognition the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre received is certainly well deserved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Métis Policy

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the new partnership between our government and the Métis people of Manitoba.

Last week we announced a comprehensive Métis policy, and I want to inform all members that this is the first of its kind in Canada and consists of four strategic goals: (1) is to enhance Métis participation in the provincial decision-making process; (2) promoting better understanding of Métis history and culture for all Manitobans; (3) applying a distinctions-based approach that respects the unique roles of Métis people, past and present; and improving relations between the Province and all organizations representing Métis interests.

The new policy also includes a \$10-million Métis Economic Development Fund which will provide better access to equity and capital for Métis-controlled businesses, stimulating the economic development activities of the Métis people here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to thank the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and the Métis Federation, and all those who've been involved in the creation of this policy. This is a promising first step that'll not only benefit the Métis, but all Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker, I'm rising to see if there's agreement of the House for the Throne Speech debate to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), as she's at a funeral—and we discussed this with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Hawranik) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard)—with the understanding that the member for Rossmere will speak as soon as it is possible for her to do so within the normal speaking rotation.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House for the Throne Speech debate to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Rossmere due to the circumstances discussed with the Opposition House Leader and the honourable member for River Heights, with the understanding that the honourable member for Rossmere will resume her speech when it is possible for her to do so within normal speaking rotation.

Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
THRONE SPEECH
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen)

THAT the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fifth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), who has 29 minutes remaining, and there's been agreement for it to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Rossmere.

So, to continue rotation, I will ask a speaker from the opposition side, please.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few comments on the record on the Throne Speech.

From my point of view, from our Liberal perspective, this was one of the worst Throne Speeches in the last 11 years. This Throne Speech falls far short of what we should expect from our provincial government. In 11 years this government has mismanaged health care. They've put Child and Family Services in chaos. They've squandered opportunity for our youth, and we have the highest proportional increase in food bank use of all provinces. I was hoping to hear something that would secure health care, that would protect our children and provide vision for the future, but, sadly, it wasn't there.

This speech lacks credibility. This speech makes the claim that last year's budget was balanced; this was not the case. Last year there was a deficit of \$500 million in the basic budget, what's called the core operations of government. By starting the speech pretending that the balance—the budget was balanced last year, the NDP start by losing credibility. Governments need to be forthright about what's happening with our finances, not trying to cover up what the government doesn't like.

The Throne Speech also says that the new Bombers' stadium is under construction. Well, there's a hole in the ground, but no building is yet being built, and the financing and the building plan is in disarray at the moment—not a very credible claim.

A Throne Speech should be about setting goals and targets and setting the direction of the government and the province, and let's look at the goals. We have an epidemic of diabetes in Manitoba, but it wasn't mentioned in the Throne Speech, and there's no goal or target set for reducing the incidence of diabetes and keeping Manitobans healthy. We have far too many children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders born each year in Manitoba. Yet there was no plan, no goal and no target to reduce the number of children born each year with FASD.

* (14:40)

In June of this year, I—my colleague and I tabled The Family Physicians for All Manitobans Act, a bill which sets responsible benchmarks, ensuring that as many Manitobans as possible have access to family doctors. Well, imitation is a sincere form of flattery. It's regrettable that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is making promises that he knows he can't keep, and won't keep, about an issue that's so important to Manitobans. Access to quality preventable care—preventive care is key to Manitobans, and it's shameful that in his Throne Speech the Premier's more concerned about trying to get votes than ensuring quality care for everyday Manitobans.

There was a statement in the Throne Speech that acknowledges that the previous target set by the government in 2003 for the reduction of phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg was inadequate. But instead of setting a new goal and target, the government says it will think about setting a new target sometime in the coming months. The target should've been in the Throne Speech. That's what a Throne Speech is for, to set the targets and the direction, but it wasn't there.

The Throne Speech talks about \$3 billion in lost opportunity when fossil fuels are imported from outside of Manitoba, but fails to set any specific goal or target to replace it.

A report in the last few days has highlighted the fact that food bank use in Manitoba has increased by more than 10,000 people in the last year, from 47,925 to five—57,966. Manitoba's increase, at 21 per cent, was the highest proportional increase of

any province in Canada. Manitoba now has 4.7 per cent of our population using food banks, the second highest proportion in all of Canada, and yet the NDP have failed to set any target to reduce the number of people having to use food banks. It's a sad testament to the ineffectiveness of the NDP in reducing poverty in Manitoba.

The Throne Speech also offered little in terms of a realistic plan to end the chaos in child welfare in our province. In Manitoba we've more than 8,000 children in care in our province. Compare this to Saskatchewan where there are only about 4,000 children in care. In Manitoba we do far too little to help families and reduce the number of children who end up in care and we keep children in care for too long, and yet there wasn't a plan in the Throne Speech to better support families and to reduce the need to have so many children in care.

For this last year there've been many problems as a result of excessive rainfall and damage to agricultural crops in Manitoba. There's a desperate need to improve water management in our province. Reading between the lines, it's clear, as part of this government's policy of bad management, taking farmers for granted is part of the Premier's big-picture planning. As such, there was very little in the Throne Speech on this and no clear plan to ensure we have an excellent water management system in our province.

There is much to do in Manitoba, but this year's Throne Speech did not set out the direction needed. As I said in my comments on the day of the Throne Speech, the NDP government has had their chance to act in the last 11 years. They've not addressed many of the critical issues for our province. The Throne Speech was not a good one. It was the last gasp of an inept government.

One of the things we need to ask is: After 11 years of NDP rule, is a high school graduate better off in Manitoba or in Saskatchewan? The NDP has failed a generation, because a student who first entered grade 1 when the NDP took power in 1999 would now be set to graduate high school this summer, and that student in Manitoba is not as well off as the one in Saskatchewan.

The student would be making more money in Saskatchewan. In 1999, the average Manitoba household earned more than the average Saskatchewan household. Eleven years later, the average Saskatchewan household makes \$5,000 more per year.

The student would inherit less debt in Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan the debt has gone down over 11 years, while it continues to climb in Manitoba. A graduate going to live in Saskatchewan would inherit a per person provincial debt of only \$6,000. If they'd stayed in Manitoba it would be double that, or almost, at \$11,000 per person.

Saskatchewan has proved a better record in protecting their children. Social services are in place in Saskatchewan to make them less likely to fall into government care. Manitoba has over 8,600 children in care, and by comparison Saskatchewan only has about 4,500 children in care.

A graduate in Manitoba would be more likely to graduate with their friends. Manitoba has the second lowest rate in high school graduation, behind all the Maritimes and worse than any other western province. We made this an issue in the 2007 election campaign; the NDP is just realizing this now. Their mandatory attendance solution may make headlines, but the studies today shows that it will make little difference when you need stronger, better solutions to address this forward—this problem, ideas that we have talked about and will continue to talk about.

The NDP has mismanaged a health-care system that burdens doctors and nurses, watched as crime rates skyrocket, and completely failed to make education an opportunity—a priority. I spent this first week in session calling on our visionless government to do better for Manitoba. I look forward to bringing forward ideas that will provide a Liberal vision for Manitoba so we can all do better.

As part of this government's policy of bad management, Manitoba Hydro has fallen behind the rest of Canada in clean energy policies. The NDP are going ahead with a very expensive option on the west side of the province, an option which will create great difficulties for many farmers. When there were recent hearings on Bipole III, the NDP used their majority to shut down the possibility of a farmer presenting. For many reasons—economic, environmental, security—the west-side option is a bad option. The Conservatives want to go down the east side of Lake Winnipeg, an option which has its own set of major problems in its environmental impact and the unknown cost of compensating the First Nation and Métis communities along the east side for the adverse impacts of the line. Liberals see the best option as the one under water, down the centre of Lake Winnipeg. This option is much shorter than the west-side route. It is more secure in that it doesn't

have the same risk with ice storms or tornadoes. It has the least impact on farmers.

For three years I've been calling on the government to look seriously at going under water for Bipole III, but the government hasn't even yet produced a report on this option. In contrast, the Maritimes are going ahead with major underwater transmission lines from Labrador to Newfoundland and on to Nova Scotia. In contrast, Québec is moving forward with a line to New York under Lake Champlain and under the Hudson River. Manitoba is being left behind by this government. Shame on this government.

On health care, the NDP were not there when Joe McLeod, a 69-year-old man with Alzheimer's disease, spent a month in jail because of his disease. It was appalling. On this issue, Mr. Speaker, the NDP lost their moral compass. It wasn't until I called loudly for action and the media from coast to coast across Canada took up the cause and Manitobans were crying out against this government, that action was finally taken and Joe McLeod was found a place in a care home, where he should have been in the first place. Health care should be about caring; it shouldn't be about putting people in jail because of their health condition.

With regards to the environment, we've seen this year probably the worst year in the history of our province for keeping Manitoba lakes clean, and yet this government has not even set its target, let alone brought in an effective plan to reduce phosphorus and algal blooms. After many questions by me in this Legislature on why the government is determined to eliminate nitrogen from Winnipeg sewage, we've heard it all. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) first said it was because we had to save the beluga whales, and when this was proved to be nonsense, the Premier said it was because ammonia had to be eliminated, but the City of Winnipeg has already done this, and this reason was also proved to be wrong. The government should get on with removing phosphorus without removing nitrogen, and use a half a billion dollars saved for much better purposes.

On affordable housing, the government has claimed it wants to act, and yet it's clear that in Brandon and other places around Manitoba that the government's actions have been woefully inadequate. The government has let Manitobans down. The government has set the goal of 20,000 new Canadians per year moving to Manitoba, and we need immigrants, and yet there was nothing in the

Throne Speech ensuring that the housing resources exist for these new Canadians. The lack of an affordable housing strategy targeted new Canadians is further proof of bad management policies by this provincial government.

When the Canadian Paediatric Society released its report, *Are We Doing Enough? A status report on Canadian public policy and child and youth health*, we found Manitoba to be second from the bottom.

*(14:50)

Manitoba's poor ranking is a result of the NDP failure to support or fully implement five pieces of Liberal legislation which are critical to improving child and youth health in Manitoba. If these five pieces of Liberal legislation had been passed and fully implemented, Manitoba would be the best in Canada when it comes to child and youth health. Manitoba can be and should be the best in Canada. It's only the NDP which is holding us back.

It's curious to me that the number of people who accept the status quo with Manitoba having a low ranking on many reports like the 2009 Canada Paediatric Society report.

Liberals believe it doesn't have to be this way. We can be the best; we should be the best. We may not be able to be the best in everything, but we certainly should do everything we can to be the best in such a critical area as the health of children and youth.

People across the way sometimes tell me I'm making a mistake to put a priority in children and children's health. They say that children don't vote. But for me, the future of Manitoba is in our children. Our ability to save a strong—have a strong Manitoba depends critically on how we raise our children. Political pundits can say what they like, but for me, children are at the heart of why I'm in politics, and I believe there are many adults like me who believe that we must ensure the health of our children and our youth.

For all of the above reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against this Throne Speech. The Throne Speech misses the mark by a long way. Thank you. Miigwech.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words, and as other members have stated, I want to take this opportunity to welcome you back to the House. I can say that—

and wish you well in your health, and I'm so pleased that your surgery was so successful. I want to also recognize our Deputy Speaker (Ms. Brick), who took over for you while you were gone and guided us through some challenging times.

As well, the table officers, pages who are here, I hope that for the pages it's a worthwhile experience and you learn a little about how policy is developed in this province and will have the opportunity to, indeed, see some of the other sides of government, not just question period, but where—how the work is really done. And I hope you enjoy your time here.

Mr. Speaker, this past summer was an exciting time in Manitoba where many communities got together to—for Homecoming Manitoba, and I want to recognize two communities in my constituency. I want to recognize the community of Cowan that I come from, very small population, but it managed to organize a very successful homecoming, and the community of Ethelbert that also had a homecoming, and it was very successful. Those kind of events cannot be successful without many volunteers, but there is a lot that we should be proud of, not only with hometown—Homecoming Manitoba, but also we should be looking at other ways that we can celebrate many of the things that happen here in the city of Winnipeg and in the major centres. But, in many of the small communities, there is indeed a lot of culture out there, and we have to continue to look at how we can build up pride in people, build those communities.

Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders are at their AMM convention this week, and I want to give my—extend my best wishes to all of those who are coming into office as municipal leaders, but I also want to pay tribute for those who maybe chose not to run, as we heard earlier about today, and also those who may have been defeated. I want to commend those people for giving of their time, because the role that municipal leaders play in this—in operations of this province are very, very important.

I also want to take a moment to recognize some volunteers that are working very hard right now. You know, we think that by this time of the year we will have had strong frosts and cool weather and be into winter, but, unfortunately, our—the weather patterns have changed dramatically, and as we speak, Mr. Speaker, the community of Waterhen and Sapotawayak Cree Nation—and I believe there may be others, but those two communities in my constituency are struggling with flooding. And there

are many, many volunteers and—who are giving of their time, and there are people from other communities that have come to help, and there are many officials out there who are struggling. Working in water at this time of the year is not a lot of fun.

But I'm proud of the things that this government has done. Mr. Speaker, the investments that we have made in the Amphibex equipment is in—is being used in both of those communities. The tiger tubes that this government made—invested in to help protect—help with flooding are being used in the community of Waterhen. So it's those kinds of investments, that kind of forward, visionary thinking of governments that is very important, and I can tell you, when I visited both of those communities over the weekend, they were very appreciative of what our government has done and what—how we are working with them in these trying situations. Will there be more work to be done there? Absolutely, and I think we all have to think about what spring might bring for us as we—with the high levels of water, and this kind of planning is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I have been at a series of meetings in my constituency, and I want to tell you that, although the members opposite want to paint doom and gloom, it is a much different picture out there, and it is the same thing. Communities across the province see the investment in the infrastructure, see the improvements that we made. They see the changes that we have made in education and training and apprenticeship that is helping young people, and they appreciate those investments.

I've also been around the province on the prebudget consultations, and I have to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and to other members of the House, although members opposite have a very doom-and-gloom attitude and have said some significant things about how they would save half a billion dollars in order to balance the budget in one year, that is not what Manitobans are saying. Manitobans right across the province, where I have been out on pre-budget consultation, have said, stay the course. You have a five-year plan. You are making investments in this province. You are making sure that front-line services are protected, and they've said, stay the course. And I would wish the members opposite would recognize how important that is instead of the doom and gloom that they portray.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, in the next 11 months, next—close to a year, the member—

government—people of Manitoba will have to make some choices, and they're going to decide. Do they want a smart, steady, forward-looking leadership out of government, or do they want a reckless government that doesn't care about priorities at all and is willing to slash and cut everything like they did in the '90s—and, you know, that's not what I heard when I was out there.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Throne Speech before us, and, although the members don't agree with it, I'm very proud of the Throne Speech that was tabled because it does indeed lay out a strong blueprint, a plan that will keep Manitoba moving forward, whether it is in building on innovation and the economy, educating for the future, investing in health-care innovation, making our communities safer or helping families and protect the environment or whether it means building strong northern and rural communities.

All of those are very, very important, and, you know, I'm very proud of the fact that it was this government, and it is this government that, on December the 1st, will be the only province in Canada without a small business tax. Now, the members opposite voted against every one of those budgets that reduced that small business tax. They didn't do a thing, Mr. Speaker, and now it's becoming a reality and small business tax is being eliminated in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have made other changes that are very important in this Throne Speech, whether it be in creating incentives for women and young people to get into business, investments in the Manitoba Youth Corps, expanding new trade advisory into a new trades advisory organization, looking at ways how we can reduce our dependency on fossil fuel. All of those are important steps and those are things that Manitobans want us to do.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very proud of the things that we have done to improve quality of life and give Manitobans a hand up. I know the members opposite would not support—have not supported minimum wage increases but, you know, I talked to many people who this little bit of an increase in money in their pockets, young people mostly or people without a higher education in most cases, have a little bit extra disposable income, and all of those are very important.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were running in the last election they said that they would reduce the highway budget in the North and they would move all of that money to southern Manitoba. That's not the way of this government. This government governs for all of Manitoba, whether it's in health care, whether it's in education, building University College of the North, encouraging rural people and northern people to get in health care. We care about all of Manitoba and that's why we're introducing a new five-year highways and bridges plan.

We're improving—we're investing in expanding drainages. We're making investments to redevelop downtown Brandon. We're investing in health care. Again, things that are important to people no matter where you live in this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to cover a couple of issues that are really, really important. And I want to talk briefly about Bipole III and the attacks that the members opposite have made on Bipole III. It is absolutely amazing how reckless the members opposite could be when they say that they are going to scale back the project by cutting out the converter equipment that is—that are badly needed for reliability of our supply.

They—you know, we had trouble in 1996 when lines went down. Members opposite were in government; they did nothing. They didn't do anything about our reliability of supply. This government has done a lot of work. We have a plan in place and in 2007 we told Manitobans what the plan was. And members opposite know we have to move forward in order to meet reliability of supply for Manitobans and to meet our commitments of sales. But what did they choose to do, Mr. Speaker? They said, oh, if we form government we're going to change that plan.

That is the most reckless comment anybody could make. To say that you are going to stop all of the progress that Manitoba has—Hydro has made over three years—over three years they have been consulting with municipalities. And the members opposite have been out in some of those areas, cranking people up, telling them that they could change the line, telling them to come to committee when they knew full well that they could—that coming to committee was not an option, Mr. Speaker, for them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also just say that there is no credibility on the members opposite. When they say they would cut out \$500,000–\$500 million; I knew that big number wasn't big enough, \$500 million. That's what they plan to cut. They plan to cut that. And then we heard the members opposite last week say—the member from Tuxedo said the other day that the Tories would cancel the entire plant upgrades to Winnipeg and put our water at risk.

So, on one hand they want to cut \$500 million out of public service, that means cutting health care, education and policing, and then they go further to say that they would cut \$500 million out of wastewater treatment. Again, you have to think, you have to think about how you can be more credible in what you're doing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again just touch briefly on—members opposite talk about our record and what we have done and our five-year—our plan to get back into balance but we can be proud of what we have done as government. We are committed to making debt payments that are required under the previous legislation. In all of the challenges that we have faced because of the recession, our debt servicing costs are down. Our total net debt as a percentage of the GDP is down and the members opposite should recognize that in 2010 we are the—our four—this is the—we're the fourth lowest in the whole country of our debt-to-GDP at 1 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, these kind of investments are important, and I know that Manitobans will look very closely at this—these Conservatives and they will look at what the Conservatives are thinking of doing. Conservatives plan to cut bipole. They have said they will not build the converter. They're going to put Manitobans at risk.

I know that the members opposite have said, even the member from Carman has said, that things like agriculture are not important, that health care is not important, these are not the things that we will win elections on, Mr. Speaker. And I can recall here in the Carman leader—the *Carman Valley Leader*, there is a—this is in sharp—we—and I can say to you members opposite we are very proud of the work that we have done for rural Manitoba. I'm very proud of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers), who continues to champion for the needs of farmers and for producers. This is very different than the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen). This is in sharp contrast to when the member for Carman said that the Tories will put less focus on issues like

agriculture because, he said, we are not going to win an election based on agriculture. That's what the members of Carman says.

But the member opposite also has travelled all over the province trying to crank people up on Bipole III. He's been attending meetings, putting out false information out there. And I say to all of those members, think about what you're saying on Bipole III. Think about what Bipole III means for the revenues of this Province, \$22 billion over 20 years, but think about the reliability of power supply for Manitobans. Because if we do not build Bipole III, we run the risks of the lights going out in Manitoba. We run the risk of rolling blackouts if there is a terrible storm such as we had in 1996. This can happen. We need Bipole III for reliability of supply and we need it for revenues for this Province, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, members opposite kind of think this is a joke. They kind—they never built a hydro dam. They've never, in all—they've never built a hydro dam. And now there are hydro dams—one is being built, two more are on the books—and the members opposite, if they are saying they do not want Bipole III and they do not want converters, Mr. Speaker, they're saying they won't build new dams.

But that's their record, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans will look at that, and Manitobans will look at our Throne Speech and they will see that it is—with a plan like this, that we will move Manitoba forward, give young people the opportunity to take jobs and get the training that they need, and our business taxes and research and innovation incentive will create new opportunities to build on the many natural products that we have in this province. Whether it be through the Food Development Centre, whether it be the nutraceutical centre, all of those things are important tools to help move this province forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, just to start off, I'd like to welcome you back to the Chamber too, as many of the other members have done. This is my first opportunity to do that.

I do want to welcome all the new pages we have. I think they are a real asset in this Chamber and that they are—they will enjoy and learn during their tenure here.

In addition to the new pages in the Chamber, we have also recently had the arrival of our new interns, and I always value their input in our offices.

Recently had the municipal elections, just two or three weeks ago, across the province. There was roughly a 40 per cent change, maybe a little more than that, in councillors, mayors and reeves across the province, and they this week are having their annual convention in the convention centre here in Winnipeg. I expect a lot of the members in this House intend to be back and forth over there; I certainly do, as the critic for Local Government.

*(15:10)

I do want to pay homage to the people that throw their hats into the ring for municipal government. I spent 20 years in municipal government myself, and it's an interesting experience. It's—it can be daunting. It can be a little rough at times, but it's certainly a place to learn about your own communities, and it's a place where you do impact your own communities, probably more so than any other level of government. I have had an opportunity to look through their resolutions handbook, and I was a member of that board at one time so I've seen the resolutions for a lot of years, and I was impressed by the high quality of the resolutions this year. And I think there'll be a lot of opportunity for ministers to respond to those resolutions, and I hope they respond in a positive way.

Last year I put forward—or last session, I put forward a bill in the House trying to give some more protection to municipal reeves, mayors and councillors from the legal litigation, which was—the NDP failed to support, but certainly had a lot of popularity throughout the municipalities of the province. And that bill, I think, should be brought forward again. I think it should be debated once more, and there should be some safety nets put in place for municipal people.

Other areas that I think could stand some improvement—in municipal governments—are some of the rules surrounding the elections for municipal councillors, mayors and reeves, and school boards. There's certainly an opportunity to streamline the process somewhat. Quite often, we're seeing you have to go to one poll to vote for your municipal council, councillor or reeve or mayor, and you have to go to a different poll to vote for the school board. That could certainly stand some improvement. And probably, I will look at, as critic—or maybe our critic for Education—look at putting forward a bill somewhat along that line in the future.

We recently had a Public Accounts Committee meeting on the provincial auditor's report on

La Broquerie, and I was pleased to see that most of the recommendations, after some three or four years from the auditor's report, had been dealt with. There's a couple in transition yet, and we were able to pass that report and move it on.

One of the things that came up, though, in the questioning at that committee, was the fact that on the financial rules, the financial rules that are placed on municipalities by The Municipal Act on their budgets and their capital expenditures and the various financials that they have to report to the Province, was that there is a penalty from the Province if they don't produce those things in the required time, and that's all right. There probably needs to be some penalty. But the penalty was surprising; the penalty is withholding the federal fuel tax from the municipalities.

Now, municipalities receive several streams of funding from the provincial government, such as the municipal-provincial tax sharing or VLT revenues. But for some reason, the Province has chosen to intercept the federal fuel tax going to the municipalities. Now, the federal fuel tax comes from the federal government and is supposed to go directly to the municipalities. It's administered by the Province; that's all that's done with it. The Province has the figures. They have—it's paid out on a per capita basis and the Province does the breakdowns for, I'm sure, a fairly substantial fee, do the breakdowns and move the money out to municipalities.

But I actually had the opportunity on Friday afternoon to spend the afternoon with the federal Minister of Agriculture, Gerry Ritz, and I had—I mentioned this to him and he was quite shocked to find out they're actually withholding the federal funds rather than some of the provincial funds.

One of the things that certainly came to light in the La Broquerie auditor's report was not on the financial end but on the other areas. The act is somewhat vague on the implementation of certain things in the municipality. They can—you can call in the Ombudsman; you can call in the auditor, but in both cases they make recommendations, and they only make recommendations. The implementation of those recommendations is, I guess, partly the role of PAC, but there are no penalties to make sure that those recommendations, the ones that apply to the municipality, are put in place. And I think there is a larger role for the department to play in that direction.

The municipalities certainly have had some problems over the years with increasing infrastructure costs, mainly increasing infrastructure costs, but other costs that are increasing with a very limited tax base, a tax base that's tied to property taxes. The Province hasn't helped that situation over the last few years. They've been downloading things such as education tax. Even though they deny that's happening, it's certainly happening. I have done a little research on that. I looked at the taxes in my own municipality on three different types of properties—a residential, a farm and a commercial property—and when they reduced the farmland—education tax on farmland, and they have reduced it 75 per cent on farmland, but it's been a shift. It hasn't been a drop in the education tax on property; it's been a shift to another classification of property. The same thing with the education school tax rebate: It's caused shifts. And when you work the numbers out—I looked at five years and looked at the changes, and, in all cases, the total education tax on property went up. The only way to make a meaningful change in education tax on property is to do it across the board, not just on one classification of property.

We've seen this government and their approach to agriculture, and I do want to mention the attitude this government takes about protecting Lake Winnipeg. They went out and they've said—and I know we all have a role to play in it, but they went out and they've pointed their fingers in certain directions and put some pretty stiff regulations in place. I have a document that was done by the International Institute for Sustainable Development for Environment Canada policy, and it shows the breakdowns on the phosphate loading into Lake Winnipeg. For instance, the Assiniboine River, the total amount coming in on the Assiniboine River is about 630 tonnes of phosphate. The Red River at St. Norbert is at 3,100 tonnes and at Selkirk it's 4,900 tonnes. That's an increase of 1,800 tonnes. That's three times—three times—what's coming from the Assiniboine River. So where is it coming from? I think most of us could probably figure that out fairly quickly.

*(15:20)

They—we've seen the budget for agriculture reduced and reduced and reduced, GO centres understaffed in my own constituency. We're three-and-a-half positions short in Ste. Rose office; we're two short in Neepawa office. This is at a time when there's been some fairly serious problems in agriculture over the last few years. The wet

conditions haven't been properly addressed. Support payment was promised by September the 1st by the current Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers); it hasn't happened yet, and it doesn't look like it's happening any time soon. He blames the federal government, but I have noticed that Saskatchewan and Alberta both delivered programs.

We have issues with predator control with our livestock, and we're seeing cutbacks in the Department of Conservation that are affecting our ability to control predators. In—once again—in Neepawa Conservation office up till last fall they had a seasonal worker hired there that went out and attended to predator control, knew what he was doing. He was very good at it and was very valuable in the area. He retired; the funding was cut. They didn't replace him. So, what happens? More insurance gets paid out. It goes to crop insurance when we find the carcass and there's more insurance goes out.

We're seeing—we're getting to the point, now, where regulations are interfering with regulations. The Rolling Acres Hutterite Colony north of Neepawa had their cattle manure piled up to be spread, and the regulations now say it has to be spread within one year of the date it was produced, basically. But you can't spread it after November the 10th. We had a very wet year. They were late getting their crop off. They moved in there to clean up the manure, spread it on the land. It was November the 10th, so they can't do it. So, now, they face the possibility of a fine from another regulation for not spreading this manure within one year. It seems a little silly.

We had a loss in my municipality very recently. The last hog farm of my municipality depopulated. There are no hogs being produced in the RM of Langford anymore, and there used to be quite a few of them. In fact, I was one of the hog producers in that municipality. Reason: 400 days of storage. A small operation has no hope of building a lagoon for a 120-sow operation. You can't do the math. You can't do the arithmetic that will allow you to pay for a lagoon, so the 400 days of storage, another regulation.

We—as I travel around my area—in fact, just on Sunday I was in an area where within about a three-mile distance I visited two farmers that are both in their 70s, still raising cattle. And I see that more and more all the time; partly because they wanted to retire or pull out a number of years ago

with BSE, and things that happened, cattle weren't worth much. That was their retirement package. You know, even in my own case, at one time I had 125 cows and the associated livestock that went with that. I also had a fairly sizable NISA account built up in 2003, and since 2003 the NISA account disappeared and so have most of the cows. And I estimate on my own farm that my losses were about \$150,000, and that's common across the board.

Ag, I'm told, lost 2,300 jobs in 2009. We've seen this government put in regulations on the building and expanding of hog operations. That has taken the large producers out of the business, and we've seen them put regulations in place to take the small producers out of the business.

You know, there's interplay between especially cattle and carbon sequestration, and I think the NDP government either don't know it or don't pay any attention to it. But land that's grazed or cut for hay is a better carbon sink than land that is left without any cattle or anything being done to it.

We've seen an outflow of value added. We've asked many times for some promotion of—we'd like to see a beef slaughter plant. We knew it was a necessity well before 2003, but it really became a necessity after that. Nothing's happening except a little bit of money gets put in here and lost and a little bit put—gets put somewhere else and lost.

We've seen—I was pleased to see that Bunge at Altona is talking about an expansion of their canola pressing operations, but I was also quite disappointed to see two new world-class crushing plants go in at Yorkton rather than one in Manitoba—at least one in Manitoba. And that was done for no other reason than the business climate that this NDP government has promoted in this province.

Last September 7th and 8th, there's an area near Eddystone that received 11 inches of rain. Farmers had baled their hay; their hay was in the fields. It sat in water; it was ruined. I saw the bales with three or four feet of water around them. They were told to apply for disaster financial assistance, and they were—they all proceeded to do that—put in their claims. A claims inspector came out, took a look at it, said, yeah, this should qualify this July or August. They all received letters saying they didn't qualify because there are other programs that would cover it. And so I did some checking, and Manitoba Crop Insurance says insurance ceases when native hay has been baled or put up in stacks. So there's no coverage there. It was already baled.

Ag stability doesn't cover these producers because they have no margins left. There isn't a cattle producer in the country that has any margins left.

So what are the programs? There's been precedent before for DFA paying it—paying for these losses, and what are the—show them the programs. Tell them what's there. These—that combined—I had one producer tell me just the other day they never got a single bale of hay done this year. That was a producer up by Crane River. They never were able, with the conditions, to get any baling done.

You know, it's about four years since I've been in here and a lot longer since the NDP formed government, and they've been talking about the health of Lake Winnipeg every year since they formed government. It's interesting to me because they keep claiming they're doing wonderful things to protect Lake Winnipeg. We had the blue-green algae at the highest level this year that it's ever been. So that, obviously, the programs they're putting in place are really—really quite helpful. We leave them in government protecting Lake Winnipeg very much longer, they won't be savable.

You know, the waste and mismanagement and—that goes on with Manitoba Hydro and political interference is just beyond my comprehension. You know, we build a new wind farm with a California company—\$340 million—and Hydro loans them \$250 million to do what? To produce power to sell back to Manitoba Hydro at at least double the rate that Manitoba Hydro can produce it for already. It makes a lot of sense. We've seen the Wuskwatim dam already double from the initial price that was reported, and we've seen the Hydro building at least quadruple, and we think maybe it's even more than that—maybe about five times.

* (15:30)

One of the really interesting arguments I saw, and the Minister responsible for Hydro put in one of her letters to the editor, was she disputed the \$1.75-billion figure that we use when we're talking about the extra costs to the west-side bipole line. She said we have that figure dead wrong. They're not wasting \$1.75 billion; they're only wasting \$410 million. That's quite an argument. Yeah, we're only wasting \$410 million, so that's a lot better.

But when she says that figure, she doesn't take into account the line loss from year to year to year to year, 40, 50 years of line loss. I was told by one very high Hydro official that the line loss alone on the

west-side line would pay for the east-side line in 10 years. That's an interesting figure. Everything they've done with Hydro lately has been over time, over budget, and it's because of political interference.

One of the young producers in my area had Hydro—there was a line—neutral line broke off and hanging from the poles. And he's a very honest young man and Hydro accused him of knocking that line off the poles, which he hadn't done. He's a farmer in the Plumas area and he phoned in to Hydro and asked them what they based it on. I actually eventually got it changed around, but it took him quite a while and it took a little bit of my help to get it reversed. But the response he got over the phone when he said, why are you doing this to me because I had nothing to do with it, the response was, we're in deficit; we must recover our losses somewhere. And I thought that was a rather interesting response.

You know, one of the big issues in my area, and partly because of the wet years, is drainage and water management and all the things that surround that. Most of the drains in my constituency, and there are a lot of them and there are a lot of provincial drains, are blocked up with sedimentation, vegetation. I'd heard for years about shale traps and I'd never actually seen one or known what they were. So I had a producer in the McCreary area take me out to see some of these shale traps this year.

Shale traps are put in the faster moving streams and drains coming off the Riding Mountain escarpment to intercept the shale. They're usually with railway ties and concrete, railway ties standing on end in concrete, and the shale will stop and the water will continue. About once a year, traditionally, the Province went in and cleaned out the shale traps. Farmers came and took the shale away and put it in the bottom of their feed yards where it made a wonderful base for the feed yards. They have now quit cleaning out those shale traps. The shale is going down the streams, plugging the streams, and you're adding to the problem rather than helping the problem.

Something I also noticed this year—and this is all a big picture, it all ties together, the lack of drainage or maintenance of drains has caused more problems with the wet land, and so then what follows is we see farmers doing more tillage this year in the hopes of drying the land out a little bit, more fall tillage in the hopes of drying the land out a little bit for next spring so they can get on it. That's moving back the other way from what we've agreed for quite some

time are probably best practices, zero till or minimum till. There was a lot of tillage this fall and tillage will cause more runoff in the spring and cause maybe a little more damage.

You know, there was vague references in the Throne Speech to working with the feds and municipalities addressing problems such as drainage. I don't know why the Province is trying to pass off their responsibility. Third-order drains in this province are their responsibility. They're not a federal responsibility. They're not a municipal responsibility. They're a provincial responsibility. And they're trying desperately to pass some of that off onto other levels of government.

You know, in the town of Neepawa, we have 13 beds out of our 38-bed hospital closed right now because of a lack of nurses. I would like to know where all this wonderful increase in nurses has gone in this province, because it's sure not apparent at the intensive care wards in the hospitals of the city, and it's certainly not apparent in the hospitals in small towns like mine; 13 beds are closed.

We have a 100-bed personal care home in Neepawa with 35 people panelled for that personal care home. Five of them are allowed to be used—there's five beds devoted to that backlog in the hospital but, you know, I did ask for the figures, and acute care bed in a hospital is \$559 a day. The average cost per day in a personal care home is \$173. This is in the Assiniboine regional hospital. You know, to me, that's a very significant difference in numbers and—[interjection]—a very significant difference in numbers, and I would think the Province would certainly move to move more into personal care and away from the hospital beds.

I cannot, by any means, support the Throne Speech. I certainly support the amendment our leader put forward, and if—and we'll vote in favour of it, but if they don't attach that amendment to the Throne Speech, I certainly can't support the Throne Speech as it came out, and I will not be supporting it when we vote later this week. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, the honourable member for Rossmere will resume her debate, and she will have 29 minutes remaining.

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House for allowing me the opportunity to attend the funeral of a good friend from our church, so I appreciate the flexibility that

you've shown me in allowing me to defer the remainder of my response.

So I'm very pleased to be here today to put a few words on record in support of our government's Throne Speech. And before I begin, though, I would like to welcome you back, Mr. Speaker, and it's good to have you back in the chair. And I'd also like to welcome back Jeanette from the Chamber branch who has returned to her chair at the entrance to the anteroom, I guess, as we come into the House each morning and afternoon.

I'd also want to express my gratitude and thanks to our Clerks because I find that the work that they do is certainly no small task, and as a member of the Public Accounts Committee and now also as the chair of the Leg Affairs subcommittee, the work they do is really critical for us, and they help keep us on task and organize. So I just wanted to extend my thank you to the Clerk's department.

And, indeed, it is a privilege for me to stand here today and represent the constituents of Rossmere. I'm very honoured to have been elected by the community of Rossmere and I thank them for the opportunity to work on their behalf, and I'm very humble that they have put their faith and trust in me.

As I meet with the members of my community, I'm always impressed with their hard-working nature, their energy and their community spirit. It's a community that values their schools, is grateful for the hospitals and other health-care facilities in our area and appreciates the many recreational opportunities offered in their neighbourhood.

Not only in Rossmere, but across our beautiful province, our citizens are able to enjoy a quality of life that in no small measure is due to the vision of our government and the initiatives that we have taken over the past 10 years, a vision and action that continues into the future with our Throne Speech.

* (15:40)

The fact that I stand here is an indication by the citizens of Rossmere that they value our work and want us to continue to move forward and for the province to move forward. Their priorities are our government's priorities. We know full well what is important to Manitoba families. We listen and we act. That is why our Throne Speech continues to reiterate and to focus on the priorities of Manitobans, educating for the future, building an innovative economy, investing in health-care innovation, making communities safer, helping families,

protecting the environment, building a strong North and rural Manitoba.

As a teacher by profession, I'm so pleased to comment on the investment that our government has—is making for children and youth so that their futures are secure and will show promise. I know that my constituents will be very pleased to see the continued emphasis on education. It is so evident in my visits to our community schools and speaking with parents that our investments in education are paying dividends and that the wish of the community is for these investments to continue.

Our schools are rich in experiences for our children. In Rossmere I'm very proud for—of our many language programs. In River East Transcona School Division, French immersion, German and Ukrainian bilingual programs are very successful, and the three of the four elementary schools in Rossmere provide outstanding language opportunities for our students. As well, our technical and vocational programs are excellent opportunities for students to find their niche in the world.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We are committed to finding a variety of options for students to succeed, whether co-op education, apprenticeships or alternative learning environments.

In September I had the opportunity to attend the 100th anniversary of the Faculty of Home Economics/Human Ecology. As an alumna of the faculty, but obviously a few years ago, I was particularly taken with the presentation that celebrated the broad reach of the graduates of the faculty. A segment presented by Brenda Speirs-Fryatt, a former teacher at Murdoch MacKay Collegiate, highlighted the work of students from the fashion technology vocational program at Murdoch MacKay. What an incredible program for students who dream of working in the creative art world of design and fashion. The graduates from that program can be now found working around the province with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Manitoba Theatre Centre but also as entrepreneurs and small-business owners.

The opportunities that we can provide in our schools which use the latest technology found in the industry gives wings to the imagination of our young people. Another example that comes to mind is the vocational program in photography offered at Kildonan-East. Our goal is to provide learning opportunities that will engage our youth and provide the incentives to remain in school and graduate. A

young friend of mine has found her niche with photography, and it is a school program that has captured her imagination and, I believe, is motivating her to complete her schooling. We recognize the importance of tailoring programming and funding schools in a way that allows innovation and alternative programming for students that find traditional ways of learning to have barriers and are not springboards. These are examples of how our government continues to support the opportunities and the choice of our youth to select trades, apprenticeships or colleges as their vehicle to jobs and success in their adult life.

Our government is committed to the vision of education from cradle to career. The 50th anniversary of my old school, Springfield Heights, demonstrates the pride that my community has in its school—in its schools, but also showed the innovations that schools have been able to access with foresight and innovations of our government. I was so impressed with the access to technology that students at my old school have. I was part of the filming of the DVD framing the history of Springfield Heights School and I was pleased to see the confidence and knowledge with which these youngsters composed the DVD and put the whole thing together. We know that strong schools and training institutions are critical to building a better future for our families and also our economy.

Our government is also listening to Manitobans and recognizing that health care continues to be a high priority. We've continually enhanced our health-care system during our tenure and are continuing into the future with the Westman CancerCare Centre, Flin Flon Clinic, expansions at St. Boniface, dialysis units in Winnipeg, Gimli, Russell, Peguis and Berens River.

In the coming year, my neighbours in St. James will see the start of the Access St. James, and that will be such a boon to the citizens on the west side of Winnipeg. I can speak for my constituents who find great benefits with our Access River East, a community hub for health care, it includes nurse practitioners as well as doctors, and one service that I've heard about, from several young moms on different occasions, was their access to midwives. These mothers have been so appreciative of the care and attention that they received and our foresight in providing an option for them in childbirth.

We are also continuing our progress with the Cancer Action Plan. We are committed to

aggressively dealing with prevention, screening and treatment. This is so evident through our CancerCare facility. I have the unfortunate situation of assisting an elderly friend with cancer treatments for chronic leukemia. He requires regular chemo and blood transfusions. CancerCare is amazing. One of our visits, which included his oncologist, resulted in a consultation with no less than three other cancer specialists. The co-ordinated work of CancerCare provided timely, efficient and appropriate care for my friend. What highlights CancerCare for me is the innovation, and innovation that is our—that is what our government continues to look to for the future.

The primary-care health bus is just such an innovative idea, providing checkups, blood pressure and sugar tests—blood sugar tests, health education and chronic disease management, and all of this without having to travel far from their home—to be able to have an opportunity like this, which brings these opportunities to remote communities.

Our commitment is and continues to be to improve health-care service to Manitobans. Another innovation: mobile surgery units which will be able to provide cataract and ophthalmology services, bringing these surgeries to the communities, rather than requiring patients to make long treks to larger centres to access care.

And we continue with a variety of other things. We are helping families in the environment by developing new programs to improve infrastructure and the programming of community clubs. And I can certainly say that the North Kildonan community centre is one of those community centres that is very active and brings a lot of the youth and children from our community together, whether it's soccer in the summertime, baseball—and I know right now they're very busy getting ready for their hockey season.

We're also introducing new initiatives to revitalize rural community centres. We will protect consumers for those buying cellphones, condos, insurance, and I know certainly I hear from some my seniors that as they are enjoying their life in their apartments, their hope that they'll be able to continue without having to resort to having to buy it as a condo.

We're introducing new measures to protect against real estate fraud. We are strengthening the FASD strategy as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in conclusion, I am very pleased to be part of a government that continues to

put Manitoba families first and invests in their priorities. We will continue to build our province into the future and move ahead on many of the initiatives that we have started in our first tenure.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm rising today to put a few words on the record with regard to the Throne Speech put forward by this very tired NDP government.

You know, it's interesting; as you get, you know, get long in tooth and outstay your welcome, you know, you get a little tired and you get a little worn out and actually to continue to be progressive and moving forward you tend to take ideas and borrow ideas from others, and we've seen that in the Throne Speech that was presented by this government.

* (15:50)

To start, I would like to say what a pleasant surprise it was and very heartwarming to see the Speaker back in his chair after an absence. I think the Speaker has become a friend to many of us in this House and I believe that we all respect and appreciate his advice, and we really do appreciate his return. Would also—I would like to thank the member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick) for filling his shoes for the period of time that he was away.

I'd like to welcome the new pages who are joining us for this very short session, and again, hopefully, in the spring, whenever we come back, and hope that they have a pleasant experience working with the MLAs within this Chamber.

I want to thank the Clerks and the Legislative Chamber staff for all that they do to make our stay within the building enjoyable and do what they can to help us make sure that we are representing our constituents in the best way possible.

On that note, I want to thank the constituents of the Minnedosa constituency, who have been a pleasure to work with and for over the last seven years, putting forward many positions on behalf of my communities. And knowing that when I do put their questions forward asking for responses from government, I do know that they back my actions and we work together in trying to find resolution on so many issues that have developed. Many have been corrected and some continue to be challenges that we'll continue to fight for over the next few years.

I also would like to congratulate all new municipal council members throughout Manitoba,

but specifically within the constituency of Minnedosa. I know there's several community leaders who are returning with their experience and their wisdom, and they, I know, are looking forward to working with new members of their council and vice versa. New members of—taking leadership roles as mayors and reeves have also got the benefit of having councillors give them advice and help them through leadership challenges and opportunities. And at AMM this week, I'm looking forward to meeting with as many of my elected officials as possible over the next few days, and encourage them to meet with as many ministers on issues that are pertaining to their communities.

Now, back to the Throne Speech. Manitobans have indicated that they're very concerned for their safety. They're very concerned about their finances and they're very concerned about their health-care system. But these issues and these concerns were not addressed by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in his Throne Speech or by this NDP government's Throne Speech. What was portrayed was a very long, tired projection of reannouncements, and there didn't appear to be very many new ideas coming from this government. And any of the new ideas that were presented, or a few of the new ideas that were presented, were actually ideas that have been brought forward by my colleagues on this side of the House and actually taken and ran with by the NDP.

Notable absences from the speech included actual action to the increased policing presence in Manitoba communities, a legitimate strategy to bring the province's finances under control without increasing taxes, a real plan to address the problems in ERs that are leading to patients being turned away, or even a single sign that the NDP government is serious about tackling waste and mismanagement in areas such as the bipole project.

And I do know the bipole project is a very serious concern to all Manitobans. The cost is obviously a significant cost and is one of the major concerns. But I also know, as the former critic for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, that there are so many communities on the east side that were hoping and trusting that this government would actually portray stronger leadership and actually listen to their concerns with regard to an east-side line. They so much looked forward to having a government that would be listening to their requests for an east-side line, an east-side road, a community access, and so many people have indicated that this government has just lost focus on that issue, and it is so unfortunate.

And what has happened on the west side is so many residents on the west side have, again, voiced their very serious and legitimate concern with how this government has actually handled the bipole matter. So many community people, farmers, environmentalists along the west side, Riding Mountain Biosphere, so many organizations and groups and people have stressed their concern with the government's persistence in wanting to go on the west side, which is going to cost Manitobans, my grandchildren, my children's children, taxes and financial hardship for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

You know, Mr. Speaker, the word "agriculture" doesn't seem to be in the vocabulary of this NDP government. It didn't appear to be in the Throne Speech, it doesn't appear to be in a lot of their messaging and I know, as a person who grew up in rural Manitoba, who actually have family members who were farmers, my father and my brother who works in agriculture, you know, these people, you know, really believe that this government is missing the ball, that this government needs to be paying attention to what I think is one of the most important industries of this province. And I think that there just seems to be an absence of commitment from this government to do that.

And I believe when the former member for Concordia, the former premier, in his final address, he indicated there was—if there was one weakness that he had it was the lack of rural or agriculture-based support around the caucus table and I think that that is evident. So I raise that as a very serious concern for my constituents and the people in rural Manitoba.

I spent well over 10 years living in Winnipeg and I considered rural Manitoba home. And I think a lot of people who live in Winnipeg or in the urban centres do have ties to rural Manitoba and I think it is important that we respect that, and do our part in making sure that they—that government does listen and that there is a voice for those people.

People like livestock producers within my communities—I was going to name names but I guess it's probably better not because I think that what we need to do is focus on the issue, and livestock producers have been asking for some type of confirmation from this government that they were going to keep their promise to provide programming to help them deal with weather-related challenges, like securing feed and restoring damaged pasture and

forage stands. And there doesn't seem to be that type of a commitment from this government. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) promised aid would flow by the end of August but he's failed to do that and blames others for that failure, Mr. Speaker.

The Throne Speech failed to deliver when it was going to come to a long-term vision for agriculture and rural development in Manitoba, and as a former rural economic development officer, I really do feel the stresses that communities are facing. So many community economic development offices have indicated to me that they've gone to ministers, have asked for the government's ear and they just fail to understand the significance of the issue. They fail to understand that there has to be some type of a long-term vision and support for rural communities.

And long-term vision and support for communities does not include the reducing of funding for organizations like the regional development corporations. By receiving a 10 per cent cut, what this government is doing is actually in the process of annihilating regional development corporations and the people that lead these organizations.

There are so many good people that work with municipal councils and help them deal with the challenges that communities face, and if you continue to disrespect those organizations, and to not provide them with the support that they need to lead, then we're going to see communities continue to seek support from government without any action actually happening.

Mr. Speaker, recently a constituent of mine, who goes to a veterinary medicine college in Saskatchewan, has—had indicated that she was very concerned that there was—they were going—there were steps are—there were cuts being taken to the STEP program which would have a very detrimental effect on the veterinary students. And I found this rather interesting, that the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk), who used to be the Minister of Agriculture, she spoke about the significance and the need for nurturing youth within Manitoba and providing them with opportunities.

* (16:00)

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, who actually bragged about the STEP program and the significance of Manitoba veterinarian students taking their schooling in Saskatchewan and how this was a partnership, is actually now reducing the supports

available to these students in Manitoba. And what this young person has said is that many of the rural Manitoba students want to go back to Manitoba to practise veterinary medicine, and that was the intent. That was the intent of the partnership with Saskatchewan, but that they're—that that's just not happening. She's indicated that she wants to come home and actually be a veterinarian in her own community or region. That's where her family is and that's where her home is and that's where she would like to come back to.

So as students—it's not a matter of we don't want to go home for the summer to work, she says, but we're—it's whether we can work when we go home. And I think that what this government has to realize is when they do look at programs and they're actually cutting those types of programs, the Minister of Finance should be very careful in what she puts on the record, because I believe that that provincial government providing funding for additional seats for veterinary students is actually counterintuitive to not providing any types of employment opportunities for these students to come home and work. So here's an example, I guess, of where this government has actually dropped the ball, is—seems to be distracted and doesn't seem to understand, you know, the full intent of what they should be doing.

This fall the government promised uniform report cards, but we still don't have any idea of those report cards and what they'll look like and if they will give parents any information about how their children are doing in school. So we're looking forward to seeing that, and I do know that talking to different parent organizations in my constituency and teachers and administrators, you know, there is—they realize that change is happening but they just feel that they don't have all the information that they require to be supportive or to share their confidences in the government's move towards doing this.

Mr. Speaker, family services. This is an area that we've seen, since 2005, 21 children dying in the care of the child and welfare system either through homicide or suicide. Family breakdown, addiction and violence has resulted in more children in care than ever before with more than 3,000 children in care than there were in 2005, and since 2008 the number of welfare recipients in Manitoba have grown by more than 3,300 people. What we're seeing is a breakdown in families. We're seeing a government that is actually not paying attention, not keeping its eye on the ball and not looking and supporting families in need.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a huge increase in food banks in Manitoba. In Brandon alone we're seeing over 20 per cent increase in the last two years. And talking to Marla Somersall, who is with Samaritan House in Brandon, and she's very concerned about these numbers because these aren't people that are on social assistance or not working. These are also people who are working who just can't make ends meet. She had said that they're seeing people who are spending 50 to upwards of 75 per cent of their income on rent which leaves them absolutely nothing to provide for the family.

So I believe that there's several issues that the government needs to be looking at with regard to Manitobans in need and families in need; whether they're in crises or whether they're in financial situation, we need, you know, we need a government that actually has a plan and is actually dealing with these issues.

Mr. Speaker, recently talking to several of my daycares within my constituency, they had some very interesting points that I feel need to be put on the record with regard to government strategy. All of them spoke about a broken funding formula and that it doesn't seem to be addressing the needs within those centres. The centres are doing the best they can in providing care and support for families. As a former board member of the daycare in my home community, I know that every dollar counts, whether it's fundraising, whether it's through operating grants, whether it's through child or family fees. Every dollar counts, and what we're seeing is a government who really is dictating how the centres are managing those dollars.

For example, Mr. Speaker, subsidies—low-income families. With the increase in minimum wage, and I'm not sure if the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) realized that and is looking at that as an issue with the Minister for Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh), but by increasing minimum wage, low-income families who rely on subsidies to help them pay for their child care this policy has actually disenfranchised low-income families from qualifying for child-care subsidy. So, it's creating more debt for the facilities, it's creating more debt for families and making it harder for them to pay for child care outside of the home. And so these families are having trouble paying for their child-care fees.

So I'm wondering if this government has actually taken into consideration the challenges that this has created, and realizes that this is actually putting more

of a hardship and a burden on families who are trying to make ends meet.

The government spoke about their policies with regard to, you know, supporting safety and health awareness within this facilities, but the policies, like the lock-door safety policy, will cost—for example, one of my facilities, \$5,000. So \$5,000 for a facility that has to work within a budget is significant. They've raised the money, and they will implement that policy April 1st of next year. But this has been a huge financial hit to the facility with no financial support to implement such a program, and I know that they have and other organizations—daycare centres across the province—have asked the Province to revisit this policy by providing funding to help them implement this. But that hasn't—it's just gone on deaf ears with this government, and there doesn't appear to be any support for that.

I know the centre within my home community has actually implemented all the policies that are required by this government and there were several over the last few years. And that has taken away the director from the floor to help with the children. This person has had to work to get all of these policies and programs in place and they are in place. But, again, there were very few, if any, financial supports to help them implement these policies.

With regard to the pension, it appears that this is a carrot that has been, you know, put out there by the government, and it'll be a challenge for the centres to implement. And the question raised by a centre, and I, you know, I'm going to share is: How can we off—or how can we afford this without having a hit on the current wages? So, again, a policy that's been output out there but, again, lots of questions; not sure if it's been thought out, if due diligence has taken place and, again, the facilities are wondering how they're going to be able to handle that type of an—that type of financial hit.

Again, it's in the best interest of the children to have a daycare centre within their community, but with these types of questions and challenges being faced by so many of my communities, and I know communities across the board, it's becoming harder and harder for them to continue on.

And the Throne Speech actually had very little information or announcements with regard to healthy living, and what concerned me was that there was seen to be no information shared with regard to addictions. And I believe today that there was a reannouncement, and that's what I can quote a

member from the addictions community saying, a reannouncement of something that was announced in June, 2008.

And it's with regard to a facility called the River Point Centre. This is a centre that should have been up and running two years ago, Mr. Speaker, but, again, we seem to have a government that is tired and just didn't seem to have a vision, had a building that they were paying almost a million dollars a year for to maintain—a million dollars a year to maintain this facility while they decided what they were going to do about it. You know, if you're going to announce in June, 2008, you would think you'd have a plan in place. Again, this, you know, smacks of a stadium-type of announcement. You know, out there, you know, digging a hole and making an announcement—really, not having its ducks in a row on how to move that project forward.

*(16:10)

So we now see that this is going to happen in 2012.

Well, the addictions community is very concerned that this is taking so long. There are so many issues. There's so much need, and again, this government has dragged its heels, dithered and backtracked on something that is so important for the addictions community. They didn't do their due diligence in June 2008. They didn't do their due diligence; they dithered, they backtracked, and now this won't be in operation until late 2012. There are so many issues that I have with this that I just can't understand why the government would drop the ball so badly when we have so many people that need so many services with regard to this issue, Mr. Speaker. So I'm going to encourage the minister to work as quickly as he can. This government needs to work as quickly as it can to ensure that these services are in place for people that require them.

With regard to seniors, Mr. Speaker, we've been looking in the Throne Speech for this government's commitment to seniors resource councils. This has been an ongoing issue for many years, that there's resource councils have been looking for this government to provide them with some serious support and some recognition for the services that they provide. Instead, we see a continual off-loading of government onto the shoulders of these services to seniors groups without any real support financially in doing so. So you know, I'm looking at this government for its commitment to seniors. We're seeing, you know, increased wait times for

diagnostic tests, appointments with specialists, surgeries, and this Throne Speech failed to lay out any type of vision and support of seniors in this province.

So, on that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to close and just say that I'm very disappointed that the government failed to address what I believe were significant very, very important issues. They dropped the ball and, again, I just am not going to be able to support this. But I do believe that the Leader of the Opposition provided a very good framework for the government to follow, if they really do care about Manitobans, that they will take heed and build a budget based on some of the great ideas that this side of the House put forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Monsieur le Président, je commence mes remarques en réponse au discours trône en français aujourd'hui parce que je veux dire que je suis fière d'élever mes enfants à être bilingues dans une province où les droits linguistiques pour l'anglais et le français sont protégés par la *Loi du Manitoba*, le document de notre fondation comme province. Le français est la langue maternelle de ma famille et aussi de notre fondateur, qui étais un homme très fier, très courageux et aussi très compatissant.

Monsieur Louis Riel travaillait avec ses voisins dans un temps plein de défis, et travaillait aussi à un coût personnel très cher. Mais enfin, Riel gagnait en face de ces défis. Avec ses collègues, nos prédécesseurs, il travaillait avec les communautés pour mieux servir les citoyens et les citoyennes en créant la nouvelle province du Manitoba. Il faisait des choix difficiles, mais malgré ces défis, il faisait les meilleurs choix, et je le remercie. Monsieur le Président, pour moi, Monsieur Riel était un héros personnel et politique.

Comme professeure à l'Université du Manitoba, j'enseignais à mes étudiants et étudiantes concernant ses croyances dans les droits humains et dans le leadership en communauté, comme un homme humble et consacré à son peuple et leur avenir.

Je réfléchis sur le rôle et les valeurs de notre fondateur. Pas seulement parce que nous avons reconnu son legs comme fondateur de notre politique manitobaine concernant les Métis, mais aussi parce que maintenant nous sommes aussi dans un temps de choix pour les Manitobains et Manitobaines.

Il faut que nous choisissons une voie pour notre avenir. Autrefois quand j'ai pris la parole dans cette chambre, j'avais noté les mots sages de l'auteur français Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, et aujourd'hui j'ai la même confiance dans la vérité de ces mots que les autres fois et aussi dans tous les débats où je les défendais dans cette chambre.

Mais, aujourd'hui je veux réfléchir sur les mots de notre fondateur, M. Louis Riel, parce qu'il faut réfléchir sur nos racines, sur notre histoire, pour savoir comment on peut réaliser les rêves et les buts de notre fondateur, et aussi les rêves et les buts de nos communautés et nos voisins.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I am beginning my comments in response to the Throne Speech in French today because I want to say that I am proud to be raising my children to be bilingual in a province where language rights for French and English are protected by The Manitoba Act, the founding document of our province. French is the mother tongue of my family, and it is that of the founder of Manitoba, who was a man of great pride, great courage and great empathy.

Louis Riel worked with his neighbours in a time of great challenge and at tremendous personal cost, but in the end he prevailed against those challenges. Together with his colleagues, who are our predecessors, he worked with the communities to better serve citizens by creating the new Province of Manitoba. He had tough choices to make but in spite of challenges he made the best choices and I thank him. For me, Mr. Speaker, Riel is a personal hero and a political one as well.

As a professor at the University of Manitoba, I taught my students about his belief in human rights and community leadership as a humble man devoted to his people and their future.

I reflect on the role and values of the founder of our province, not only because we have recognized his legacy as the founder of Manitoba policy on Métis people, but also because we are now facing a time of choices for all Manitobans.

We must choose a path for our future. Previously when I spoke in this Chamber, I referred to the wise words of French author Jean Baptiste Alphonse Karr, and today I have as much confidence in the truth of his words as I did then and when I defended them in this Chamber in debate.

But today I want to reflect on the words of our founder Louis Riel because we must reflect on our roots, on our history, to know how we can achieve our founder's goals and dreams, as well as the goals and dreams of our communities and our neighbours.

English

Mr. Speaker, the founder of our Province, Louis Riel, was a man of vision and a prolific writer so I've chosen two of his most straightforward, honest and humble quotes which embody how we must set out our path for the future and do so with respect to the legacy that has been left to us.

First, he reminded us that worthwhile endeavours require effort, commitment and a long-term vision when he said deeds are not accomplished in a few days, or in a few hours. A century is only a spoke in the wheel of everlasting time. Mr. Riel also reminded us, very simply, we must cherish our inheritance. It is with these sage and elegant words of our founder in mind that I will proceed in my remarks regarding the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech put forth a vision that builds on past achievements and investments, as well as innovates for the future and does so with a full, holistic and long-term vision. I know that these are often unfamiliar concepts to members opposite, so I will choose a few examples that have relevance to my own neighbourhood and demonstrate what a thoughtful, responsive government does in serving its people and compare it to their own unresponsive, disconnected and short-sighted track record which, coincidentally, parallels their present dystopian vision for the future masquerading as a utopia.

Their vision, I presume, has its origins with my former classmate and their leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) and his evident misunderstanding of our English teacher Miss Roberts' teaching of novels like *1984* and *Fahrenheit 451*. I think he missed the part of the class where she explained that these were visions of a potential horrific future, not how-to manuals, and that she wanted us to be wary of concepts like doublespeak, the Inner Party and groupthink, not make them lifestyle choices. But, Mr. Speaker, I digress.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin my first example of how our vision, commitment and understanding are shared with our fellow Manitobans with three,

simple, beautiful words: Access St. James. The Throne Speech continued our commitment to health care on so many fronts, but the one that hit home for the people in Kirkfield Park, Assiniboia, St. James and Charleswood is the commitment to complete Access St. James on the Grace Hospital campus.

This government has transformed and revitalized a health-care system that was left in shambles by members opposite. Mr. Speaker, not only will there be a new birthing centre in south Winnipeg, a new Women's Hospital Health Sciences Centre, as well as a mental health crisis centre and ongoing work with nurse practitioners to increase their role in primary health services, but we will continue to build Access centres like the one in St. James. I'm proud of the working in relationship that this government has with both the WRHA and the Grace Hospital Foundation with this project, and the clinical training centre for ER docs that is also on the horizon for our beloved Grace.

But that's what people on this side of the House do, though. We consult with stakeholders; we build relationships and we innovate and find creative and practical solutions, and take the time to invest in those solutions, to deliver them properly in collaboration with stakeholders. Manitobans, especially those in Kirkfield Park, Assiniboia, St. James and Charleswood, need to be reminded that it was members from our side of the House that stood alongside the ministers of Health and Family Services in front of the Grace Hospital this fall to move forward on the commitment to a full-service health and social services Access centre, and that all they can anticipate on the grounds of the Grace from the members for Charleswood and the Tory candidates they are positioning in our end of town, will be a litany of tired fear-mongering rhetoric and staged events laced with melodrama and misinformation. It'll be 2007 all over again. They possess none of the new, strong voices they proffer, just hackneyed whining and media scare tactics.

Maybe they should consider a more accurate rewording of their catchphrase, to weak, withered whining, as to better reflect what so many Manitobans already know what PC really stands for: perpetual complainers.

Monsieur le Président, notre engagement aux soins de santé des Manitobains démontre un grand contraste entre nous et les députés conservateurs. Notre gouvernement s'engage à apporter un certain nombre d'améliorations au système de soins de santé

de la province, notamment la création de cliniques de soins mineurs rapides dont le personnel sera composé d'infirmières et d'infirmiers praticiens. Notre engagement montre que nous comprenons l'importance d'une réponse rapide et sûre; donc on va investir dans un nouvel hélicoptère ambulance et un nouveau bus de soins de santé primaires qui permettra, entre autres, d'offrir des examens de santé et de l'éducation sanitaire dans les collectivités éloignées.

On croit que les Manitobains et Manitobaines méritent des soins de santé qui sont commodes et pratiques comme des installations mobiles pour offrir des procédures de micromanipulation chirurgicale et des mesures législatives pour limiter le coût administratif des soins de santé. Nous comprenons nos voisins et nous faisons des contrats justes et durables.

* (16:20)

Translation

Mr. Speaker, our commitment to the health care of Manitobans illustrates a major contrast between us and the conservative members. Our government is committed to making a certain number of improvements to the provincial health-care system, including the creation of quick-care clinics for minor health issues the staff of which will be made up of registered nurses and nurse practitioners. Our commitment shows that we understand the importance of a rapid and reliable response. So we are going to invest in a heli-ambulance as well as a primary-care bus, which will, among other things, allow for health exams and health education in remote communities.

We feel that Manitobans deserve health care that is practical and convenient with mobile facilities that will offer surgical micromanipulation procedures as well as legislative measures to limit the administrative cost of health care. We understand our neighbours and we are making fair and lasting contracts.

English

These commitments speak to the vision of our founder, Mr. Riel, who had a vision of a fair and just province where all would be listened to and all would be treated with respect and compassion. They also demonstrate our government's commitment to the concerns and priorities of my neighbours and of all Manitobans, which will take us to a healthy and prosperous future. Manitobans want us to continue to

invest in these crucial services that they have not only come to expect, but which they will continually challenge us to improve with each new technological and research advance.

This government appreciates both the challenges presented and the balance required to respect our inheritance and health-care responsibilities, along with the willingness to develop long-term investments and solutions to emerging health-care issues. So I commend the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) and her staff for rising to these opportunities, doing so with compassion, prudence and vision to ensure not only meeting the immediate needs of our citizens, but to ensure the long-term viability of delivering a rich continuum of high-quality health-care services to all Manitobans.

The innovations in health-service delivery for this year alone exceed the capacities of what the members opposite delivered to Manitobans in their entire term in office, which, I believe, could be best summarized as fruit flies in the ERs, bragging about the mere 14 hours a day of excellent care the Grace emergency was able to provide when its doors weren't locked to the public and the maniacal hacking and slashing through the ranks of doctors and nurses in a frenzy that could only be paralleled if they were allowed to pursue their foolhardy vision of plowing through the majestic and pristine boreal environment of a future UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the members opposite are anxious to get those chainsaws running after over a decade of collecting dust. Apparently, their commitment and contribution to economic stimulus in this province is limited to getting their chainsaws oiled and serviced for anticipated demolition work.

Mr. Speaker, this current vision shared by members opposite is just another sad example of their recklessness, their selfish disconnection from the aspirations of the majority of Manitobans and a clear lack of understanding of what Manitobans want from their elected officials. Shame on them and, to Manitobans, beware PCs bearing empty promises.

Mais, Monsieur le Président, je dois continuer de montrer les exemples dans le discours du trône qui représentent les engagements demandé par nos citoyens et citoyennes et réalisés par notre gouvernement. Le discours a énuméré certaines des nouvelles mesure que prend la Province dans la domaine de l'éducation, notamment le lancement d'un processus de consultation générale visant à aider

les parents à aider leurs enfants à réussir, grâce à l'utilisation de bulletins scolaires en langage simple, à la coordination des journées pédagogiques et à l'amélioration des taux de présence des élèves. On saura développer de nouvelles initiatives pour combattre le harcèlement dans les écoles pour maintenir un environnement sûr et consolidant.

Monsieur le Président parce qu'on sait que les années de la petite enfance sont si cruciales, on continue avec la création de places additionnelles dans les garderies et la mise sur pied, dès le 1^{er} décembre, d'un nouveau régime de retraite pour les éducateurs de la petite enfance.

Translation

But, Mr. Speaker, I must continue to show examples within the Throne Speech that represent the commitments demanded by our citizens and implemented by our government. The speech listed some of the new measures that the Province is going to take in the sector of education, including, the launching of a general consultation process aimed at helping parents help their children to succeed through the use of plain language report cards, the co-ordination of PD days and the improvement of student attendance rates. We will develop new initiatives to fight bullying in schools in order to maintain a safe and supportive environment.

Mr. Speaker, because we know that the years of early childhood are so crucial, we are continuing with the creation of additional spaces in child-care centres, as well as the establishment on December 1st of a new pension plan for early childhood educators.

English

Mr. Speaker, our province and this government can be proud of the legacy we have built in child care and education. The Throne Speech renews our commitment to the children of our province by investing in them and in those who educate them. On December 1st, a pension plan will be implemented for our early childhood educators, something that I know the ECEs in my neighbourhood appreciate. It has been rewarding working with them over the past few years to achieve this goal and to have them share their thanks and appreciation for bringing these commitments to fruition. More importantly, it means that we are being shown—that they are being shown the respect due to a profession that is so crucial to the growth and development of our youth. By laying a strong educational foundation, we set forth on the path to an even brighter future. We believe that to

invest in our children, we must first invest in creating more child-care spaces and then invest in the educators and provide supports throughout the educational experience for both parents and children. These investments are about the long term and about creating a solid bridge between past accomplishments and future endeavours to ensure our children's success.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, while I was a parent of a young child in the '90s, I have no recollection of any such investments from members opposite and can't imagine they would maintain this legacy if Manitobans were foolish enough to entrust it to them again. More likely, they would let in the McDaycares that lurk at our borders and throw people a paltry, monthly stipend which they would later claw back in taxes, all under the guise of choice, because true investment and vision smacks of effort for them. We've seen such co-opting and superficial actions from their federal cousins, and let's just say they march to the beat of the very same selfish and short-sighted drummer.

On this side of the House, we know that genuine effort and commitment often goes unthanked and that perpetual complainers will find a way to rain—find a way to rain on any parade of success or accomplishment, but that doesn't stop us from doing the right thing for the right reasons, knowing that the true and final results may come to fruition later rather than sooner as long-term investments may take longer to mature, but, ultimately, provide the greatest riches and reward. Our children are just such long-term investments, and they deserve true investments like those we are providing them in this Throne Speech.

Monsieur le Président, le discours mentionne également des initiatives qui visent à protéger les consommateurs et à aider les familles manitobaines à améliorer leur qualité de vie, avec une série de mesures conçues pour protéger les consommateurs qui achètent une maison, un condominium, un véhicule ou un téléphone cellulaire. Dans mon nouveau rôle comme l'adjointe au ministre pour des affaires de locataires, je suis fière que l'établissement d'un bureau indépendant de conseil sur la location, pour aider les locataires et les petits locateurs, est complet, et que nous avons un plan à long terme visant la sécurité dans les logements pour les aînés.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, the speech also mentions some initiatives to protect consumers and to help

Manitoba families to improve their quality of life with a series of measures designed to protect consumers who buy a house, a condominium, a vehicle or a cellphone. In my new role as deputy minister responsible for Tenant Affairs I am proud that the creation of an independent advisory office on rentals to help tenants and small landlords is now complete, and that we have a long-term plan to improve security in housing for seniors.

English

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of our government's long-term initiatives in looking after Manitoba consumers. Our let's make a better deal, five-year plan for stronger consumer protection is yet another way that we invest in and protect our citizens by developing legislation and programs that address the consumer needs of an ever-evolving marketplace. We will continue this plan as outlined in the Throne Speech through a series of measures designed to protect consumers when buying new homes, condominiums, vehicles and cellphones. These vital consumer goods are part of our daily lives, and a safe environment for Manitoba consumers mean that the collective quality of life greatly improves and individuals and families can feel more secure in making major purchases.

As the minister's assistant on tenant issues, I am proud that there will be a new and independent tenant advisor office to lend assistance to renters and small landlords. Mr. Speaker, Kirkfield Park is home to one of the largest rental complexes in the province, and the Courts of St. James is home to many seniors in the neighbourhood, along with other apartment complexes in the area. These buildings, in many ways, are the largest unofficial seniors' residences in the city, and I am proud to work with tenants and landlords to keep our neighbourhood affordable for seniors. That is why I am happy that the Throne Speech reconfirmed our commitment to them with a long-term plan on housing security for seniors. I would also invite Manitobans to stay tuned for details on upcoming projects related to tenant issues as part of a larger vision of greater consumer protection.

Monsieur le Président, afin de renforcer la sécurité de la population et des collectivités, le gouvernement s'engage à l'égard de l'augmentation des services de police communautaire et de l'augmentation du nombre de procureurs de la Couronne. On travaille aussi pour la planification de nouveaux établissements correctionnels, mais plus

important, le gouvernement s'engage à l'égard de l'offre de programmes améliorés pour que les jeunes restent à l'école et hors des prisons. Pour notre sécurité collective, on saura développer l'offre de nouveaux outils judiciaires aux collectivités pour qu'elles puissent fermer les maisons utilisées aux fins du crime organisé et l'adoption de lois plus sévères pour empêcher que les criminels profitent des soutiens offerts aux personnes qui respectent la loi. On sait que ces buts ne peuvent pas être achevés tout seul, et on déploie des efforts accrus, en collaboration avec le gouvernement fédéral, pour imposer des peines plus lourdes en cas de cambriolages à domicile, de vols de voiture et d'agressions au couteau.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, in order to strengthen security for the population and communities, the government is committed to increasing community police services and the number of Crown prosecutors. We are also working on the planning of new correctional institutions, but even more important, this government is committed to offering improved programs so that youth stay in schools and out of prison. For our collective security, we will develop new legal tools for communities so that they can shut down houses used for the purposes of organized crime and stricter legislation to prevent criminals from benefiting from the supports provided to people who are law-abiding citizens. We know that those goals cannot be achieved in isolation and we are making increased efforts in collaboration with the federal government to impose more severe penalties for break-ins, car theft and knife attacks.

* (16:30)

English

Mr. Speaker, we all want to live in safe and secure communities, and this Throne Speech renews our government's commitment to Manitobans by building on successes of the past and by building on relationships with the neighbourhoods, police and federal government. We believe in long-term investment, including more community-based police and Crown prosecutors, along with the enhanced programs to keep kids in school and out of jail. We seek to empower our communities and citizens by developing new legal tools to help communities shut down houses used for organized crime and the introduction of stronger laws to ensure that criminals are not benefiting from the supports offered to law-abiding citizens.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite like to tout themselves as tough on crime when what we really need to be is thorough on prevention, deterrence and consequences. It's a tougher job and requires intelligence and compassion rather than bravado and fear mongering, but we believe in addressing root issues and working with stakeholders to develop a holistic and systemic approach for long-term successes and outcomes that will really make a difference in our communities.

This Throne Speech reaffirms this commitment by continuing to work with the federal government to bring in stiffer penalties for home invasions, carjackings and knife crimes. It also demonstrates how we reinvent our successes to build new programs like the one modelled on the successful auto theft initiative, which will intensively track violent, high-risk offenders and keep them from reoffending.

We are also aware of the needs of victims in their recovery, and our government is developing new legislative tools aimed at giving victims of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation the ability to seek remedies from those who have recruited, harmed and profited from them and their suffering. By empowering these victims, they not only move forward on their journey as survivors, but their abusers must face a restorative system with meaningful consequences.

We also understand that no one is born a criminal and that, in many cases, a series of events and underlying conditions place people on the wrong side of the law and involved with the judicial system. We recognize that, for many of these individuals, there are underlying mental health issues and that a strictly punitive system that does not address these issues will never do the job that it seeks to do.

With this understanding, Mr. Speaker, we are developing a new mental health court to help ensure that these individuals get the supports and consequences that will provide them with the opportunity to move beyond their current predicament and to a place where they will no longer be a threat to themselves or others in the community.

Mr. Speaker, my time is running short and there is so much more that could be said about how this Throne Speech reaffirms our commitment to Manitobans and to the rich legacy we have been entrusted to preserve and enrich.

I believe that the examples I have provided, some of the many that matter to the people in my neighbourhood, represent how our government listens to Manitobans and remains engaged with all stakeholders and citizens to build a safe, strong and bright future for all of us.

I hope these examples have also reminded Manitobans and members opposite that their own track record and the vision they are now trying to market to citizens is fraught with shallow, disconnected, simplistic platitudes that reflect nothing more than a desperate attempt to grasp at power and to do so at the expense of our collective future.

Monsieur le Président, je conclus mes remarques en disant que je suis fier de représenter ma conscription dans la tradition de notre fondateur, en travaillant pour tout le monde, en travaillant pour tous ceux qui sont justes et pour être la vraie voix, forte et nouvelle, de mes voisins après plusieurs années sans représentation complète et compréhensive.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks by saying that I am proud to represent my riding in the tradition of our founder by working for everyone, by working for all those who are just, and to be the true voice, strong and new, of my neighbours after many years without full and comprehensive representation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

English

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve my neighbourhood and to do so as part of a government committed to a vision of prosperity for all citizens, based on a comprehensive, long-term investment. I am proud to have been selected three years ago by my neighbours as the truly strong, new voice for them in this Legislature after so many years of their being left to languish by Tory representation that was disconnected from their needs and which, despite attempts to rebrand and remarket itself now, can offer nothing more to them than weak, withered whining from perpetual complainers.

I know my neighbours are happy with their choice, and I will do my utmost to continue to represent them in this Chamber to the level they deserve and as a part of a government that listens to

and is committed to their version of a strong and vibrant future.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, a great honour and privilege to get up in this House and be able to speak to the Throne Speech.

We should always remember that this is a privilege. Actually, it's an honour and a privilege, not a right, and I always accept that privilege from the good people of Springfield and East St. Paul who give me the opportunity to be here and speak on their behalf, and I do take that seriously.

This is the 11th Throne Speech I've been here and I—every time I get up I'm reminded that there are a lot of men and women who put their trust and faith in us and give us the right to be here. So I will choose my words accordingly and add to the debate on the Throne Speech.

I, again—but before I get into it, I want to thank the good people of Springfield and East St. Paul. I've had the opportunity to travel the highways and byways and, like most members in this House, I've burnt through another set of tires. I'm—car isn't even that old and already I've got a new set of tires going on, and it's a good thing. We had the opportunity to get around and visit constituents and go to—fairs and parades to events and all kinds of great activities that we are allowed to participate in, and I keep reminding myself this is what the job entails, and it's just great fun, whether it's reading at schools or visiting farms or going to sports events, opening up different facilities. It's always a great thing to be out in the community and representing and getting to hear back from the voters from the constituents.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the staff that work for the people of Springfield: Gail, Gladys, Christel and Matthew. Not all of them are full time, of course. Matthew is our summer student. He's done a great job and—to each and every one of them, we certainly appreciate everything that they do.

I would also like to thank those individuals who make this Chamber work. Thank you from the table staff in front of us, the clerk and her staff and all the other members, those that help to make this Legislature run. You know, least we forget, even those who sit at the cold, front desk when those cold winds are blowing and the doors open up. You know, we thank each and every one of those individuals who do just a great job keeping this magnificent building running, and democracy—the centre of

democracy in this province, if you will. They keep it shiny and clean and just do a great job of it, and we'd like to thank each and every one of them.

With the Throne Speech, this being the 11th one for myself thus far, I'd have to say it probably was, by far, the longest. And, although the Lieutenant-Governor did just a magnificent job presenting it, the content, which is not decided necessarily by the Lieutenant-Governor, was interesting. And, having had the opportunity to see it in print, not just to hear it, but actually read through it, I'd have to say that it shows a government that is desperately weak. And it's a tired and failed party, and what they couldn't make in content, they certainly tried to make up for in length.

And I think it's very telling that we have the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) bringing forth an amendment, fantastic amendment, and that's actually what we're speaking to. We're not speaking necessarily to the Throne Speech; we're actually speaking to the amendment.

And I just want to quote to the House, a couple things out of the amendment that I think are just fantastic, and if we go to paragraph (o) that says: "That while the Speech contains many good ideas offered by Members of the Opposition, it fails to convince this House that they will actually be implemented;" and when, in fact, we just saw a piece of legislation today and we might as well call it the honourable member from Steinbach piece of legislation. He was the one who has been advocating and touting this legislation. And, you know, I guess we have to give some credit to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), the member for Minto for seeing a great idea and copying it and putting it forth.

Paragraph (p): "That the Speech fails to acknowledge the Government's 11 year track record of failure to keep other promises, like ending hallway medicine, causing this House to realize that the promises contained in the Speech are unlikely to be kept." One of the promises, I ran in 1999; got elected. I remember that the then-Premier Gary Filmon got up and heralded that they would keep balanced budget legislation because, although they were against it before they were for it, that now they thought it was the right thing to do. And it didn't take many years once the financial storm clouds started to roll in, that was one of the first things that were thrown off the Titanic, balanced budget legislation. Another one of those promises that, although given lip service, were actually not kept.

* (16:40)

I go on to paragraph (q): "That the current government has failed in its promises to Manitobans, and as a result, it is now clearer than ever that it will require a new government to deliver positive results on crime reduction, fiscal responsibility, job creation, tax relief, protection from rate hikes, access to family physicians, support for farm families, the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg, better sports facilities and infrastructure, stability within Child and Family Services and other goals that are supported by all Manitobans." And that is the reason why, when I go through my comments on the Throne Speech, that I will be suggesting to this House that we should be voting for this amendment. It is the right thing, and it would bode very well for this province if that was in fact what was going to be going forward instead of the tired and failed Throne Speech that we heard just a few days ago.

And what we have in the Throne Speech, if you were paying very close attention, it shows really a group of men and women who have slowly grown out of touch, and I would like to point this House to a speech that was given by President Barack Obama after the mid-term elections. And he got up and he said, you know, I get it. After a shellacking like that, I get it. And commentators were saying just, by virtue of the comments he made, there's a realization that President Obama didn't get it. And that's what I would say about the Throne Speech is that members opposite don't get it.

Commentators were saying in the United States the President should have spoken about the hardships, should have spoken about the kinds of things that are troubling people; and, although not everybody's struggling, I mean, a lot of people do read newspapers, do listen to the news, and are concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the financial well-being of their pension plans, of their RRSPs, of their mortgages, what's going to happen in the future. I mean, they read about the four pigs coming out of Europe, Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain who are carrying unbelievable amounts of debt. I mean, they look at what's happening across the world where countries are struggling to pay their debt, and they look at the New Democratic Party, a government that's been there for 11 years and they realize from the Throne Speech that, although there were a lot of words and much time was consumed in the speech, they don't get it.

It's like the President in the United States who got up and said he got it but he got a shellacking. He didn't get it, what the point was, and the point was is that, just like people in the United States, so, too, in Manitoba, people are concerned about their financial well-being. You have a government, you have a group of men and women who don't understand that people are genuinely concerned because nowhere in the budget were those concerns addressed.

You have a government that basically runs activities and events on the fly. I would like to point out to the House the west-side hydro line. The costs are spiralling really out of control. The answers are appalling, at best. You get ministers who contradict what Hydro says. Hydro contradicts what ministers are saying, and there doesn't seem to be anybody really on top of the file. But, in the meantime—in the meantime—the costs keep accelerating, and it gets worse and worse and worse. And, unfortunately, when the NDP are out of power, the legacy of the debt that they have straddled Manitoba Hydro with will continue to go for generations to come.

Unfortunately, what should be the oil patch—what the oil patch is to Alberta, Manitoba Hydro should be to Manitoba. And straddling Manitoba Hydro with excessive debt, overriding Manitoba Hydro on its plans, there was a plan to bring the hydro line down on the east side, but it was a political decision. And, in fact, in all fairness to many members on that side, certainly the backbench who had no say in it, it is actually the former premier, Premier Doer, and the now-Premier, the former minister of Finance, and others in Cabinet, the front row, who failed Manitobans, that forced Manitoba Hydro to go down the west side—forced Manitoba Hydro—without even allowing a shred of debate. It was a *fait accompli*.

They walked in and they said, you will run it down the west side, and only in NDP land would you take hydroelectricity that's supposed to go southeast and run it west all the way to the Saskatchewan border, from the Saskatchewan border all the way back, tucked under the city into actually my constituency of Springfield. There it gets converted and then send it southeast.

Only, only in a wacky NDP world would somehow that make sense, that you take hydroelectricity that's meant to go east and ship it west. That is going to be—if allowed to proceed—is going to straddle the young people of this province

with a Crown corporation that's going to have unbelievable amount of debt. It is a poor policy and it shows a very failed, weak, tired government and party. They can't see their way through it. There have been men and women who've been in positions of leadership throughout history who've been able to look at something and be able—and have been able to say, you know what, that was not the right idea and reverse themselves, because they had the leadership. They actually had the 'forwithal' to say, you know, the decision was wrong, and the decision to send the hydro line west when you're trying to sell the power east is the wrong decision, and again, if you read the amendment to the Throne Speech, it's absolutely correct in that this Throne Speech must be amended to deal with that issue.

I also want to deal with the stadium. We have, currently, a stadium in the city of Winnipeg that's getting older and that's starting to show its age and something has to be done about it, and I think that's general agreement. I don't think you're going to get any kind of argument there. Something has to be done with the old Bomber stadium. Something or the building just continues to deteriorate.

What we have here is a Premier (Mr. Selinger), desperate Premier, to sort of have a marquee building that he can run out and tout as his big project for the next election, and you know what? Over the years, we've had other leaders and premiers who've built marquee buildings, but the difference between the stadium and those buildings is former premiers—and even prime ministers, other leaders across the world—what you would actually do is you'd get a deal in place and you would find out what the cost is going to be. So, to find out what the cost is going to be, you first lay out what it's going to look like. You do your drawings. You send them out. You get them costed out, and once you know the full cost, that's when you sit down and you say, how are we going to pay for this?

Not this current group of NDP, Mr. Speaker. What they do is, first of all, they start building a stadium without knowing what it's going to look like. They haven't even finalized what it is that they want to build, and then when they start talking about what it is they would like, they talk about their wish list. They're actually sort of building a wish list. Now they're going to try to find out—as they're starting the construction—now they're trying to find out what it's going to cost. The initial cost—is it around \$110-115 million? All of a sudden, without even getting the hole dug, they've already had a cost

overrun of between 50 and 60 million dollars, and I think they're floating the idea of it's about \$150-160-170 million. They haven't quite come down on the price.

Mr. Speaker, more than likely, the cost of that stadium is going to be in the ballpark of \$200 million, but, again, we don't know what they're going to build, so nobody has an idea, but if you look at the plans that were sort of drawn for the first round, the kind of pictures, you're probably looking at approximately a \$200-million building. If that's scaled back, the price will obviously come down.

Well, Mr. Speaker, would it not make sense to indicate what it is you're going to build, cost it out, and then take that cost and say to the people of Manitoba, if you would like a new stadium, this is going to be the price. But not in the current NDP world that Manitoba lives in. I understand that the project has sort of been put on hold. We understand that they sort of are proceeding with it. Nobody knows what the drawings are. Nobody knows what it's going to look like and nobody knows who's in, who's out and who's got money involved.

This is a substantial public project, Mr. Speaker. Even if—even if you bring in some private partners, there's still going to be a lot of public money in and the public has a right to know what it's going to look like and what it's going to cost and how it's going to be paid for. The public has a right.

* (16:50)

In fact, someone was indicating, I think it was the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), that if you look at city hall projects, all get vetted through city hall. There's a real process, and here, what do we get? Everything behind closed doors. Everything is secretive. Nothing is accurate. There is no truth, no reality, no nothing, and the public, somehow, at the end is going to be expected to pay for it.

If that isn't an indication of a tired, desperate, failed and weak government, I don't know what is, because how in heaven's name can you be going into a project between 160 and 200 million dollars without a drawing, without a costing, without knowing who's involved? They are going to commit us into a project that none of us, most members in this Chamber, we don't know, Mr. Speaker. We don't have a clue, and you know what? The only one does is the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and he's not telling us. Nobody in the Cabinet, nobody on the backbenches has a clue what's happening with that stadium project

and we—[interjection]. I hear from across the way it's going to get built. At what cost? And it's silent across the way now.

They can heckle little, funny comments, but, in the end, it's the taxpayer. It's going to be the people of Springfield and East St. Paul. It's going to be the people of Rossmere. It's going to be the people of Kildonan. It's going to be the people of Gimli and Brandon and all over this province from north to south, from east to west. They are going to be the ones who are going to end up footing the bill. This is not a joke. It's not funny. What it shows is you have a tired, desperate, failed, weak government, and it's a dangerous position for this province to be in, Mr. Speaker.

It's dangerous for us to have individuals sitting here and getting us committed into projects, whether it's the disastrous west-side hydro line or a stadium that they've already started to dig a hole with without drawings and without knowing the cost of it. It is time for a change in Manitoba, and I would suggest we would start that with at least voting for this proper amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), who lays it out very, very succinctly and very clearly.

I would like to point out to this House that in contrast to this very tired, desperate, failed and weak government, the NDP government, you have, for instance, here on the government side, you have a generation of young, bright, strong, energetic, forward-looking individuals. I would like to point out the Leader of the Opposition, two young children getting involved in sports. Deputy leader, young family, starting to get involved in youth sports. Oh, the Finance critic, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), her children involved in youth sport. You have the Healthy Living, seniors and youth critic, the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), children involved in youth sport in the education system. We have the Education critic, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen). His three kids involved in youth sport, involved in the education system, and myself, three kids involved in youth sport.

What you have is a whole group of energetic, strong, forward-looking MLAs who actually get it. And, you know, I started this speech, Mr. Speaker, about the Throne Speech showed that they don't get it and, on this side, we do get it. We are in the public schools with our families. We are going to Christmas concerts. We do sit in the arenas and soccer pitches

and volleyball and basketball. We are there. We are in the communities. We know what's going on and we are not this tired, desperate, failed, weak NDP government that gets itself mired, mired in a pit at the University of Manitoba. They've dug a huge pit without having a drawing that they can come down on for a stadium. They don't even know what the cost is.

It is time for a strong, energetic, forward-thinking leader, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Fort Whyte. That's what we need for this province. We need the member for Fort Whyte to take over and start driving this province and the economy in the right direction. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we would never start a project—we would never start a project—without the drawings, without the financing in place, without knowing who's going to help pay for it. We would do due diligence because, unlike members opposite, we respect the taxpayer, and I said in the beginning, I believe that being here in this Chamber is actually a privilege and not a right. We should be good stewards of the public money, which members aren't, opposite from us, that would start projects, that would do a west-side hydro line which is going to end up being double what it should be by going down the west side instead of the east side, who'd start a project at the University of Manitoba without a costing.

It is time for a change, and I would suggest we start in this House by voting for the amendment to this Throne Speech. And I look forward to hearing more debate, and I appreciate the time given to myself today to put a few comments on the record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): I'm honoured to be speaking here today in support of this government's Throne Speech and not the amendment suggested by the opposition.

Let me first take a moment to thank my constituents for allowing me to be here. Their trust and support is not something I take for granted, and I think one of the best parts of this job is how well you get to know the people in your community. I get to know the families, not just at the school that my daughters attend but at all the schools in the area. I've made friends through my work as an MLA at the community centre, the local daycares, and at various community functions.

Southdale has always been a great place to live and raise my family, but I see so many familiar faces

now at the grocery store or when I'm walking the dog that I have to say it feels a lot like I'm living in a small town. There are some other important people in my life that I'd like to thank right now. I would like to thank them, but three of the most important people in my life have forbidden me to mention their names out loud. I am still allowed to stand near them in public for now anyway, but I am not to draw attention to the fact that I'm related to them. Welcome to grade 5, I guess. So, instead, I will just say thank you to my family. I know they give up a lot for me to be here, but the best part is they believe in what my colleagues and I are doing here and they understand why it's so important. And I couldn't do it without the support of my entire family. So thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech began with listing just some of the things that our government, along with the people of Manitoba, have accomplished over the past decade. It spoke of opening new hospitals and health-care facilities, of modernizing colleges and universities, and the Throne Speech drew attention to some of our signature buildings, such as the MTS Centre, the new Hydro building, just as the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the stadium will also become signature buildings.

But there's one signature building that was not included on the list, the newly expanded Southdale Community Centre. It's on track to open this spring, and I invite all of you to strap on your skates and come and visit when it does. Not only does the expansion include a second full-size indoor hockey rink but also a pleasure skating rink, and I believe it's the first of its kind in this province. It's a beautiful space with a glass front overlooking a treed area. It's going to be gorgeous. The executive and management of the community centre should be very proud of themselves. Folks in my community dream big, but they also get things done. And, by working so closely together these last three years, we've

become more than just neighbours. We've become friends, and I want to thank them for all their support.

The Southdale Community Centre isn't the only construction site or new building in my constituency. The Island Lakes Community School has four permanent new classrooms added in a seamless transition which means that the kindergarten class has moved back into a regular classroom and once again freed up space for the school's music program. I'm looking forward to December when I get to hear not only the guitar students from Island Lakes school but from kids across Southdale at all the school holiday concerts.

Another great thing about being an MLA, you get to watch not only your children and their friends grow up but children right across the constituency from school concerts to graduations. You really get to be a part of so many people's lives.

At the corner of Beaverhill and Vermillion, you might also notice another signature building in Southdale, the newest phase of Rainbow Day Nursery. It's a beautiful building with space for 100 children and an outdoor play area for the smallest ones. The project is a wonderful example of what this government does best, work co-operatively with the community and business to build projects that benefit everyone. This is a busy corner of Southdale and could have easily been home to a new store or a restaurant, but the Borger family has deep roots in Southdale, and they knew that daycare is what we needed. And so together with the folks at Rainbow and our government—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 22, 2010

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