

Fourth Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Coverage of Insulin Pumps

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Insulin pumps cost over \$6,500.

The cost of diabetes in the Manitoba government in 2005 will be approximately \$214.4 million. Each day 16 Manitobans are diagnosed with the disease compared to the national average of 11 new cases daily.

Good blood sugar control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50 percent, blindness by 76 percent, nerve damage by 60 percent, cardiac disease by 35 percent and even amputations.

Diabetes is an epidemic in our province and will become an unprecedented drain on our struggling health care system if we do not take action now.

The benefit of having an insulin pump is it allows the person living with this life-altering disease to obtain sugar control and become much healthier, complication-free individuals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) of Manitoba to consider covering the cost of insulin pumps that are prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor under the Manitoba Health Insurance program.

Submitted by Verne Slater, Robert Burgess, Erik Olson and many, many others.

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

Amending of The Architects Act

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

On September 16, 2005, the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench revealed a significant conflict between The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act and The Architects Act.

Currently architects are exempt from The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act, but engineers are not exempt from The Architects Act.

This decision will have a negative effect on the province's building and construction industries, increase costs to municipalities and other levels of government, lead to a brain drain, increase red tape and delay projects.

Previous to the ruling, a choice existed between engaging architects or engineers to perform specified work according to their disciplines while protecting the safety of the public as guided by the Manitoba Building Code.

Over the last seven years, the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) has rejected the two negotiated solutions. Therefore, legislative change is the only reasonable and sustainable solution.

Given the ruling's implementation date is immediate, we call on the government to take appropriate steps in changing the legislation during the current session.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Premier (Mr. Doer) to consider amending The Architects Act to provide engineers an exemption similar to that enjoyed by the architects under The Engineering and Geoscientific Professions Act.

Signed by A. Dilschneider, D. Park, S. Handberg and many, many others.

* (13:35)

Crocus Investment Fund

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Government was made aware of serious problems involving the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

As a direct result of the government ignoring red flags back in 2001, over 33 000 Crocus investors lost over \$60 million.

Manitoba's provincial auditor stated: "We believe the department was aware of red flags at Crocus and failed to follow up on those in a timely way."

The relationship between some union leaders, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP seems to be the primary reason as for why the government ignored the red flags.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider the need to seek clarification on why the government did not act on fixing the Crocus Fund back in 2001.

Signed by Michael Townsley, Rita Townsley, Mark Townsley and many, many others.

Provincial Road 340

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo towards Wawanesa, would address the last few neglected kilometres of this road and increase the safety of motorists who travel on it.

Heavy traffic has increased on PR 340 due to the many large farms involved in potato and hog production, agriculture related businesses, Hutterite colonies and the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. A fully paved road would support local business and lessen the damage to vehicles.

Annual average traffic volumes on PR 340 are increasing with commuter traffic from Wawanesa, Stockton, Nesbitt and surrounding farms to Shilo and Brandon.

The arrival of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 2004 and increased employment at the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon means there has been an influx of new families in the area. Improving the rural highway infrastructure in this location will

be an additional reason for these families and others to settle and stay in the area.

Access to the Criddle-Vane Homestead Provincial Park would be greatly enhanced.

PR 340 is an alternate route for many motorists travelling to Brandon coming off of PTH 2 east and to Winnipeg via the Trans Canada Highway No. 1. This upgrade would also ease the traffic congestion on PTH 10.

All Manitobans deserve a safe and well-maintained rural highway infrastructure.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) to consider hard surfacing of the unpaved portion of PR 340, south of Canadian Forces Base Shilo, towards Wawanesa.

This petition is signed by Ben Wester, Dylan Emmett, Harry Walsh and many, many others.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The Dental Association Amendment Act

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 6, The Dental Association Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l' Association dentaire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: This act will amend the existing act in order to clarify the responsibilities of dental hygienists in regard to supervision and professional practice.

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

Bill 5—The Dental Hygienists Act

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 5, The Dental Hygienists Act; Loi sur les hygiénistes dentaires, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, this act will create the College of Dental Hygienists, and it will allow dental hygienists to practise under their own college for supervision and for professional standards. We are

optimistic that this will lead to more dental hygienists' services being available in a variety of settings but, particularly, long-term care and northern communities.

* (13:40)

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Milltown Academy eight Grades 8 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Ron Kleinsasser. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Flu Pandemic Government Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government, Manitobans health care system is in a crisis. Doctors are leaving the province. Emergency rooms are closing. Wait-lists are skyrocketing. Our health care system under this NDP government is strained to the limit.

Mr. Speaker, we know that other provinces have faced public health emergencies, and we know that there is a possibility of a public health pandemic in Manitoba. I ask this Premier what steps has he taken to ensure that Manitobans will be safe in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the public health legislation was passed a few years ago that, of course, gave us authority to deal with many of the issues of public health and safety. It was considered at the time to be the first in Canada and the most comprehensive. We have three binders, not three separate binders, but three binders that have been prepared by our public Chief Medical Officer and by the veterinary people.

We have hired and provided for the first chief vet of any province in Canada because we know the unfortunate crossover of animal disease to human disease based on the SARS research and the avian flu information out of China. Just on Thursday, this

document, a summary of the document that was available in binder form in much larger basis was made available on the Internet for the public. It is on our Web site but that does not mean to say that daily the people that are responsible for public safety and health are not working on fine-tuning the procedures, fine-tuning the policies, fine-tuning the advice to government.

When we get advice about certain legislative issues that we have to change we will change it. For example, we are now working on, and I will be sharing this with the House, if people are quarantined, Mr. Speaker, right now they have the ability to quarantine an individual but there is no protection, for example, for their job. Most employers would not cause any problems. So there is a lot of detailed work continuing on public health and safety here in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the reason that this issue is being raised today is because, unfortunately, under this Premier and this NDP government, they cannot even handle the health care system we have in Manitoba let alone what might be facing. That is why this is a very serious issue. I would ask the Premier, it is very interesting that he makes comments about three stacks of binders and all sorts of binders on the Internet. We know that they rushed to put a document out on October 26. This is a very serious issue, and I am not asking about a public relations exercise. I am simply saying because this Premier is incapable of handling the current health care system, in the event of a crisis, what assurance, what plan does he have in place to ensure that Manitobans will be safe in the event of a pandemic flu that hit our province.

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, this was put on the Internet last week but it was not rushed to do it yesterday when the H5 case took place. Secondly, under legislation that we brought in there are protocols in place, I understand, with regional health authorities across the province. We are now meeting again with the municipalities on this issue. We were the first province in Canada to hire a chief vet, the first province in Canada to hire a chief vet in recognition of the fact that in some parts of the world so far there has been crossover between animal health issues and human health issues.

We think we have very good public health people. Dr. Kettner has been working with Ottawa, with Dr. Butler and all the other provinces. Even

with no incidents of SARS, a couple of years ago we created a containment unit and a crisis exercise that took place. Obviously the experts have learned from that experience, and we continue to work with the experts in the field. I think we have very good experts here in Manitoba with Dr. Kettner and Dr. Lees, and I have a lot of faith in their abilities, capacities to work, and recommendations they would make to government.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is not those officials that we are worried about. It is this Premier that we are worried about because what we are hearing today is that if there is a pandemic flu breakout everybody is going to get a binder. Well, this is a very serious issue. We all understand that across this province we are short doctors and nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing under this Premier's watch with health care, unprecedented numbers of people having to take the highways to get health care. Manitobans deserve assurance from the First Minister of this province that they will be safe in the event of a flu pandemic. I simply ask the Premier what is his plan to ensure that Manitobans will be safe in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak.

Mr. Doer: First of all, Mr. Speaker, we have the largest inoculation program on a per capita basis (a) in the history of Manitoba, and (b) on a per capita basis, probably one of the largest in Canada. Secondly, we have 602 000 vials of Tamiflu vaccine in place here in Manitoba. Thirdly, we are the first province in Canada to establish a chief vet in the province. Fourthly, we think we have one of the finest chief medical officers in Canada with Dr. Kettner. Fifthly, we, of course, reviewed some of these plans on the meeting that took place with the member opposite. I think he was the only other leader that attended that meeting on August 3. We will be having other meetings that will take place.

We have 242 more doctors than we had a few years ago. We have more nurses than we had a few years ago. We have more diagnostic equipment than we had a few years ago, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, all of this work is a work in progress. It is always a work in progress. To say that 602 000 vials of Tamiflu is just binders, I think is really providing disservice to the great medical experts we have in this province.

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

Election Financing Union and Corporate Contributions

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

Here in Manitoba The Elections Finances Act bans unions and corporations from making donations to political parties. A corporation cannot simply tap its employees on the shoulder and request donations to be collected by the corporation and then simply turned over to a political party. Mr. Speaker, the reason that cannot be done is because that is against the law, yet the unions have been doing just that. Unions have been collecting money from an individual worker and then sending it over to the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, why has this Premier, the leader of the NDP, allowed his own party to break the law?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are the only political party that has not been charged and convicted under the elections law in the last number of years, point No. 1. Point No. 2, the Chief Electoral Officer a year ago raised issues of bundling. We said we would—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: We said that that will not be allowed. I am bringing in legislation in the next couple of weeks to disallow that. Mr. Speaker, I am also bringing in legislation to disallow major loans like \$100,000 from a corporation or an individual corporate entity to a political party.

* (13:50)

The Chief Electoral Officer has already dealt with this issue, and I have already stated that I will bring in a law to clarify that that is not allowed in Manitoba.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that there is something different between changing legislation and breaking the law. That is what has been going on. Yesterday, when we posed these questions, we understand the Premier refused to answer them.

We asked the question specifically on why the NDP has failed to report and account for all in-kind donations. Let me repeat it is against the law for unions to make monetary contributions to political parties. For the record, and I would like to quote,

back in the 1999 election campaign, what this Premier did he put out a press release, and in the press release he said, "The limiting of political party contributions solely to individuals, for example, will help curb the perception of some that influence can be exerted through our current political donations system." Your words, Mr. Premier. That is what you said. Mr. Speaker, this Premier and his party found a way to subvert their own law.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Premier if he will come clean today and admit that his party, under his leadership, broke the law.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year in committee, the Chief Electoral Officer was at committee, it is all in Hansard. There were issues raised about the practice. The Chief Electoral Officer stated that he investigated the practice and ruled that it was not quote, "illegal under the act." Having said that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I said at the time that I would review it. I also said, and members opposite know because during the technical committees that all parties are participating with, we stated that we would change the law. I think the practice of bundling and the practice of loans, in my view, is not consistent with the spirit of the act, and the practice of loans of \$100,000 from an individual that is well over the \$3,000 limit and the other practices of bundling are going to be prohibited in law consistent with the spirit that we will be free of fear and favour.

I would ask the members opposite are they going to make it legal again for unions and corporations to donate to political parties. Yes or no?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers.

Mr. Murray: This Premier tries to muddy the waters by saying bundling is one thing and then somehow he is going to change legislation so that what took place in the last election cannot happen in the sense that an individual can give money that is authorized by Elections Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, that is legal. What he is doing is illegal.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote back to the Premier from his own press release in 1999 where he said to the Manitoba public, "It may mean," and I hope that they listen—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier said in 1999, during the election campaign, "It may mean less money available for the main parties, but it is a good price to pay, I believe, to help reduce the widespread cynicism and disgust that we hear every day from Manitobans."

* (13:55)

I know that the well-trained seals applaud on the applaud sign, but I would ask them to listen to the rest of what I am going to say that are this Premier's words. He went on to say it is time that changes were made to ensure that money and influence do not speak louder than the voices of everyday Manitobans. That is what this Premier said.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just read back the words that the Premier said in 1999, and I would ask this Premier, who is the self-described ethics commissioner of his party, will he finally live up to his own words and direct that his party repays the monies it received in breach of his own law.

Mr. Doer: The Chief Electoral Officer has already dealt with the issue of union or corporate donations. I am proud of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the perception of authority dealing with government decisions has been removed with banning union and corporate donations.

I want to say the underwriters from the sale of MTS—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: The cost to rural telephone subscribers, 68 percent; CIBC, Wood Gundy, \$5,000 to the Tories; Midland Walwyn Incorporation, \$69,000; Nesbitt Burns, \$39,000; Wellington West, \$41,800; Bieber Securities, \$12,000; a total of \$168,000 for the theft of the Manitoba Telephone System. We are glad we banned that, Mr. Speaker.

Floodway Expansion Labour Agreement

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Events of the last year highlight the importance of ensuring that all publicly funded projects be carried out in a fair and open and transparent way with no ability to flow taxpayers' dollars to political friends. Will the minister responsible for the floodway expansion admit that his forced unionization labour agreement is simply about directing funds from Manitoba taxpayers' pockets to the Manitoba union bosses?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you how glad I am to be able to answer in this House a question about the floodway expansion and indicate that, thanks to this government working co-operatively with the federal government, it is now under construction. It is going to protect 450 000 Manitobans, and I can assure members opposite and particularly this member that the only funnelling that is going to take place is the funnelling of the water around the city of Winnipeg in a 1-in-700-year flood.

Mr. Penner: The NDP forced project management agreement of the floodway expansion is a deliberate systemic scheme to divert millions of taxpayers' dollars to their union friends. Why is the minister so intent on funnelling millions of dollars from forced unionization contributions into the pockets of the NDP's friends, the labour union bosses?

* (14:00)

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think in the previous session of the Legislature they asked more questions on this issue than any issue including agriculture. I do want to put on the record that, despite all the doom and gloom from members opposite, we are now seeing not only the construction of the channel itself but we have seen many Manitoba companies, both unionized and non-unionized, bid on contracts. In fact, we have already tendered a number of significant contracts. The floodway expansion is underway despite the efforts of the members opposite and because this is a government that is committed to protecting 460 000 Manitobans.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the Doer government did everything possible to ignore all the red flags at Crocus. They did everything possible to distance themselves from

all of the internal and external warnings. The Crocus scandal and cover-up go to the highest levels of this NDP government. What is the Premier afraid of? If he has nothing to hide he would call an independent public inquiry.

I ask the Minister of Finance to demand that the Premier (Mr. Doer) call an independent public inquiry.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when we brought forward a new Auditor General's Act in 2001, we put a specific clause in that legislation that allows the Auditor to go into, and I quote, "A business entity or organization that is issued a share, debt obligation, or other security if a person is eligible for a tax credit under our Manitoba law in respective ownership or acquisition of this security."

This is the broadest scope of any Auditor General's legislation in the country, and it gave our Auditor General all the powers he needed to fully investigate the matters under review at the Crocus Fund. That is why we do not need an inquiry. It has been done, 245 pages.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, former NDP minister, MaryAnn Mihychuk admitted that labour-sponsored funds were a regular and a consistent topic at the ministerial level. She also admitted that department officials had raised flags and issues of concern. She said she is prepared to testify under oath at an independent public inquiry. The Prime Minister called for an independent public inquiry into the federal sponsorship scandal because he had nothing to hide. Why will this Premier not call an independent public inquiry into Crocus? Is it because, in fact, he has something to hide?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I think this is the seventh call for a public inquiry from members opposite in the last couple of years. The Auditor General reported twice to this Legislature on the Crocus Fund, once in 1998 he reported a study of investment disclosure practices. He stated that information on investment is readily available to the public and is similar to what a mutual fund reports dealing with Crocus and ENSIS.

Subsequent to that the Minister of Finance passed very, very extensive legislation allowing the Auditor General to go into any company that has dealings with the provincial government, any private company including Crocus. We backed that up with a letter last February, Mr. Speaker, so the Auditor

General can go into Isobord and deal with the \$7 million loss the Tories had and the \$30 million, \$7 million loss to Crocus and the \$30 million loss to the government. They can go into Winnport and deal with the \$7 million loss to Crocus and the \$6 million loss to taxpayers. It can go into Westsun. It can go into CalWest. It can go into the arena deal. It has the authority to go into private companies.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I heard very specifically that the critic for the Department of Finance had asked the question to the Minister of Finance. That does not give the Premier latitude.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, my interpretation, and if my hearing is correct, the first question, yes, was directed to the Minister of Finance. The second question, the last two sentences were "Is it because you have something to hide that you are not calling an inquiry?" and that was directed directly to the Premier of the province, who is the First Minister in this House.

I have to rule, and I will check Hansard after Question Period. That is my interpretation of what I heard and I only can go on what the members ask. I have to rule that the member does not have a point of order because the question was directed to the First Minister, in my interpretation.

Viewpoints Research Inc. Government Contracts

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for Workers Compensation Board. We have had recently come to our attention that a half-a-million-dollar contract has been awarded by Workers Compensation Board to Viewpoints Research, a company with direct connections to the office of the Premier (Mr. Doer). Viewpoints did not clearly win this contract and yet an unprecedented five-year contract was awarded.

I would like to know, and the public would like to know what is the criteria that was used to award this contract or was it done on a political basis.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the WCB has a board of directors that has a procurement policy, and the tendering and the awarding of any contracts to outside agencies are awarded in concert with that procurement policy.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, it is quite curious the WCB would be doing polling to begin with. Will the government table the questions that were included in that poll conducted by Viewpoints? The public needs to be satisfied that Ginny Devine's company was not polling on behalf of her husband.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have copies of my conflict-of-interest disclosure forms that go back to 1999, in terms of Workers Compensation, prior to my election as Premier. It is fully disclosed including the contract of 12 months ago.

I am the first Premier that has had a spouse who has an independent career, Mr. Speaker, and I would expect certain behaviour from members opposite, certain matters of dignity, that we extend to other spouses. There is a law, it is in place and I would expect that the kind of dignity of this office be maintained because there are laws and rules and it goes both ways.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that those of us who hold elected office are often held to a higher standard. This Premier has said that he is a self-appointed ethics commissioner of this government. We would like to know if the Premier believes that this awarding of this contract meets the sniff test.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Norrie has been appointed unanimously by all members of this Chamber to be the ethics commissioner, and I would take Mr. Norrie's word over the guttersnipes of the members opposite.

Viewpoints Research Inc. Government Contracts

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago the Premier stood in his place and read a list of contributions that were made to the Conservative party from corporations, and he took great umbrage at the fact that this was happening. Equally, this is a repugnant situation.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, the Premier says there is no conflict when workers are being tapped on the shoulder and told to contribute to the NDP. The Premier says there is no conflict when his wife gets a contract with government agencies. He is the self-appointed ethics commissioner. He has said that. He said that he is the self-appointed commissioner for the NDP, but he is also the Premier of this province.

Does he, as Premier, think that it is appropriate for someone as close as his spouse to be receiving public funds from government contracts, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): The WCB is an arm's-length agency with a tripartite board representing employers, the public interest and employees, Mr. Speaker. They have a procurement policy and any tendering of contracts is awarded in regard to that public policy that is set by the board of directors.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stood in his place and said that Mr. Norrie is the ethics commissioner. In fact, he is the conflict of interest commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, my second question has to do with core values and those are the core values of the Premier of this province. It is a question about perception. Does the Premier think it is appropriate for his wife to be securing contracts from agencies in government, knowing full well that the perceptions of her relationship to the Premier may be influencing the awarding of these contracts?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, my wife and my spouse is not my chattel. She is an independent individual. I am the first Premier to have a spouse, as I understand it, that has her own business career. There might be other persons that might occupy this office that might have a spouse that has an independent business career, and I would hope that all individuals—

Some Honourable members: Oh, oh

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I would hope that all individuals, and we know that all individuals, must comply fully to the conflict-of-interest legislation. This contract to Workers Compensation was disclosed in 1999 when members opposite, some of them were in Cabinet. I daresay that, because it is an arm's-length agency of government, they had no involvement in it, and it was disclosed well over a year ago in terms of the

requirements of the law. It was also reviewed with the conflict of interest commissioner and, as I say, Mr. Speaker, the law is the law, and I follow it.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, if this were not happening repeatedly, one might be forgiving. But we have just received information that, indeed, another contract has been discovered, and I would like to table the letter that was received through Freedom of Information for the House.

Mr. Speaker, once again, we learn that MPI has awarded a contract that is worth almost \$100,000 to the Premier's wife. This is on top of the \$500,000 from Workers Compensation and on top of \$35,000 from the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

I want to ask the Premier if he thinks that this is an appropriate way to do business in this province, Mr. Speaker. Does this meet his sniff test?

Mr. Doer: You know, just learned, Mr. Speaker, all contracts with any government entity should be disclosed at the earliest point of knowledge in the conflict-of-interest guidelines or forms that are signed. This was signed a couple of years ago. I do not even believe, to the best of my knowledge, it even applies today in terms of a current contract. I will double-check that because I just filled in my conflict-of-interest guidelines for this session, and I did not file that. I do not believe it applies in this session of the Legislature.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Follow-up Treatment for Adults

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, compared to their peers, youth leaving the care of child welfare agencies are being consigned to a cycle of persistent poverty, are more dependent on adult social assistance and too many end up in the mental health or criminal justice systems. Consistently I hear that the government's own child welfare system is worsening crime in Manitoba because too many children who have been in care are being thrown inadequately prepared onto the streets.

My question to the minister responsible for our child welfare system: Why is it that too many children, particularly those with significant mental health issues like fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, are being thrown at age 18 onto the streets without any sort of transition approach or support network being provided?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, Mr. Speaker, we have

done a lot of work around FASD. There is a lot more to do. We are working with our non-profit organizations as well as with the various mental health associations throughout this province to deal with the multiple issues that we know youth are facing. We have also, I think, for the first time in the history of the province, taken a lot of action on the prevention of FAS or FASD. It is 100 percent preventable, and we have also worked, I have worked with my colleagues in Cabinet as we have rolled out to the Fetal Alcohol Family Association of Manitoba. We have increased their budget by over 50 percent. We have expanded the STOP FAS program, which is a program of visitation for women who may be using alcohol during pregnancy and, of course, through Healthy Baby.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, there is abundant evidence to attest to the problem of an inadequate transition at age 18 as this report I tabled shows. The minister is trying to defend the indefensible. It is indefensible that her own programs are now one of the root causes of crime in this province. Children who have been in her child welfare system are being victimized and criminalized because her approach is inadequate. I ask the minister responsible for child welfare in Manitoba why her own programs are being run in a way that contributes to crime rather than preventing it.

Ms. Melnick: Well, I have to question the appropriateness of completely negating all the efforts of the non-profit organizations and the incredible medical people in our province who are working with us around this challenge of FAS-FASD on the prevention side as well as on the individuals who are currently suffering with that. We have a deputy minister's committee. We will be receiving recommendations on that, but I really must question the judgment of the member from River Heights who is completely negating all the efforts that have been started in this province.

Crocus Investment Fund Public Inquiry

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to all Manitobans, if not, and I emphasize this, that there needs to be an independent public inquiry into the Crocus Fund. Thirty-three thousand Manitobans have lost in excess of \$60 million. The primary reason for that is because of that special relationship this Premier and this government have with the union movement. I would suggest to you that there is a very strong relationship. We see them

in bed in many situations together. We see them breaking the intent of the election laws of our province. We have seen many things that clearly establish that this government has a bias that is towards the unions which is to the detriment of our province. I am asking the Premier today to acknowledge the need for an independent inquiry of the whole Crocus fiasco which he is responsible for.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I outlined a number of co-investments made by the provincial government with Crocus that resulted in major losses to the taxpayers and to the Crocus shareholders. I mentioned one of the so-called dogs, the three dogs that were co-investments between the provincial government in '96 and '97 and the losses that ultimately and regrettably accrued to both the shareholders and to members of the taxpayers. I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that one of those entities was Isobord, and I mentioned that the provincial government lost close to \$30 million on Isobord. Mr. Speaker, the Crocus shareholders lost \$7 million under the former Cabinet minister who is sitting in front of you. The federal government lost \$12 million. The Auditor General in Manitoba has complete authority to investigate all those private and public transactions.

* (14:20)

Crystal Meth Comprehensive Government Strategy

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Healthy Living and Manitoba Justice announced today a comprehensive Manitoba Meth Strategy to restrict supply and reduce demand for crystal meth in Manitoba. Could the Minister of Healthy Living elaborate on how this strategy will prevent the widespread use of this destructive use in Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive meth strategy announced today does have a two-pronged approach to restrict the supply and, perhaps even more importantly, reduce the demand of crystal meth in Manitoba. Our strategy has a strong prevention focus.

Joining with us today is the Province of Saskatchewan in restricting the sale of single-source pseudoephedrine products, unfortunately, the preferred ingredient for meth cookers here in Manitoba. They are going to be available only in

pharmacies behind the counter, and quantities for purchase will be limited to 3600 milligrams. We are also increasing our investment to mental health and addictions programs here in Manitoba. We know from our research that users of crystal meth are indeed those afflicted—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Viewpoints Research Inc. Government Contracts

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has taken umbrage at the questions that we have just been asking regarding Viewpoints Research. I wonder if he has any other information about other contracts by Viewpoints Research with other agencies or departments of government.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I have had some occasion during my practice as a lawyer to deal with issues of conflict of interest. I think it is very clear that we have legislation in this Chamber that all members must adhere to that requires disclosure of any conflicts or potential conflict, and, secondly, offers that forum to provide public knowledge and information with respect to these kinds of issues.

Mr. Speaker, in the modern world where a man and a woman have opportunities to both work, conflict of interest affords the opportunity for the public to know that an individual can carry on a job and still be married. That is very embedded within our own legislation and is reflected in the forums that we provide. All members must provide it.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Diwali

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that today is Diwali Day, which celebrates the Hindu Festival of Lights.

This last weekend I had the privilege to attend, along with the member from Radisson, the ICHA, the Indo-Canadian Heritage Association. Diwali honours the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, good luck, riches and generosity. According to the Hindu faith she will visit every home during the festival. The festival commemorates many events that hold historical significance in the Hindu faith. For example, on the day preceding Diwali, Lord

Krishna killed the demon King Narakaasur and rescued 16 000 people from his captivity.

For this reason, Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil. Diwali also celebrates the return of Lord Rama from exile. It is believed that his people lit up the way home for him with oil lamps, hence the significance of lights. During the festival, Hindu families will exchange gifts like candles and celebrate with fireworks.

I would like to wish Manitobans, Indian and Sikh communities, health, prosperity and good fortune as they celebrate Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prendergast Centre

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention to the House to the volunteers of Prendergast Centre in Windsor Park. As a result of their hard work and commitment of our government, construction is underway on a new roof for the centre. The new roof will keep winter heating costs down and enhance the safety and appearance of the building. Funding of the new roof was provided by the Province through its Community Places grant.

Prendergast Centre is a public school that houses numerous community programs, such as day care used by 300 children, Anglophone and Francophone seniors' groups and a Louis Riel School Division alternative schooling program. Founded in 1983, Prendergast Centre is funded through fundraising efforts and user groups with some assistance from the Province.

There are always a lot of activities going on at Prendergast Centre. I had the privilege of attending a meeting at the centre a few weeks ago and was very impressed at the large number and variety of people using the facility together. There were bingo games being played and kids playing on the grounds. Last Wednesday, I had a great time at their soup and bunwich event, which I always attend and am always very well fed and treated to good conversation with the seniors.

Prendergast Centre would not operate so smoothly without community-minded people like Arleen Stege, Ray Henson, Dana Gregoire and Germaine Montsion, who work very hard to get things done at the centre. I encourage the people of Windsor Park to check out what is going on at the Prendergast Centre and get involved in the recreational activities that are always taking place. The centre is one of many great things about

Windsor Park, a model community of good neighbours and good people. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Government Ethics

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, while the federal sponsorship scandal is taking centre stage in Ottawa, Manitobans clearly have more than their fair share of scandals to be concerned with. Despite this Premier's assertion that he acts as the ethics commissioner for this NDP government it is clear to this side of the House and to all Manitobans that taxpayer dollars are being used in questionable ventures by this government.

Last month we learned that the Workers Compensation Board had awarded a \$500,000 five-year contract to Viewpoints Research Ltd., a polling company with extremely close ties to this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this NDP government. Last month, we also learned that the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission had awarded three contracts, a total commitment of more than \$30,000 to Viewpoints Research Ltd., and today we learn that Manitoba Public Insurance paid nearly \$100,000 to that same polling company, Viewpoints Research Ltd., co-owned by the Premier's wife.

We have also seen the NDP force non-unionized companies to pay union dues through the project labour agreement for the floodway expansion. This is obviously a deliberate scheme to divert millions of taxpayer dollars to the NDP's union friends. Under this NDP government, this self-proclaimed ethics commissioner, we have also seen more than 33 000 Manitobans lose more than \$60 million in the Crocus Fund scandal. Now we see that unions have been collecting money from individual workers and sending it to the NDP party in direct contravention to the Manitoba Elections Finances Act. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans do have their own scandals to be concerned about. Thank you.

Aboriginal Youth Awards Dinner

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the achievements of a remarkable young man from Lac Brochet named Jack Denechezhe. Jack was one of 14 young Aboriginal Manitobans who were recognized at the 12th annual Aboriginal Youth Awards dinner on October 21. This was Mr. Denechezhe's second award. In 2003, Mr. Denechezhe was awarded the Dene Go Theh Achievement Award. This year, he was given the award for Employment in a Traditional Field.

Jack Denechezhe, a 23-year-old from Lac Brochet, was born in Winnipeg but has lived in Lac Brochet all of his life. He speaks Dene and has lived a traditional lifestyle from birth. As the oldest of his siblings, Jack has been a caregiver for and a role model to the rest of his family.

* (14:30)

Mr. Denechezhe was nominated for the award by Hotilnene Kgotine Denegothe Inc. for work that he has done as a youth camp leader and a community teacher for the three years. Mr. Denechezhe is a strong role model for the youth in his community. For the last three years, he has taught young people in his community how to survive on the land. In 2002, Mr. Denechezhe received six weeks of training for a Rediscovery Youth Camp in Vancouver, B.C. It was there that he learned canoe safety and wilderness first aid. Upon completion of this program, he returned to Lac Brochet to work with local youth. Mr. Denechezhe enjoys contemporary music and hopes to pursue a career as a performer.

Mr. Speaker, Thursday, October 20, 2005, marked the 12th annual Aboriginal Youth Awards dinner. The dinner gives the Aboriginal community an opportunity to combat harmful stereotypes by showcasing the best and brightest of Manitoba's Aboriginal youth.

The awards were established in 1994, and thanks to corporate sponsorship the number of awards presented has doubled since then. Fourteen awards are now presented in a wide array of areas from athletics to academics to entrepreneurship. The awards have engendered much public interest, and attendance has doubled in the last few years.

On behalf of the Legislature, I would like to thank Darlene Daniels, the awards committee chairwoman, the corporate sponsors of the awards dinner and the Aboriginal teenaged and young adult award recipients.

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

Mr. Jennissen: The young award winners are an inspiration not only to First Nations people but also to all Manitobans and all Canadians. Thank you.

Electoral Reform

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, across Canada on the news networks we are hearing from Mr. Jack Layton talking about what he believes is very important ethics and accountability in

government, and he is making reference to, of course, Mr. Broadbent's proposal that indicates that there is a seven-point ethics package which is critically important in today's reality.

The purpose for me standing today is to make the suggestion that the NDP MLAs listen to what their federal leader and former leader are saying in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. If you look over their seven points, there are two of them, points two and four, that I really want to emphasize.

Point four is: Our present system does not reflect Canadian voters' intentions. Fairness means we need a mixed electoral system that combines individual constituency-based MPs with proportional representation.

That is something which the NDP on the federal level have actually been advocating for many years. In the province of Manitoba, where they actually have the opportunity to make a difference, Mr. Speaker, they are doing nothing. In fact, the legislative changes that they have made to date have done more to cripple democracy in our province than to put it ahead.

I challenge the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province to do what is right, to listen to what Ed Broadbent and Jack Layton are saying, to listen to what the NDP membership, I believe, wants to see with this government, and that is to bring genuine reform.

The other point is point two: Election dates should be fixed. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that we should be moving toward fixed election dates. I would suggest to the Premier that the next election should be in October of 2007. The Premier has an opportunity, a real opportunity, if he wants legitimate electoral reform, he can lead his party across Canada by demonstrating that it is not just the NDP out of power that want to see change, but that even a premier that is NDP would be in favour.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE

(Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment

thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I voluntarily give up my time so that more of the members of this House on both sides can speak on the precious opportunity to participate in the Throne debate.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, this Doer government is bankrupting Manitoba. This Premier (Mr. Doer) is a luxury Manitobans cannot afford. Six years and seven throne speeches later, and less hope, less vision, less excitement across the way. As I sat and I watched, you actually would have thought that they were slowly, slowly being read to sleep.

If there is one silver lining to this speech, it is that we know that this speech will only be a little better than the even worse speech next year, because we have noticed every year the speeches get worse and worse, less hope, less enthusiasm, less of a plan, less of a vision, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk today about the fact that this Doer government is bankrupting Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We find out that this Premier has become a luxury that Manitobans cannot afford. I want to talk about inheritance because really that is what this Legislature is all about. What will the proceeding generations inherit from us, this current group of 57 legislators?

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in an immigrant family. My family came here after having lost everything in World War II, and it was said to us on almost a daily basis, they would say to us, "Kids, get an education; get a university degree; get a good job." We want to push the next generation that one or two rungs up the ladder. Then we expect of you to do the same to the next generation. You should always be moving the next generation upward. It is called the inheritance, and it is not just about inheriting money. It is about inheriting a philosophy that we want to improve every generation that follows. It is about the future.

What I have noticed over the years here in this Legislature, in this province, I have learned some very hard lessons about what socialism really is. I have studied socialism. I studied socialist countries across the historical span of the last hundred-some years, but I have never actually seen it in action in its truest form. What I found out from this Doer government, from a socialist government, is that

spending is all about the here and now. It has very little concern about tomorrow, the generations that follow.

What we have seen is a time of clearly unprecedented federal transfers, the kind of federal transfers that the previous government would have been in heaven with, Mr. Speaker. They just would not have been able to know what to do with all the money. At a time when you have such unprecedented transfers of money to a government, we find that not just is that money being spent, but, more importantly, we are going into debt. In government, as in personal lives, when you start getting into onerous debt financing, it is a cancer, a financial cancer on the system, on the family or, in this case, on a government.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It is very unfortunate that we find that the provincial debt of this province is in and around \$20.5 billion. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not million, that is \$20.5 billion, and the only reason why we keep our credit rating at this current rate is because of low interest rates. Alas, if you watch the reports coming out from the federal government, interest rates are going to continue to go up. They are increasing, and, as we add to our provincial debt, I understand that our interest payments right now are in and around \$700,000. That is as much as a floodway every year that we take and, rather than we deciding as a Legislature where those monies should go, those monies automatically go outside of this province, go to other individuals, other organizations, other institutions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what will happen in time if this government, this Doer government, does not get a handle on its overexpenditures, on its driving up the public debt, the cancer of that debt will slowly start to eat at our ability to fund health care, a very important institution to Manitobans. It will impede our ability to finance education, whether it be K to Senior 4 or post-secondary education, something we hold very dear, something that we use to monitor how we do as a society. If we do not get our expenditures under control, that \$20.5 billion, and counting, and going up and increasing on a daily basis, we will impede our ability to finance social services, those who need the help the most. The cancer will affect all departments.

Look at our highways. We know for a fact rather than moving forward on the highways and roads deficit, the infrastructure deficit, we are going

backwards. It is in the billions of dollars. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that if we are supposed to spend \$300 million this year and we do not, that is added to the infrastructure deficit. So, not just do we have a \$20.5 billion debt on Manitoba, we have an increasing infrastructure debt, and who is going to be expected to pay for that someday?

Mr. Speaker, the 57 of us sit here and make decisions for not just our children but for the grandchildren and for those to come. I look at the big public works projects that this government has on the agenda, and all of them are worthy, they are necessary, and it is not a bad thing that the government does public works projects where obviously private industry, it does not make any sense for them to be involved.

We applaud the government, that they are taking Duff Roblin's project and renovating it, clearly, a project, a vision set out by Duff Roblin. What we are seeing is a minor renovation, but we know that that is going to add money onto the debt. We realize that. We see a Hydro tower, the Hydro tower which, from what we understand, is part of an agreement. The price ticket seems to be escalating considerably. That will also add on to the deficit. We see a lot of other projects, all publicly funded, which will add to the deficit. All of them are worthy in their own, but, Mr. Speaker, when the floodway is complete and the last shovel has been pulled out of the ground, I ask this Chamber how many jobs are going to then be created after Duff Roblin's ditch has been renovated. How many jobs will then have been created?

Mr. Speaker, with the Hydro project, the new building, basically, we are going to move individuals from one building into another building. There might be some jobs created, but not a lot of jobs are going to be created, and as we go through project by project by public works project, I ask you, after we have established this debt, what jobs are going to be created in Manitoba that are going to help to pay off that debt.

This summer I happened to be in Aylmer, Ontario. In that region, in and around London, Ontario there is a new auto manufacturing plant going in. They were not quite sure of how many people were going to work there, anywhere from 2000 to 4000 people. In total they were thinking that 15 000 people were going to move into the area. That is where real wealth is created. They will be manufacturing parts, buying the materials to manufacture the parts, and then those parts will be

sold and real wealth will be generated. We need those kinds of projects. Yes, we need a renovation of Duff Roblin's floodway. Yes, we need to live up to our obligations with Hydro, but where is the job creation component of this?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I read with great interest and saw the statistics of a report that came out that talked about job creation in Manitoba, and it is of great concern when we find out that, by and large, the bulk of the jobs being created in Manitoba right now are public-service jobs. Not that we do not want public-service jobs created and not that they are not necessary; in fact, they more than likely are very necessary, but the question is where are the private-sector jobs. Where are the manufacturing jobs? We cannot just keep running up the debt. We cannot just be working on public works projects and employing Manitobans through government dollars without real jobs being created that are going to add money into the Treasury, because the day will come when we will have to start paying off the debt.

Mr. Speaker, there is another sign that causes myself as a young family parent here in Manitoba and that is there is a statistic out that we have one of the lowest paid work forces in Canada. That must cause concern even to a socialist government like the Doer government, because that is from where we get our tax dollars, and if we are losing our high paid tax dollars, those jobs, to other jurisdictions, then we have a problem.

Over the years I have been tracking labour statistics, and bear with me if I get involved in labour statistics here, but we have seen over the years, and I would quote some numbers for this House. In September of 1999, this is the labour force actual, 592 400. By August of 2005, the last numbers I have in my book, we have 620 400 individuals in the actual labour force. Considering the kind of public works dollars that are being spent, that is such a small increase in the labour force. We are finding out that, actually, the amount of people working, the numbers are not changing much either. What we are seeing is a levelling off or a contracting of the economy. The numbers will fluctuate a little bit, but by and large the numbers are not accelerating, according to the kind of money that government is paying on large public works projects.

You have to remember that it is people who are working who pay taxes, who fund the kinds of things that our government currently is trying to pay for. When you start looking at labour stats, and every

time they come out there is a warning to the government, careful, the numbers do not look good, there seems to be some kind of a problem within our economy. Yes, we have low unemployment rates, but we also have a stagnant unemployment force. We are not creating a lot more jobs; we are not creating a lot more people looking for jobs. It is all staying stagnant. At best it is levelling off and at worst we are seeing a contracting economy. That, Mr. Speaker, is very scary.

So, when you start to combine all of these things, Mr. Speaker, we see the kind of great social institutions that, frankly, we all enjoy. I am the first one to admit I have used our health care system, had a broken ankle, I went and I had my health care. But that will not be sustainable if we continue with the kind of highest taxes, low job creation, at best government jobs, at worst stagnant job creation, lowest paid workforce. That culminated with a deficit that is spiralling out of control.

I am going to give another example to this House. We keep hearing about Conawapa, worthy project if we are, you know, in need of more electricity. Clearly, we want to sell more electricity to North America and have more electricity here for at home, but in 1997, '98, '99 and the first few years of this current government, the price of Conawapa was \$5.4 billion. In fact, it kept carrying on in the Doer government. I said to my colleagues if we wait another 30 years, at this rate we will get it for free because with inflation, actually, the price was coming down. Then for a while it went down to \$5 billion. It was just a while ago the *Free Press* reported that all of a sudden Conawapa was \$10 billion. Now, clearly, a moving target and, frankly, Conawapa is probably going to be looking at anywhere around \$5 to \$10 billion.

*(14:50)

If we were to expend \$10 billion on Conawapa, a project that at its time I am sure will be very much needed, we make no money off of the asset but have to expend the \$10 billion right up front, and then we start making money on the asset. Mr. Speaker, a debt then of an extra \$10 billion on the \$20 billion, a \$30-billion debt, makes me concerned, because remember Conawapa will not generate income until the asset is completely built. That has to be a problem, and I know it is a problem for individuals. As I go from Gateway community club to the south side of the city, as I travel in other towns and cities from Steinbach to Brandon, as I talk to individuals in

the communities, and I lay out for them that the Doer government is bankrupting Manitoba, as I lay out for them the concerns that I have as one Manitoban who is trying to raise his family here in Manitoba, individuals will say to me, "You know what, that is clearly a problem."

I believe that Manitobans are starting to catch onto that, after six years and seven throne speeches, nothing. There was not even excitement on that side of the House, and there is not excitement. Once in a while the applause sign goes on and you hear all the backbenchers, "Oh!" and then they go back to sleep again and they wait for the next applause sign to come on.

Mr. Speaker, we know that, at a time when you have unprecedented income, federal transfers from the federal government, we have unprecedented spending by this provincial government and unprecedented increase in the provincial debt. All of those give a very, very bleak picture for the future because, with all the different statistics coming in, no matter how good this Premier (Mr. Doer) spins and spins, he will not be able to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Once this economy takes a hit, if we see, like we are seeing at the federal level, interest rates continue to increase, it will impede this socialist government's ability to pay back not just the deficit or the mortgage, but the interest that is going to be incurred because of the increase in this debt.

Very concerning for this side of the House is the fact that there is no end in sight. There is not a time when, during the Throne Speech, the "D" word was mentioned. Never once did this government talk about the fact that the deficit is ballooning completely out of control, and that is very worrisome for those individuals who live in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, almost on all respects, we are the highest taxed in Manitoba, and if this Premier and this minister do not keep their spending in check, all the advantages that we have seen over the years will slowly be clawed away from us. We have not seen the unprecedented kind of increases in our services that we have seen lately under this NDP government. And they still crow about it being the lowest Hydro and the lowest electrical rates in the country. At the rate they are going, at the rate that they are spending, they are putting that into jeopardy. That should be one little benefit of ours. Instead, they are putting that benefit into question.

I believe we had an amazing opportunity when the federal government started to extend an increase

in federal transfer payments to build a stronger province. We have a province rich in natural resources, rich in people. We have basically everything and anything that you could ever want. I cannot understand why it is, in that climate, in a province where we have so much wealth, when Manitoba Hydro is far greater than Alberta's oil patch. We should be the electrical sheiks of the world. Instead, what we are seeing is they are bankrupting this province. I do not understand it, and I do not think it bodes well for this province.

This was a disastrous Throne Speech, and I can only hope that the next one is better. But I place no hope into that. I would call this government, when they bring down their budget, that they start dealing with this onerous mortgage, this onerous mortgage they are putting on our young children and denying our children a proper heritage as future citizens of this fine province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk to the government's Throne Speech. When I look at this Throne Speech, I am reminded of the Biblical proverb: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." One of the problems that we see with this Throne Speech is that the NDP no longer appear to have any real governing purpose, any sense of direction or vision of where they would like to lead the province. The Throne Speech was bankrupt of ideas, was supposed to be about the future, but what we got was a rehash of old news, old announcements, not much of a new vision there.

This list of past events and old announcements sort of looked as if the NDP wanted to lead us back into the past instead of taking us forward into the future. You know, perhaps that is what we might have expected from the NDP, to take us backwards. That is not what most people in Manitoba would like.

What is particularly telling was that there was a Hydro re-announcement that was held in the morning apparently in an attempt to cover up the major deficiencies in the Throne Speech. A re-announcement, I say, because much of what was in that announcement had been announced earlier in September. Normally, a government avoids any other major announcements on Throne Speech day because they do not want anything to detract from the Throne Speech itself. But here we have a government trying to bury the Throne Speech with a Hydro photo op, a very peculiar objective or plan for the government and another demonstration that they

did not have much substance in their Throne Speech and not much vision. When there is no vision, the people are going to be hurt and not benefit to the extent that they should. When you look at the lack of content and major shortcomings in areas of public safety, health care, the economy and the environment, it adds up to a very disappointing Throne Speech.

Safety as an issue was buried in the middle of this unimpressive Throne Speech, and given how this concern about safety has been front and centre recently in our province, because citizens are concerned about walking out on the streets of Winnipeg at night, and we have had an innocent bystander shot in the middle of gang warfare occurring in our streets, the Throne Speech should have led off with a major effort to address safety and security. As many have pointed out in recent years, governments which can no longer ensure the safety and security of their citizens start to lose moral legitimacy. It is too bad to have to say this, but that, in fact, is what is happening with this NDP government. They are losing their moral legitimacy.

What we got at the beginning of this Throne Speech was a history lesson on preparing for emergencies dating back to 2002, with only a vague glimpse into the future, quote, "New legislation will be introduced this session to enhance our capability to deal with emergencies." No description, no details, nothing more than that. Not very inspiring.

So I remind the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP that, where you do not have a vision, you are not going to benefit the people, and people are going to be hurting. Indeed, that is exactly what we are seeing with the problems with crime. What the NDP have done is the same old thing for six years, and it has not worked because the problem with crime has got worse and not better. We need to have a much more focussed and changed effort. As we have suggested, the department of public safety which can bring together the various activities to make sure that we have safe streets, that we have a Cabinet subcommittee working and dedicated to this particular area, bringing together people in the Health Department, Family Services and various ministers, a focussed effort to make sure that our citizens can be ensured that the streets and the communities will be safe.

* (15:00)

There was no mention at all of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in the Throne Speech. Why?

Nobody knows. It is a rather important issue, but clearly the NDP are not very concerned about this. The NDP are not concerned or have no real plan in addressing the causes of crime. Statistic after statistic shows that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder children and youth are at much higher risk, because of their mental condition, of being victimized or criminalized. Yet we still do not have a screening program for all children to ensure that they are not slipping through the cracks.

We still do not have an assessment program for youth who come into contact and are charged with criminal offences. Increasingly, experts from across the country are saying you must assess young offenders for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders because it is very prevalent and because they need to be treated differently. They have a problem, a mental health problem, a real physical problem. With children and young adults and adults with FASD, there are difficulties telling right from wrong, and they need a different kind of approach, otherwise the likelihood of them reoffending when they are put back on the streets is high.

So it is very important to treat and to prevent to improve our approach to the causes of crime, the root causes of crime, but we did not see that in this Throne Speech, and the NDP have let us down for this reason.

On health care, we have gone from one crisis to another in the health care system under the NDP. The Throne Speech should have addressed health care in a much more meaningful fashion. It should have, as we have suggested, introduced a legal right to timely access to quality care and a mechanism to implement this. The government has tried to tinker around the edges. Too many of their efforts in the past have failed, and we still have long waiting lists. We still do not have the kind of approach that we need to prevent health problems and keep people well that we need to have.

There is not sufficient commitment to make a difference, and we see that day after day in what is happening in the health care system. Even in areas, as for example, the Victoria General Hospital, the government said they were going to make sure the maternity ward was there in an important role in the southern part of Winnipeg. Then earlier this year they closed the maternity ward. They closed the maternity ward.

One would have expected some vision for what the future is going to hold. We heard from the

Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) something about midwifery, but no, no, they seem to have forgotten this issue completely, deep-sixed it, as it were, and have no idea of really where they are going. I continue to hear problems. People getting maternity services, who are coming from south Winnipeg, who are being referred, for example, to St. Boniface and not being able to get exactly what they should be getting.

Some of the major issues which were there when the NDP came to power, problems with early childhood tooth decay, are still there in a major way. We do not have the focussed effort to prevent this preventable problem. Very little has been accomplished in six years. It has been six lost years under this government. What we are doing is spending a fortune, taking people down at age two, children down at age two, because they have failed to prevent the problem and have focussed solely on providing surgery for children aged two rather than preventing the problem as they should have done in the first place.

Diabetes, and today is the start of Diabetes Month. Oh, we have an epidemic of diabetes in this province. That epidemic is continuing under this government. There is no sign at all that they have even come to grips with this. There is no sign of a turnaround after six years that the incidence and the prevalence of diabetes keep going up and up and up. The measures that the government has taken in six years have been ineffective and yet, we do not have a plan in this Throne Speech. There is no focussed effort to make a difference. There is no vision.

What we have here, Mr. Speaker, is an NDP government in denial of the problems, trying to divert people to other things instead of trying to address the real issues in Manitoba. There is not the vision that there should have been. There is not a focussed effort that there should have been and we are shorter and less well off because of that.

The Throne Speech should have provided the approach to ensuring that our economy is doing well. Each year under this government, at the beginning of the year, there are promises, suggestions that Manitoba is going to grow and grow and grow and, each year, at the end of the year when we actually have the results, Manitoba has grown less well than the rest of Canada, sometimes much less well than the rest of Canada. You know, all this rhetoric and flowery talk by the end of the year, when we analyze the results, shows that we are falling further behind

the rest of Canada. Not a government which even recognizes the problem. Not a government which has provided the mix of programming, from changes to taxes to changes to the approach to entrepreneurs. What I hear from entrepreneurs is that, with this NDP government, instead of looking at investing in Manitoba, they want to fly over it, because they know that this NDP government has sadly not provided the right kind of climate. We still have too many young people leaving, and we are not attracting the young people to grow this province, as we should be, from other provinces in Canada.

The Throne Speech should have tackled much better than it did the quality of education. The Throne Speech should have indicated a willingness to tackle in a meaningful way the Capital Region issues, but it did not.

Where was tourism in this Throne Speech? The NDP appear to have no interest in tourism. You know, there are abundant opportunities. To cite just one small one in the Pembina constituency, the Morden Museum, a beautiful opportunity to enhance the tourism possibilities of Manitoba and to build the kind of opportunities that will increase tourism to this province, but no, no, they are not particularly—*[interjection]*

Yes, well, the NDP fossils, it might bring it too close to home. They have certainly, in Morden it is the largest collection of marine reptile fossils in all of Canada, and yet it is not getting any interest from the governing New Democratic Party.

* (15:10)

You know, even where they are addressing things in some of the ridings that they are looking after, when we actually compare it, many of the NDP ridings are among the poorest of ridings with some of the most problems. Why is it that they cannot even look after their own people in their own constituencies well? Surely, there should have been much better in many areas from this Throne Speech, but there was not.

Let us look at environmental issues. You know, we are now 15 years after 1990, and our greenhouse gas emissions are up some 11 percent from 1990. We are farther away from the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6 percent below the levels in 1990 than we were when this government came to office. We are getting farther away from the target instead of nearer to it. Sad commentary, but that is the reality.

Recently, a very careful audit of protected areas, of policy and activities by the provincial NDP government gave the government an F. In recent history it is almost unprecedented to give a government an F in this area because they have performed so badly. They avoided even mentioning this in the Throne Speech because it might have made them look bad.

The government has neglected their promise to work with the federal government to establish the Lowlands National Park. They had lots of opportunity over the last six years, but their own lack of any real interest in this area seems to have put the establishment of a park off till whoever knows when in the future. Lake Winnipegosis: there is still not, after six years, any plan to restore the walleye, the pickerel fishery to its historic levels.

Even when it comes to enforcing existing environmental legislation, as the Provincial Council of Women pointed out, the NDP are breaking their own environmental laws. They are breaking the laws of this province by not having the roundtable on sustainable development sitting and providing and working, providing advice on a regular basis. Well, when we look up north, one of the worst toxic mine waste tailings in all of Canada is to be found at the Sherridon mine. It is in desperate need of intervention to contain the leakage of harmful metals and chemicals, and yet where is this NDP government? The MLA from Flin Flon has known about this problem since before 1999, and yet there has been no significant progress in more than six years, six lost years, six lost years under this government. When we come to environmental issues, we now know why this government wanted to abolish the Manitoba Environmental Council. They did not want anybody looking at how bad they were handling environmental issues.

When it comes to physical infrastructure, you know, the government produced a 2020 report. It was not even mentioned in the Throne Speech. There were some not bad things in that report. But, no, they seemed to have deep-sixed that report. The MLA from Transcona worked quite hard on that. But it is very sad that the ideas that he worked so hard on just have not been supported by his government and by this Throne Speech. Infrastructure in this province, the highways, the bridges and so on need more attention from that. There are areas in southern Manitoba where the problems of not keeping roads up to RTAC standards are significant. They are hurting the economy. This government is not doing

its job, and because it has not paid attention to infrastructure, our economy and our well-being is suffering.

Human capital: there have been calls, and we have made those calls, as well, to overhaul the social assistance program to address the concerns and issues around poverty in this province. But the NDP government is just content to maintain the status quo with all its problems. They are content to keep people in poverty rather than to try to make some changes that could make a difference.

When it comes to the Métis in Manitoba, there has been an opportunity to provide good co-operation and a working environment together with Métis people around Manitoba, but this government has chosen time and time and time again to be confrontational with Métis people instead of co-operating and working together with the citizens, the Métis citizens of this province.

My colleague the MLA for Inkster has brought forward some substantive proposals for electoral reform. The Throne Speech could have included a plan for electoral reform. Many other provinces are recognizing the need for electoral change and reform, but this government, no, it has its head in the sand. It is content with the status quo. They do not want change or reform or improvement in Manitoba. Boy, it is sad. Six lost years, in many ways, under this government, and now the government is promising us one more last year.

A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided a plan to make Manitoba a have-province and to change things so that youth want to stay in Manitoba and so that young people from elsewhere want to come here. A Liberal Throne Speech would have introduced reforms to the social programs to provide a legal guarantee of timely access to quality health care and a process to implement it. A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided for major changes to our social assistance and child welfare programs so that we can help those who are vulnerable and less fortunate instead of producing a situation where they are all too often victimized and criminalized. A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided an action-oriented approach to address critical environmental issues around the province. A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided for improved drainage and water management to help farmers, to reduce the risks, the substantial risks, that we saw this year of farming in this province. A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided—

An Honourable Member: A Liberal Throne Speech is 28 seats away.

Mr. Gerrard: We are coming. We are coming on those 28 seats.

A Liberal Throne Speech would have provided for better co-operative efforts for people around this province to improve Manitoba instead of trying to deep-six innovative ideas as this NDP government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I now move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster,

THAT the Motion be amended by deleting items (d), (l) and (n) in the amendment and by adding at the end of item (z) the following words:

(aa) the government's failure to commit to completely eliminate all education tax on farmland, and to move to 80 percent provincial funding of education instead of the present level of less than 60 percent;

(bb) the government's failure to commit to legislate a legal right to timely access to quality health care and to provide for an approach which implements this right;

(cc) the government's failure to commit to the principle of accountability in the delivery of public health care services in Manitoba;

(dd) the government's failure to provide for and to deliver on a vision for its direction in health care in Manitoba as exemplified by the closure of the maternity ward at Victoria General Hospital without an adequate plan for the future;

(ee) the government's failure to recognize the importance of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and the government's failure to adequately provide for the critical need to diagnose and treat this condition well and to reduce the incidents of FASD and crime in Manitoba;

(ff) the government's failure to adequately address the causes of crime;

(gg) the government's failure to address poverty in Manitoba including overhauling the present social assistance system;

(hh) the government's failure to provide for an adequate approach to drainage and water management in Manitoba in order to provide for better support for farmers;

(ii) the government's failure to recognize the urgent need to contain the leakage of toxic metals and other chemicals from the very large toxic waste tailings pile at Sherridon in northern Manitoba;

(jj) the government's failure to develop a plan to restore the walleye (pickerel) fishery on Lake Winnipegosis to its historic levels;

(kk) the government's failure to deliver on their promise of establishing, in co-operation with the federal government, the Lowlands National Park;

(ll) the government's failure to provide for an adequate plan to develop the tourism industry in Manitoba;

(mm) the government's failure to work co-operatively with the Métis people of Manitoba in order to improve conditions for all Manitobans;

(nn) the government's failure to commit to a process leading to electoral reform and improved democracy in Manitoba.

* (15:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for River Heights—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense. The Chair finds the subamendment is in order.

An Honourable Member: Are you sure?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sure.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am not sure if I can follow such an incredibly enthusiastic speech from the member from River Heights, but I will try my best, Mr. Speaker.

This is the sixth Throne Speech that I have listened to in this House, and, regrettably, Mr. Speaker, there has been a continued narrowing of the vision set forth by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and this Province. Unfortunately, there is really not much in this Throne Speech for Manitobans unless, of course, you are a union boss or maybe a member of the Hells Angels.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve better than the tired, empty rhetoric that they get from this government. A common theme that we see of this government is promises made and promises broken. Promises after promises after promises,

announcements after announcements after announcements, but very, very little action, and Manitobans are tired of the empty rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that Manitobans deserved a clear vision from their government in this Throne Speech. We believe that they deserve sensible solutions to problems facing our province. We believe that they deserve hope for the future, and particularly our young people who want to stay here in Manitoba and want to live and work and raise their families here in Manitoba. But, really, there was nothing in this Throne Speech that provides them hope and opportunity for the future here in Manitoba.

We also believe that Manitobans deserve a government that does not accept or strive for mediocrity, and that is what we have seen from this government time and time again by not creating a sound economic environment with lower taxation and something that is more competitive than what we are right now. We are forcing people to leave, Mr. Speaker, and it is obviously the strive to mediocrity that we do not accept on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is the role of the government to encourage progress and opportunity and not to hinder it. This is, again, my sixth Throne Speech in this Legislature and each Throne Speech that I have heard continues to hinder the opportunity of, indeed, all Manitobans, but particularly young people here in this province. We think that that is rather unfortunate.

What Manitobans got is that this government that just delivered its seventh Throne Speech and all we heard was the same recycled promises and the same feel-good rhetoric. Empty rhetoric, again, broken promises, unprecedented debt, this really is the legacy of this government. Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech contained the phrase "since 1999" 17 times. It is time for them to get out of the 1990s and into today and the future, which they should be planning for, for the future of our young people in this province. We need to stop going back and looking back and blaming the days of the 1990s, everything that they have not been able to achieve, which they have not been able to achieve much, I have to say, but at least they can start looking forward and have a true vision and provide hope and opportunity for the future of young people in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, needless to say, I certainly will not be voting in favour of this Throne Speech for

many reasons. I am going to elaborate on these reasons for the next 30 minutes or so. Sorry, 20 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, there is no strategy in this Throne Speech to deal with the growing debt. We now see it at \$20 billion. *[interjection]* Sorry, \$30 billion will be next year. But we are at \$20 billion now, some \$3.5 billion more since this government came to office in 1999. The debt is growing by more than \$1.5 million a day, which is absolutely unacceptable and is essentially mortgaging our children's future in our province.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no strategy for economic growth in our province. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that under-resources our police officers. We came up with a plan that involved a hundred new police officers on our streets, and all the Premier (Mr. Doer) could do is stand up and say, "These are virtual police officers." Well, I would like to see where his police officers are, because they seem not to be on the streets. They seem to be more a phantom or virtual than what he is claiming they are. So we would like to see more in that area too.

We will not vote for a Throne Speech that does not address the gang, drug and violence problems in our province. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that offers no hope for Manitobans waiting in pain. I will not vote for a Throne Speech that does not address the crisis in rural health care. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that offers no support for Manitobans assessed large ambulance transfer bills in this province, Mr. Speaker. This Throne Speech shows the NDP government has absolutely no new ideas on how to sustain agriculture, as well, in this province.

So, just to elaborate on a few of these areas, let us talk taxes. Mr. Speaker, we wanted to see the complete elimination of education property taxes on residential property and farmland. This Throne Speech failed to provide the tax relief Manitobans are demanding. Anything short of the total elimination of this tax is unacceptable.

We wanted to see tax cuts that would ensure that we are no longer the highest-taxed province in Canada. Unfortunately, this Throne Speech has failed to do that as well. There is absolutely no new tax cuts announced in this Throne Speech. The tax cuts that we have seen have been announced before. They are re-announced, and there is no new tax relief for Manitobans.

Let us look at economic growth and job creation, or lack thereof, in Manitoba. At a time of unprecedented revenue in this province, this government has failed again to show any recognition that a thriving and competitive tax environment is essential to making Manitoba an attractive place in which to live and do business. There was nothing in this Throne Speech to show that this government is making economic growth and job creation priorities. As a matter of fact, the only job creation or growth in this province, if at all, because certainly we are seeing a decline in the private sector, is actually in the public sector. So it seems to be the strategy of this government, when it comes to a job creation strategy, to hire more people in government, and that is the way they are going to create a thriving economy in Manitoba. Well, let me tell you, that is not the way it is done. Clearly, they just do not quite get that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech provided no long-term economic vision. Manitoba has one of the lowest average weekly wages in Canada. We have ranked ninth out of 10 provinces in job growth over the past two years.

One thing that they neglected to mention in this Throne Speech, as well, another thing, is the debt. Well, of course, why would they want to mention something that is a negative factor for the children of our province? This government continues to mortgage our children's future. This Throne Speech failed to even mention the provincial debt, which is at its highest level in the history of our province, in and around \$20 billion, again, growing at \$1.5 million per day.

*(15:30)

Since 1999, this government has operated with little accountability or fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans are now facing a growing debt that threatens the financial strength and future prosperity of the province. The provincial debt continues, again, as I said earlier, to grow by \$1.5 million a day, and perhaps the most alarming number of all to me is that the cost of servicing the debt this year will be \$767 million.

Just think of all of the hip replacements that you could do, that could be performed. Think of all the knee replacements. Think of all the things that we could do for the social infrastructure in our province. Think of all the money that we could give back to Manitobans in the way of tax relief, some of their hard-earned tax dollars from that \$767 million. That,

to me, is one of the most alarming numbers that we have seen.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech delivered no economic plan to make Manitoba an attractive place to live, work and raise our families; therefore, another reason why I will not be able to vote in favour of this Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to touch on the justice area or, again, lack thereof, in this province. If we look at gangs, the biggest disappointment and the biggest failure of the government in this Throne Speech is that there was virtually nothing to address the growing gang problem in this province. We need more than empty promises and hollow announcements. Manitobans need swift, tough actions.

Manitobans deserve to feel safe, and as former Mayor Giuliani of New York once stated, "Once people feel safe, they can go about living their daily lives without fear and can contribute to the economy." So I think this government can actually learn from former Mayor Giuliani and some of the things that he has done and did in New York to clean up the crime problem and make a safe environment for citizens in that community.

Under the watch of the NDP, we have seen the Hells Angels and the Bandidos move into Manitoba. Under the watch of the NDP, we have seen the growth of gang activity and violence in our communities. Mr. Speaker, the City of Winnipeg has announced a strategy to deal with growing gang violence. We have announced our plan to deal with gang violence and crime in the city and the province. This government has announced nothing. The Premier (Mr. Doer) says he is going to add more prosecutors to the gang unit. Unfortunately, without more police on the streets to arrest the criminals in the first place, we are not going to have the need for additional prosecutors.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the meth strategy. We have been talking about the meth crisis for a long time. Why has it taken this government so long to act? Why will they not lay out specific details of their plan? Crystal meth has taken hold of our province and our youth, and we must take decisive action now.

Mr. Speaker, enough is enough. Manitobans are increasingly frustrated with the proliferation of drugs, gangs and violence throughout the province. Manitobans have said enough is enough.

We urge the government to put partisan politics aside for the sake of Manitobans and to look seriously at the recommendations we proposed in our action plan for safe communities: Funding for at least an additional 100 officers for Winnipeg—those are not virtual officers; those are real, live officers on the streets of Manitoba—funding for at least an additional five officers for Brandon; an integrated provincial gang strategy committee; a municipal reserve gang strategy committee; expansion of the police-in-school programs; greater support for parents of drug-addicted children to get help for their children; more beds in detox facilities; electronic monitoring for high-risk gang and sex offenders who are released on conditions of probation.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many reasons why we cannot possibly support this Throne Speech. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that under-resources police officers, and we will not vote for a Throne Speech that does not address the gang, drug and violence problems in our province.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health care, Manitobans deserve timely access to quality health care services, something they are now being denied in our province. We wanted to see a clear plan in this Throne Speech for reducing wait lists, restoring health care services to rural Manitobans and for covering the costs of inter-facility ambulance transfers. This government has had more than six years and seven throne speeches to deal with the crisis in health care, yet they have failed Manitobans.

This Throne Speech offers little comfort to those waiting in pain for surgery and for those whose local emergency rooms are closed, forcing them to travel the highways in order to access health care services. Highway medicine is alive and well, as is hallway medicine, despite the promise by the Premier of this province some almost six or seven years ago in the 1999 campaign of ending hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. Again, promises made and promises broken, Mr. Speaker. How can we trust anything that they are going to introduce now?

There is nothing in this Throne Speech to deal with the crisis in rural health care. Communities throughout Manitoba are facing closed emergency rooms and downgraded services. This Throne Speech offers little hope to patients in Brandon, Ashern, Arborg, Deloraine, Boissevain and so many other communities, all those communities whose local emergency rooms are closed and who are experiencing doctor shortages, and there are many,

many more communities than just the ones that I mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, hallway medicine has given way to highway medicine, although they are both very much alive and well in Manitoba as patients are shipped on Manitoba highways in order to access health care services that are no longer available in their communities. This Throne Speech fails to deal with the ambulance transfer bills that are being sent to rural Manitobans. The government should not be offloading the cost of ambulance transfers onto the backs of patients, yet they continue to do so. This government must take responsibility for their failures in health care and agree to cover the cost of inter-facility ambulance transfers. Stating that they will be looking at addressing the inequities does nothing to help rural Manitobans who continue to be treated as second-class citizens by this government.

I think that their inability to manage the health care crisis and the doctor shortage in this province has caused many of the people from rural Manitoba to be shipped by ambulance to other communities and to Winnipeg. What happens is, if they have to stay more than 24 hours, they will automatically be charged the fee for the ambulance. Well, obviously, that is wrong. The government is not able, first and foremost, to keep those doctors and attract them in those communities, so they have to send these people by ambulance to Winnipeg where these people will have to wait in line in the ERs with everyone else in Winnipeg who is waiting in line for health care in this province. While they are waiting in line and waiting and waiting for 24 hours, 48 hours to get the care that they need, you know, then they get home, they are finally getting a little bit better and what do they get? They get a bill in the mail. Well, clearly, there is something wrong with that. I think that there are probably many members opposite who are getting phone calls from people in their communities who are extremely concerned about this issue. Obviously, we have come up with a strategy for dealing with this issue. We believe that all inter-facility ambulance transfers should be covered because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, we will not vote for a Throne Speech that offers no hope to Manitobans waiting in pain. We will not vote for a Throne Speech that does not address the crisis in rural health care, and we will not vote for a Throne Speech that offers no support for Manitobans assessed large ambulance transfer bills.

This government has an opportunity. We have been consistent in our message when it comes to dealing with the wait list crisis that plagues the citizens within our communities. We have talked time and time again about the need for change within the delivery of health care services in our province, yet this government continues to refuse to look at our alternatives to some of the ills that are faced with the waiting lists. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I wish they would listen and I wish they would listen hard, because people across this province are wanting answers. They want to get off waiting lists. They are waiting in pain. We are looking at people waiting for hip and knee replacement surgery. We are looking at children who are waiting for pediatric dental surgery. These people have been waiting, in the case of the hips and knees, somewhere up to two and three years for their hip and knee replacements.

*(15:40)

The pediatric dental surgery, there was a proposal that was brought forth to this government by the Maples Surgical Centre offering to deplete that list within one year. All of those children would have been off the list by now. All of those dental surgeries would have taken place had the government agreed to contract out with the Maples Surgical Centre, and I know members opposite said and have said, incorrectly, on the record and on radio stations that the proposal actually cost more than it does in the public system. Well, that is dead wrong, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely wrong. The proposal was to do them at cost. That is no profit. It would have been done at less a cost than the public system, but I think what you have to understand, too, is accountability within the health care system itself and what this government cannot say right now if I were to ask them, "How much does it cost to actually perform a hip or knee replacement surgery in this province?"

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Well, you know what? They cannot tell us how much it costs because there is no accountability within the system, and if there is no accountability in the system how do you create efficiencies within a system to be able to free up more money to perform more hip and knee replacement surgeries and so on? I would suggest there are two things: Create accountability within the system, but also look at other innovative ways to deliver health care services in this province and, Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly on this side of the House that public-private partnerships in the delivery of health care services,

again, within the publicly funded system, should absolutely be looked at but, again, in this Throne Speech there is absolutely no vision, no hope for the future of patients waiting in pain.

In conclusion, I think, I have given several reasons, and I could, again, go on and on and on in many other areas. Education, agriculture, so many other areas, conservation, energy, science and technology, world development, water stewardship, Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on with all of the other reasons to vote against this Throne Speech, but I think the Leader of the Opposition has outlined it very well in our amendment here, which I will be supporting. So I will leave my words at that, but, again, I am very disappointed in this government for the sixth year that I have been here in a row.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): It is my pleasure to stand and speak to our latest Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, for the Fourth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature of the Province of Manitoba.

I am pleased first to start by welcoming you back, Sir, to this session and I hope that everything goes smoothly for you in the Chamber activities and do not require your intervention on too many occasions. I would also like to welcome back the table officers that assist us every day in the performance of our duties and for the good work that they have done and no doubt will continue to do in the days and weeks to come. I would also like to welcome our new pages who are with us throughout this session and I wish them every success. I hope that they have an enjoyable experience during their time with us here during this session and that they learn about the democratic process that we have in the province of Manitoba, but as folks have often said I hope that they are not too discouraged about the way they see some of the laws are being made in this province and some of the debates that take place in here. Obviously, it takes place in the spirit of combative nature, but it is all with words and, while we are serious about the issues, we do have the opportunity on many occasions to work together, both opposition and government members, and that has occurred throughout my years here and, I think, our government is proud that we can bring forward policies that all Manitobans can accept as our guides for our way of life.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would first also like to mention, too, that it was a bit of a sad time for me since we last sat in this Legislature. I had, of course, since June we have lost a few friends in the

community of Transcona, folks that were long-time active community residents and volunteers. I would like to mention that Joe Konkin had passed away. Joe had played a significant role first with his union activities as the negotiator and team representative for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers over a number of years prior to his retirement. He has passed away, unfortunately, from cancer. Mr. John Pullen, no stranger to members of this House, also passed away from cancer, and I did a member's statement on that yesterday. John provided unbelievable advice to members of this Legislative Assembly over his years and to the working public and to families here in Manitoba through his efforts to bring forward policy and to work for those improvements to the quality of life that we all enjoy in the province of Manitoba. We have also lost another friend, Helen Schellenberg, long-time family members in the community of Transcona and no strangers to the community of Transcona, a very large family.

We would like to also recognize, and we are saddened by, the passing of Helen Schellenberg as well and for the contribution of these three individuals to our community of Transcona and also to our province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, on a more happier note, I had the opportunity in July of this year to attend the Order of Manitoba ceremonies that occurred here, and I have to say I think it is for the first time perhaps in the history of the community that I am fortunate enough to represent we have an Order of Manitoba representative living within the community, someone who is no stranger to members of this Legislative Assembly or perhaps to the public of Manitoba. That individual happens to be one Martin Johnson, who is a retired firefighter now. He has been retired for a couple of years, but Martin was instrumental in the start-up of the Firefighters Burn Fund and continues to play an active role in that fund and the very good work that that fund does in providing support services to burn victims and their surviving families. Martin was a firefighter for 40 years and of course he has been on the Burn Fund for over 27 years, so he was there from the very beginning. We would like to congratulate Martin Johnson for the work that he has performed on behalf of so many, so many Manitobans. We are indeed pleased and honoured that Martin is a resident of the community of Transcona and that he is a recipient of the Order of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also wish my friends in the Sikh community and the Hindu community here in the province of Manitoba, today is Happy Diwali to all members of the Sikh and Hindu community in the province of Manitoba. This is the Festival of Lights, which is celebrated just before winter on the night of no moon, and that happens to be tonight. So for my colleague the Member for Radisson (Mr. Jha), who is taking part in these services as well, this is an important day for the Hindu and the Sikh communities, so that is I am sure something we can all celebrate together.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn my comments to the Throne Speech, and I listened quite intently to the comments that were made by members opposite with respect to the Throne Speech. One of the things that always strikes me about the way they comment about the Throne Speech is how negative the members of the opposition are.

An Honourable Member: Nabobs of negativism.

Mr. Reid: As my colleague the member from Burrows says, "Nattering nabobs of negativism." It is interesting to note it takes so much energy to be negative. I do not know why for at least once in my years here and watching you as an opposition why you cannot be positive about some of the multitude of good things that are happening in the province of Manitoba. I will go through some of those good things, some of those good things that are happening here in Manitoba. I will touch on them, although there are many more that no doubt can be talked about, perhaps, by others that will speak after me here today and in the coming days.

Mr. Speaker, let us start first with the fact that our government when we came into office in the late fall of 1999, we came forward with a clear strategy where we would try to encourage our young folks to continue with their education here in the province of Manitoba because we saw as a government the key to building our province is a well-educated workforce and young people that are interested in continuing with their education and then staying in the province of Manitoba to work and to raise their families. That was the key to the success of the province as part of the overall strategy to building our province.

We set out, and I am sure some of my colleagues will remember here, the much accomplished *More to Do* brochure that we had during the campaign in '03

and the five points that we have indicated to Manitobans. I will start, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to improve our health care system, and I will go into details about that in a few moments.

* (15:50)

Second point, Mr. Speaker, we will make it easier for young people to stay in Manitoba. The third point is we will continue to strengthen and diversify our economy, and I will talk about that in a few moments. We will make our communities safer and more secure. I will also talk about that in a few moments. We will make Manitoba an even more affordable place to live, and we are accomplishing that as well.

So you can have check marks on each of those headings, as we are making significant progress on those fronts. I am not saying for a moment that we do not have more work to do because we do recognize that there are more challenges that we need to address and more work that needs to be done to address those particular challenges, Mr. Speaker.

Let us start with some of the issues that have been in discussion here in the Legislative Assembly. The floodway expansion, Mr. Speaker, now, I recognize that former Premier Duff Roblin was the visionary or the person spearheading the original construction of the Manitoba floodway, and we have great respect for that vision and for the work that Duff Roblin and his government of the day undertook in protecting the citizens of the city of Winnipeg, because I think that was visionary.

Now we have a Premier (Mr. Doer) in this province who also wishes to continue with a strong vision to further enhance and protect the safety of the public of the province of Manitoba, and we have undertaken some flood remediation strategies in southern Manitoba in partnership with our federal government colleagues. But, also, we have recognized that we need to expand the floodway. We are in that process now, Mr. Speaker, as of September 23 of this year, when our Premier and former-Premier Duff Roblin came together with other members of this Legislature and the federal Parliament to participate in the sod-turning ceremony for the new floodway operations and expansion.

I like to call it the 3-D project. If you will bear with me, Mr. Speaker, I mean no disrespect with respect to the names, but the Doer-Duff ditch seems to be applicable in these cases. The 3-D project, as I call it, will give the opportunity for over 1000

Manitobans to be employed in the building and the expansion of the floodway, and it will create significant job opportunities for members of our province as they contribute towards the building of that floodway.

To give you an example with respect to the floodway, and this is an article that came out about Lafarge Canada which was awarded a \$21-million contract on the floodway expansion project. It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that this is only one of a number of contracts that Lafarge will be involved in. They will be able to employ some 23 workers over the next five years, and it will create 35 new jobs at their Dawson Road facility. That is just one small part of the overall project.

In pre-cast concrete products, the largest pre-cast concrete contract in Manitoba history, this particular floodway project will employ over 1000 people over the next five years. My understanding is that 80 percent of the workers on the first excavation contract are employment-equity Manitobans, First Nations people who are employed now on that particular project, giving opportunities and hope and a future for those people who are employed in that. Barkman Concrete from Steinbach, and I know the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is probably interested in this, was awarded a \$400,000 contract to provide the highway barriers.

Mr. Speaker, John McCallum, a University of Manitoba economist, says that the expansion of the floodway could generate about \$2.5-billion worth of economic activity over the five years of the life of that project. So huge, huge opportunities for the province of Manitoba, and, in fairness, I want to make sure that I pay thanks to the federal government for partnering in this process with us to expand the floodway, but we have visionaries in this province knowing, and our Premier (Mr. Doer), I give him credit for recognizing that we need to expand the floodway and to protect the citizens from what will be a once-in-700-year flood.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government in place that is prepared to recognize and to deal with serious situations and to be able to strike partnership arrangements with our other colleagues to make sure that these types of projects go forward.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I like to think of our government as a builder government. The floodway is just one of many projects that we are involved in. We started with education, as I said before, giving hope and opportunity to our young people, but we

also believe in strategic partnerships or alliances or arrangements with the public and private sector to construct projects like this.

I think back to just recently when we announced the Red River College campus downtown here, and I had the opportunity to tour that facility.

An Honourable Member: Four years ago.

Mr. Reid: Yes, it did start a number of years ago. It was just completed, and we had the opportunity to go through that facility. *[interjection]* Perhaps the Member for Steinbach does not like that project. If he does not like it, I am sure he will say that, but I think it was a good project because it brought folks back downtown into the centre of Winnipeg and gave us the opportunity to have our young folks receive their education right in the centre of the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite were opposed to the demolition of the Eaton's building. We heard in Question Period here that they were opposed to the construction of the new MTS Centre, and we just heard recently how that particular centre now has achieved the one millionth customer going through the doors for that particular facility, and I believe in less than a year. So that is a significant accomplishment.

We have a number of opportunities with respect to our universities which I will talk a bit about in a few moments, regarding education.

Mr. Speaker, Hydro itself now is commencing and the land has been cleared and they are commencing the construction of the new downtown Hydro headquarters building, a state-of-the-art green building, if I can use that term, that will incorporate the latest features with respect to environmental facilities and operations of that particular building.

I am quite proud that our government, as a builder government, again, Mr. Speaker, was able to conclude a power sale to the province of Ontario that will allow for power savings that Manitobans have accumulated with respect to their reduction in hydro-electric power over a period of time, have been able now to save that power and were able to export that power to the province of Ontario, which will generate about half-a-billion dollars over the next six years, I believe, with respect to income for the Province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I know some members in the opposition caucus, at least one member that sits on

the corner bench, talks a bit about how the wind turbine generation project has been a boon to his particular communities, and I know our government is quite proud to be involved through Manitoba Hydro with respect to the construction of those 63 wind turbines at St. Leon that will generate some \$9 million in activity for the landowners in that area. Having met with those folks about a year ago, I can recall the discussion of how they were spreading the wealth to the various folks that live in the area and how fair they were actually working towards to make sure that everyone would benefit from that particular project that is going to generate some 100 megawatts of electricity for Manitoba's export market, in addition to the \$210 million in capital that was involved in the development of that project.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro, this is a short time ago, of course, converted the Selkirk and Brandon coal plants to natural gas turbines so we can use those turbines for supplementary power in the province of Manitoba and, perhaps, for export use. But even more exciting, as a part of our builder government philosophy, building our province for the future, is the fact that we are now engaged in a process that will see the second phase of the Ontario hydro power sale continue in the negotiations process towards the development of hydro-electric dams in northern Manitoba for export power to our sister provinces in Canada, hopefully, and that we will then be able to move forward with the Conawapa Dam and the Wuskwatim Dam projects and, perhaps, others as we move forward with the development of our hydro-electric capacity in Manitoba.

I am also happy that the Throne Speech talked about a home-heating strategy, Mr. Speaker, because this will recognize—

An Honourable Member: Yes, you will raise the price.

Mr. Reid: Well, I know the folks opposite perhaps wanted to go to a market rate with respect to the natural gas prices. Now, if you want to look at the natural gas market prices that were going to occur, that would have meant a 44 percent increase for natural gas consumers in the province of Manitoba. Now, I do not know why you would support that, but that is not something that I support. The fact that we were able to keep our natural gas prices significantly below that, but in the range of less than 10 percent and only have, as we have announced here in this Throne Speech, we will limit the changes in the

natural gas prices in the province of Manitoba to once. That has just occurred as of today, Mr. Speaker, to not allow that change, that second Public Utilities Board application to go forward in February. I think it bodes well for the folks that use natural gas in the province of Manitoba, in particular the residential customers. When you look to our western sister provinces that saw double-digit increases, 20, 25 percent in their natural gas prices for their consumers, you can see Manitobans will be well served by our proposal in the Throne Speech and how we are going to limit the natural price changes.

* (16:00)

I am also proud of the fact that, as a builder government, again, that our government has been involved with Husky Oil and that Husky Oil is going to be building an expansion to their facilities, \$145-million ethanol expansion, that will increase production from 10 million litres per year to 130 million litres a year to allow us to move forward to a 10 percent, I believe there is, ethanol base in our fuel for the province of Manitoba, for our gas usage in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to move for a few moments to health care. I want to talk a bit to some of the good things that have been happening. Now, members opposite I know like to say that there are so many negatives that are happening in this province and it is unfortunate they can only dwell on what they see as the negatives when there are so many positive things that are happening in this province.

We have recognized that, when we came into government, there was a serious problem with respect to the shortage of nurses in our province, the people that provide the bedside care day in and day out in every community of this province. I think back to the comments that were made to our Minister of Health, as we moved towards providing more nurses, more nurse training opportunities for our people in this province, in particular our young people, where we moved our nurse training from some 200 nurses a year that were happening under the previous Tory administration during the 1990s, now we are graduating over 700 nurses a year.

I think just in the last few years, Mr. Speaker, we have 1200 more nurses working within our system than what we had in the dark days of the Tory government, the dark days of the 1990s when the Tories were in power. Of course, I think that their objective then was to undermine the health care

system to cause Manitobans to turn away from the public non-profit health care that we have in our province, in our country. The way they did that was to reduce the training of our doctors and our nurses. We have turned that around.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when we came into office there was a shortage of ambulances in this province. I also remember the fact that my community was also affected and that one of the first things our government did is that we allocated funds for the purchase of 80 new ambulances. Now my community has a new ambulance available to service the citizens of Transcona. Also, there are some 160 new ambulances in the province of Manitoba.

I know I had the opportunity just recently to talk to some folks from Texas on a trade mission that I was involved with—

An Honourable Member: Write it down, FOI, FOI—

Mr. Reid: Yes, you can FOI my own personal expenses, because that is where you will find that involved and I am being upfront with the members. I have nothing to hide because I think Manitoba achieved a significant amount out of Hemispheria 2005, Mr. Speaker, and I think that because we were talking about trade with our Mexican and U.S. partners we will have Hemispheria 2006 in the province of Manitoba in the city of Winnipeg next summer. I encourage all members opposite, if you want to learn more about trade you have to talk to your partners. You have to get involved.

Mr. Speaker, during those particular trade missions that we were involved with I had the chance to talk with folks that were from Texas. We talked about our health care system in Manitoba, in addition to the weather of course, among other things that we would talk about but we also talked about how Texas was so short of nurses and how much they liked the training that Manitoba has for our nurses and that they were under—

An Honourable Member: Yes, because we are sending them all to Texas.

Mr. Reid: No.

An Honourable Member: They love the training.

Mr. Reid: Yes, and that is what you think and that is the message you have been trying to portray. The reality is that those nurses are now returning to the province of Manitoba. In fact, most of the nurses that we have trained here in Manitoba have stayed in Manitoba to work and live. We are quite proud of

our accomplishment in having those nurses trained in Manitoba providing services to Manitobans day in and day out.

Mr. Speaker, we have 235 more doctors in the province of Manitoba than we had in 1999 in the dark days of the Tory government. I saw the sign in my own community just this week on the billboard outside of the shopping centre where the doctors' complex is and the doctors say, "Taking new patients." So we have doctors now that are actually putting up signs saying, "Come on in. Open for business. We are accepting new patients." Positive sign for the community, positive sign for the province.

Mr. Speaker, we have four more MRIs in the province of Manitoba. We have 16 new CT scanners; we have 20 ultrasound machines operating longer hours, providing more services to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. I only need to look at the lists with respect to the MRIs and the CT scans. In the 12 months on the CT scans, in 1998-99, there were 50 900 scans. In the last most recent 12 months, there were 121 000 scans performed in the province of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: That is scans.

Mr. Reid: Scans. Well, that would be the Tory government when you were in operation, and that would be scans. I was here during those days when there were scans that were occurring on your part. So we are more intent on fixing the health care woes that you had left to us, but we are not so interested in what you like to do with respect to election campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite proud of the fact that we have in Manitoba, in the city of Winnipeg, constructed the Health Sciences Centre building, \$100-million project that will bring new operating theatres on-line, provide new state-of-the-art facilities for Manitobans. We have a 31 000 square foot complex in Transcona with respect to the ACCESS Transcona facility, and it will give opportunities for bringing better care closer and sooner to your community. That is the message that we have for the people of my community. It will give opportunities for us.

I also want to close, Mr. Speaker, just a few moments if I will, talking a bit about the Justice Department. Members opposite say that there are no opportunities. We have hired 18 more prosecutors, some of them specialized with respect to the gang

unit. I talked to some of them this morning during the meth announcement; and the new work that we have done with respect to the hiring and the funds set aside for the hiring of 54 new police officers in the province.

Our Lighthouses program, the fact that we are involved in the anti-theft program through MPIC where we are funding the immobilizer program. There are thousands upon thousands of Manitobans that have taken up the installation of that immobilizer program and we hope to immobilize the entire vehicle fleet of the province of Manitoba, a tremendous benefit for the people of Manitoba. They will actually save money directly, immediately, and they will save millions of dollars in the long run with respect to that particular program. We encourage them to be involved in the installation of the immobilizers on their vehicles.

We have so much more good things, Mr. Speaker, that we can talk about as the NDP government of Manitoba continues to build the province of Manitoba. I am proud to be a part of this particular government and proud of the accomplishments that we have in the province of Manitoba as we continue to build a better future for the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the constituents from Lakeside for giving me this opportunity to serve them over the past year and work on their interests. We know we have lots of issues that have come forward over the past three years since I have been in this House and responded to the third Throne Speech here this afternoon.

It is a very disappointing time to be in government. I know I do not share the enthusiasm that the member from Springfield definitely has. I know that over the past three years the Throne Speech has offered very little for rural Manitoba. They seem to think they are the answer or the salvation for the people of Manitoba, but I think you have to look at the record of the previous government and that is really how things happened in this province. They have had increase in spending, increase in revenues from the federal government. We are the last have-not province in western Canada, in Canada as all.

I want to speak specifically in respect to agricultural issues. The BSE crisis which came about in May of 2003, and even though the border has been reopened in July of this year to 30 months and under,

we have yet to turn sod on a processing facility here in the province of Manitoba. We have had lots of lip service. We on this side of the House went time and time again, offered suggestions not only to the minister but to this government, on ideas on how to get this up and running. The CAA has made a commitment in order to establish new markets. They want to export 180 metric tonnes of meat to the outside markets, and Manitoba is not only losing the jobs, they are losing the initiative to try and get ahead of the other provinces. We have seen another announcement last week in Lacombe for 400 head per day, at a cost of \$18.8 million.

*(16:10)

There was another announcement last spring for another one that was just out of Edmonton for another 400 head per day at a cost of \$20 million. The cost on Rancher's Choice up to this point is in the neighbourhood of \$27 million and growing.

The First Minister (Mr. Doer) and the minister from the federal government, Mr. Alcock, made an announcement in July. They were going to have the infrastructure in place to move this project forward. We have yet to see anything done on that either. I was in contact with Minister Alcock's assistant last week and there, again, there is no clear indication that this project is going to move forward in the next short while. If, for some reason that things got done and they sell the rest of the memberships within a timely manner, I understand that the CFI has tentatively given their approval to stamp the plans once the rest of the shareholders are in place, but that gives us very little optimistic hope for the farmers and ranchers within the province of Manitoba.

With respect to Neepawa, we have yet to see anything happen on that either. I have talked to the mayor there, I have talked to several of the investors with respect to Neepawa. I think we are going to probably lose that to Saskatchewan. We have seen Saskatchewan increase their slaughter capacity not once, but twice.

The negative part of all this is that with CAA's commitment to exporting more beef, processed beef, and creating those jobs here within the province of Manitoba, we are losing them to the other provinces. What does that tell us? Well, the Throne Speech come out: "Farm it in Manitoba; finish it Manitoba." That is a great slogan. I have to give the government a little credit for some thought there, but there it is, it is just lip service once again.

I think the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) came out with dozens and dozens of press releases about what she is going to do, how their government is going to do this and how they are going to do that, but it is merely lip service. We have not seen anything substantial to prove that this government is truly committed to the farmers of rural Manitoba, which causes a ripple effect. It causes us from time to time to face severe hardship, the downturn in the grain prices, the downturn in overall commodities. Yes, we have seen the beef prices come back, but we have got three long years of hardship that have been faced within this province.

We had the drought as well in 2003, and one of the programs that this NDP government come out with was a freight assistance program which we are very glad that the government did. They had a chance to repeat history. They did not have to re-invent the wheel. They could have done the same thing this year. In particular, I do not know if the minister was in our area. I know a couple of her colleagues were, but we faced severe hardship within our area, and a lot of the other areas within the province of Manitoba. The freight assistance would have gone a long ways in order to help bring feed stock in for the producers in my area and a lot of other areas, and it would have been a very successful program and something that they could have monitored very simply because they had done it in the fall of 2003.

We also want to come back to this "Finish it in Manitoba." I know that, unless the minister and her government come up with substantial plans in order to assist the farmers in rural Manitoba, we will have a finished farming sector within the province of Manitoba.

The CAIS program is supposed to be the saviour. What we are finding is it is not. The issue is that the minister and her government realize that there are so many flaws in this thing that they appointed a new committee to study it last spring. We are still waiting for the report on that. What farmers are finding, even though most of them have been offered an advance, is that they have been offered to have the money expended out to them where they can receive some of this interim, but they are afraid to take it because even on their last payments they got prior to this announcement, a lot of them had to pay it back. The program is so flawed that farmers cannot rely on it the way they should, and until we have a plan in place where they can go to the bank, these older farmers are losing their

equity. The young farmers are going to the bank and they cannot get funding; they cannot buy out the family farm and they cannot expand.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that we have a desperate situation within the province. The minister announced the other day, "Oh, wow, we got a record payout for crop insurance." Well, that is their money. That is their own money. This is not a saviour from this government that is paying out all this money. You go to the bank and you say, "I have a crop insurance payment." Well, they know right away all that does is cover some of the cost. Fuel has doubled. Fertilizer has doubled. You cannot go to the bank and get any more money than what your crop insurance says, which is devastating to most of these young farmers. The older farmers are saying, "Hey, I am tired of losing my equity. I do not know whether to encourage my family to go into farming."

Unless this government is prepared to make a commitment, a long-term commitment financially other than a farm in the CAIS program, other than a farm in the crop insurance program, we are not going to have farms in the upcoming future. We are going to rely on the other provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, our neighbouring province, to outgrow us, and we are saying, "Oh, we have crop insurance. We have the CAIS program." They have the CAIS program too, but they understand what the farmers are up against. They do not have near the programs that we have here in Manitoba as far as being flawed. We have nothing that we can go to the bank with for our young farmers, and it is so disheartening for them in order to try and make things last.

The government had an opportunity to eliminate the education tax off farmland in this last Throne Speech. They had 25 percent a year ago, and then this year they went and increased to another 25 percent for half, and this year they went to 10 percent. They could have eliminated it this year. They had the opportunity. They could have left residential for next year. But they had an opportunity to really make something meaningful to our farmers and they did not do it.

The rural economy is a spin-off of what happens in the agricultural sector. We found that, with the hurt that is out there with respect to the farmers, they used to have the money to pay in order to sustain rural Manitoba. Our farmers to whom we are so committed, over the past number of years, we have

seen nothing but time and time again the hurt and lack of commitment from this government.

We came up with a plan that we tabled in July after the wet weather. We made it available to the members opposite, and I would just like to reiterate what we talked about. It was a six-point flood recovery program increasing the unseeded acres from 50 to 75. Also, we offered a forage-recovery program for \$75 per acre. What that would do would be two things. First of all, it would allow the producers to put that land that was unseeded into a tame hay or a forage crop that we could be able to use for feed. But, again, that was not there. We also asked for the re-establishment of the JERI program that came in 1998 after the 1997 flood. There, again, there was no leadership by this government. They had an opportunity to try and work with the federal government and come up with a proper drainage program where all Manitobans would have benefited, not only the farmers, but rural Manitoba as a whole.

The fourth one was the input cost. As we know, the input costs were very high due to fertilizer and the seed, and the JERI program would have covered that off. Disease control, I have to give the government credit here, they did listen to us, allow for the diseased crop to be destroyed and, instead of having the whole crop infected, that part was accepted.

The drainage program within the province of Manitoba has yet to be addressed. We need substantial dollars, and I realize that the Province of Manitoba has the opportunity to take the leadership role, and they have not done that. They have not done that. They have an opportunity here to meet with the federal government, their counterparts. They are in government, not us. They have the opportunity to come up with a drainage program within the province of Manitoba that would make us one of the leaders, one of the leaders, Mr. Speaker, in drainage within our country. Without a proper drainage program in 2006 many of our lakes, in fact, some of ours, we have our own Devils Lake right within the Interlake, it is called the Shoal lakes. Yet we have yet to see anything from this government in order to try and drain that. We have thousands and thousands of pasture land and seeded land that are now unavailable for crop or pasture.

* (16:20)

In fact, I have a resident who lives not too far from us across the lake who took her cattle out in June. They are landlocked. They are on the pasture.

They have been hauling feed in with quads and they are going to have a hard time getting those cattle out within the next month or so before freeze-up comes, in fact probably the next couple of weeks. But this is the type of leadership that we have seen from this government, lack of commitment, lack of drainage, lack of true vision when it comes to the agricultural area.

I know that the minister is very proud of the fact that they got rid of the Grow Bond Program, instituted their own program, but the Grow Bond opportunity was there for all Manitobans, and we miss it because what happens, the way the program is set up now, is so complicated. They have these 10 new economic officers that they hired and put into the grow offices within the province of Manitoba, but they are not available. They are not truly accessible. They say, "Yeah, they are out there now." Finally, they say, "This will be our saviour for rural Manitoba." But you have to be seen.

We will just have to stay tuned. We will stay tuned to see how much they really do. Hopefully by then, with the next election, we will be able to reintroduce the Grow Bond Program and make a substantial difference to rural Manitoba.

The Water Stewardship program, the government is so proud of the fact that they talked about how they are going to build the floodway and save Winnipeg, but there are other areas that need a program other than just building a few rock dikes here and there in some of the favoured constituencies where they are trying to save those seats. The real crunch or the heart of the problem is that they do not realize that we have a whole province to look after, not just a few. But, having said that, Mr. Speaker, the whole idea comes back to the inability of this government to rule for all Manitobans.

The way we look at this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Manitobans deserve a better government. They deserve an opportunity to be heard. They deserve an opportunity to have things that would provide meaningful relationships to the people of Manitoba with their government and their MLAs, and that has yet to happen.

When we think about the Throne Speech in regard to growth in this province, we look at the debt, \$1.5 million per day, \$1.5 million per day just to service the debt. Think what we could do with that money for the farmers, just the farmers, never mind the hips, the knees, the rest of the problems that we

have within the province of Manitoba, to really make a significant difference.

The taxes within the province of Manitoba are the highest in Canada. The have-not province, wow, something to be proud of. You go back and talk to your constituents and you say, "Boy, am I doing a great job for you." Well, I can tell you it is not working so good for us here.

When you talk to your neighbouring provinces, even Saskatchewan, we used to be proud of the fact that we were ahead of Saskatchewan. Now we are behind Saskatchewan. How does that look? How does that sound? Boy, are we doing good.

We talk about our youth staying within Manitoba. Go to the universities and talk to some of the professors who work hard, who work diligently to educate our youth, but where do they go? Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario. The Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) was talking about Texas. I am sure many of them have even gone down there. In fact, I know of three doctors who graduated out of the province of Manitoba who are now in Arkansas, Missouri and Louisiana. That is a real shame, Mr. Speaker. It is one of those things where they say, "Oh, well, we are increasing doctors; we are increasing nurses; we are increasing professional people." But we are just a stepping-stone for the rest of the provinces and the states for training and background.

The government is so good at saying, "Well, geez, we have got everything under control. We have the gangs under control." Well, the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province goes down and promotes Gimli, takes a bottle of Crown Royal down, and brings the Bandidos back. Well, that does a great job for bringing in gangs to Manitoba but that is not real economy.

We on this side of the House offered a program called *Enough Is Enough!* Yet what does this government do? They just do not seem to get it. I know they think that probably I am hard on them and they are saying enough is enough out of me, but, you know, that is my job. That is my job, to keep these guys accountable, and we are just getting warmed up. The whole idea and concept with respect to gangs has just escalated within this province, and we have to get it under control for our youth. We have to get it under control for our seniors. People are still afraid to come downtown. They are still afraid to come downtown. Whenever we talk about the MTS Centre and the millionth person that came through

last week, there is still that fear. There is still that fear after all the time that we have had, the different events we have had. They come as couples, they come as groups in order to protect one another. That is the fear that is of the gangs in the province of Manitoba.

The drugs within the province of Manitoba, I know our Justice critic has worked very hard on talking about the drugs, crystal meth in particular, within the province of Manitoba. He has given seminars and talked about the different issues that come up within the province of Manitoba, and we are proud to say the fact that the government did take some of those initiatives and announced them today in order to make it where they were going to try and work with this issue in order to get it under control.

With the health issue, the number of my constituents in particular talk about how the hips and knees are still not under control. We know for a fact that a number of them have been waiting for a long time. In fact, I had one of my neighbours come over the other day and talk to me. He had been waiting for six months, and this is a repeat hip that has to get fixed. Unfortunately, his pain level is so high that this government, if they had their druthers, I guess that they have their way of getting things done, they would definitely assist in getting these particular knees and hip replacements in order. I know that the individual that I am talking about has waited for his first one well over a year, and just because things went wrong was not no fault of his own, but to get back in, the waiting list seems to go on and on. I have written the minister about it. We talked about things that we need to get done within the province of Manitoba and yet, all it is is one after the other.

In wrapping up, I just want to talk about the increase in the taxes in respect to education. The government has tried to convince the general populace out there that with this extra 10 percent for the farmers that this is the way to go. This is going to be the saviour. But what they do is they cut back funding in other areas. They use it to balance their books. So, when you talk about the increase and the 10 percent, assessments went up anywhere from 25 to 35 percent. So, if you do the math, farmers are actually going to be paying more tax in 2006 than they were in 2005.

The other area that I want to touch about before, and I know the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) would be interested in this, is on the Crown lands. That is the education tax that is

available, supposed to be refunded to the farmers, is not there, and I think that is one of the issues that they need to be addressing.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I just want convey my sadness to all of Manitobans here today that I will have to be voting against the Throne Speech. I know that comes as no surprise to the members opposite, but we do need a clearer vision. We need the thought process that needs to go in to making Manitoba a better place to live. Anyway, thank you for this opportunity to put these things on the record.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Oh, my gosh, ladies and gentlemen, the sky is falling according to the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler). The member from Lakeside, the latest casualty to the doom-and-gloom approach of our friends opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to, first of all, welcome to our Legislature the pages who I wish the very best in the year that they are going to spend here with us. I want to also welcome the interns, both the interns that will serve the government side of the House and Her Majesty's loyal opposition. I hope that they all have a fruitful and educational year with us. But I want to say to everybody from the pages and the interns to those of us who are here as elected officials, do not get sucked into what you just heard from the member from Lakeside. Do not become a pessimistic, negative, nay-saying nabob, doom-and-gloomer like the friends opposite that we just saw here today.

* (16:30)

The member from Lakeside says, "What about the farmers?" Well, let us think about the farmers for a minute. Are they a whole group of doom-and-gloomers like I am looking at across the way right now? Absolutely not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are challenges out there. We are not naive to think that there are not. But we are not going to roll up sidewalks in our communities. We are not going to start putting signs out on the farm gate saying "Gone away, too much doom and gloom, listen to the Tory caucus, move to Alberta, move to Texas." We are not going to sell the farm yet. The farm is worth fighting for. Farmers think that the farms are worth fighting for. I believe the farms are worth fighting for and that is just what this government is going to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how is it that one Tory MLA after the next can stand in this House after such a great summer out in the constituencies? How

can they stand in this House and not proclaim their support for the constituents that they have been talking to all summer since we were last here? How could you do that? How can you be so far disconnected to the Manitoba reality that you need to come in this Legislature and cast doom and gloom aspersions, doom and gloom predictions?

I think there needs to be some changes over on the other side. It starts with the crystal balls that they have been looking into and they need to polish them. They need to see more clearly what is happening out there in rural Manitoba and they need to talk to some real people out there who tell me and my colleagues, and I know they tell it to the member from Lakeside, that there are some very positive, very progressive, very good things happening out there in Manitoba. It does not matter if you are in the North or if you are in Brandon or if you are in rural Manitoba or if you are in the middle of the city of Winnipeg. There are positive good things happening, not the doom and gloom that we have heard in this House from my friends opposite.

Let us take one look at part of the economic sector, one look at part of our province that I think is vibrant and I think has a lot of potential that this government is tapping into. Nothing says hope, nothing says prosperity, more than the announcement of a \$500-million power sale to the province of Ontario. I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be very surprised—I was going to say I would be very surprised if members do not vote against that, but you know what? They have the floor. They did not produce enough electors to be in this province to run a two-watt light bulb since back in the days of Duff Roblin on. So you know what? Maybe they will not have the good common sense to vote in favour of the Throne Speech that underlines our commitment to that vision.

Vision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the key word. Their vision is one of doom and gloom. Their vision is pessimistic. They did not act when they were in government to produce an energy vision in this province and they continue that tradition while in opposition. Well, I think they are doing a pretty good job in opposition. As a matter of fact, I think that they are doing such a good job in opposition that they could do it with even fewer people on that side of the House. I want to say that if they continue the doom and gloom, pessimistic mantra that they have adopted in this House, I can say with no lack of confidence that they will accomplish fewer people in this House and spend longer in opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is very important that a provincial government show the kind of leadership that we are showing through this Throne Speech. To work with people in terms of the everyday energy issues that we are facing in Manitoba, I think we need to work with people to put together a good home-heating strategy, something that is positive, something that will produce some long-term benefits, some long-term changes in the way we heat our homes, heat our businesses, heat everything on the farm that we struggle so valiantly to pay. We need to change some of the consumption patterns that we have adopted in Manitoba, and I think Manitobans are game for this. I have confidence in the ability of Manitobans to make good decisions, unlike my friends opposite.

I will give you one good example. Manitoba is leading the way, and many of my colleagues will say here goes that MLA for Dauphin-Roblin again, but many Manitobans and this Province are leading the way in the installation of heating pumps, geothermal heating and cooling in Manitoba. That is a positive trend, and I would think members opposite would at least have the good common sense to jump on that bandwagon and get in on a good thing.

Mr. Harry Enns himself has converted his house in the Lakeside constituency to a geothermal unit. One Manitoban after another is doing it, one hockey rink after another, one curling rink after another, because Manitobans understand that they need to make good long-term decisions in terms of energy, and, Mr. Speaker, with the partnership between Hydro and our government, we are helping. That is the kind of very practical decision making that flows from a government and from a people who have a vision, a positive progressive vision in terms of energy, not the doom and gloom that I just heard from my friend the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Speaker, I was recently up North with the Minister for Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton). We toured along the Churchill River, the very, very, very swollen Churchill River. We hooked up with some people, the mayor of Granville Lake. He and a councillor took the minister and I and the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) up the river to check out the damage that had been done in that area, and I was very struck by not just the damage that was done, but I want to tell you something that stuck in my mind. There was a big box along the side of the river. It was about three feet wide and about five feet tall. It was the property of the federal government of

Canada, and, you know, I am willing to give credit where credit is due, and I do not mind giving the federal government kudos every now and then. They had this box there and it was there to measure the height of the water. Do you know what was powering that whole unit? One little solar panel. One little, wee solar panel bravely facing south, bravely using an alternative form of energy. That is the kind of thing we need to see happening.

Right in the constituency of the Member for Lakeside, every time I drive up No. 6 highway, when I get a little bit north of Warren, a little bit south of Woodlands, this spring, even amongst all the water that was there, on the side of No. 6 highway was this weigh station, and it is powered by a solar panel. The people in the Member for Lakeside's own riding have the foresight and the planning, they have the vision to say we need to work with the government to provide an alternative source of energy.

If the Member for Lakeside had anything to do with that, I would congratulate him. That is a big if, though, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Given what I just heard from the member for Lakeside, I do not think he would be all that supportive of a vision that says we need to get Manitobans off some of the more traditional forms of energy and into alternative energies that really make long-term sense for Manitobans.

*(16:40)

I do not think I have to say too much about the advantages of wind power in this province. I know that some members opposite are supportive of this government's actions, this government's moves in terms of wind power, but it goes along with our approach to ethanol, and it goes along with our approach to bio-diesel. It gets into a vision of this province that is positive, an approach that is progressive. Notice I said progressive, not conservative. It is a progressive approach from a government who is in touch with people, people that we talk to all summer long at the parades, people that we talk to all summer long at fairs, people who should really energize us to come back into this Legislature and be positive and be progressive. We are doing that. The Sandilands is a good example, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Sandilands is an area which was hit hard by a storm on the evening of July 31. I will proudly say that my Conservation Department was in there the very next day. They had put together a plan to deal with the big trees that were blown down in that wind.

We acted promptly. We acted immediately. I want to say that, despite what the member from Emerson may be saying, the R.M. and the reeve of the R.M. were highly complimentary to my staff who went in and did a lot of very good work. I must say, in a weak moment, the member from Emerson even joined in with that, handing out the bouquets to the people who work in my department. So I think, I would like to say very clearly that the member from Emerson was exactly right in handing out bouquets to the people in my department on that particular issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us think again about a hopeful and progressive vision for this province and look down the road a little bit, because that is what Speeches from the Throne are all about. That is setting the legislative agenda. That is putting out a vision for the province that we can all debate in this province, in this Legislature.

The wind and the solar and the geothermal and the ethanol and the biodiesel initiatives will produce, not only good environmental long-term impacts in this province, but, you know what, the beauty of this is it will produce long-term economic benefits for the people of Manitoba as well. As a matter of fact, \$3 billion is nothing for the opposition to vote against. They would not be well advised to vote against that kind of economic growth along with that kind of economic benefit, that kind of positive economic impact that this energy vision will have.

Now, I know that it may be easier, when you are in opposition, to just take the easy route and just be doom and gloom all the time, just be doom and gloom all the time. But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? At some point there comes a time—and it would be easier just to be doom and gloom and be negative. But, you know what, there comes a time when you are going to have to decide, you are going to have to decide are you going to decide to move progressively forward? Are you going to decide to be positive? Are you going to decide to be in touch with those positive Manitobans out there? Are you going to decide to be positive along with those Manitobans that we have all spoken to over the course of this beautiful summer of ours or are you going to continue to descent into the pits of gloom, the pits of despair and doom? Are you going to remain mired in that goop, that goop that says nothing is positive? It is not a path that I would choose.

So, in conclusion, I want to be absolutely clear that I stand up for things that are positive. I stand up

for things that are progressive. I stand up for this Speech from the Throne. I am going to be very, very pleased to vote in favour of this Speech from the Throne when the time comes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It is appropriate that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) said three times that he stands up for things and then he quickly sat down. That is exactly the kind of thing that we see from the government when they say "We do this. We do this," but, in fact, they do nothing.

I did not hear much from the Minister of Conservation about what is actually in the Throne Speech. I guess he did not want to address it. He did not really want to talk about that. He gave kudos to the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for the good things that he is doing in his constituency. He failed to give kudos to the Member for Lakeside for the initiative that he took on veterans' licence plates. You know, I heard the minister of highways say, "Oh, but that was my idea. We had people who have been working on that idea for two years before the Member for Lakeside raised the issue." It was a sticker, Mr. Speaker, a sticker.

This government did not have it prior to the Year of the Veteran. They did not have enough within their own caucus or Cabinet to get a sticker on a license plate. It was taking them two years and I give credit to the Member for Lakeside who moved that initiative forward in two weeks and did not wait for two years to honour our veterans who have done so much for our province and for our country.

I listened to the Minister of Conservation talk about all the things that he thinks that he is doing competently and he has gone around from area to area and talked to people over the summer. I did talk to a number of people over the summer. I visited some of the parks, saw all the empty campgrounds and people lining up saying, "We cannot get a site. We cannot get a site, yet I see all these empty areas, why is it?" and I would say, "Well, you know, you need to talk with the Minister of Conservation," and they said, "Are you telling me that our government, our government that spends \$7 billion or \$8 billion every year, cannot get it together enough that they can actually have a park reservation system that works? Are you telling me that they talk about the natural resources being one of the greatest things that we have in our province and yet they cannot find a way to get a system that worked for many years for

park reservations, they cannot have that work?"
[interjection]

Well, now there is some advice. We hear the Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) has some advice. Finally. I wonder where that advice was when the Minister of Conservation was failing so badly on this issue. She talks about a lot of different options. You know, there is a report somewhere in the bowels of Conservation, maybe it is on the minister's desk, maybe it is buried somewhere in some dark, deep closet. Well, he might have it on him and if he has it on him, he should table it. But there is a report, a \$50,000 report. I do not know if Viewpoints was involved in that particular report or who was involved in doing the polling of it, but there is a report of \$50,000 of taxpayers' money on the operation of parks in Manitoba. I asked the minister for it six months ago, and he said, "Well, I would like to look at it first. I just got it." I asked him for it four months ago and he says, "Well, I am still studying it." I asked for it two months ago, and he says, "I am still looking at it."

You know, this must be one whiz-bang of a report, Mr. Speaker. I am looking forward to seeing this report that it would take eight months. Maybe it is buried under the binders and binders of information on the pandemic flu, maybe it is buried under all that information that seems to get flown around but does not go anywhere. So I think that the Minister of Conservation should spend a little bit less time touring around the good constituency of Lakeside and should spend a little bit more time in his own office trying to figure out how to work out his own problems and find a way to make a park reservations system that worked for years and decades before, try to find a way to get it to work now after he has come in as the minister.

The minister talked about crime and he talked about gangs and wanted to say how things are so much better. It seems as though every member of the government has gone down to Texas in the last year, virtually everybody has gone on these trips to Texas. Every time they come back, they bring back a gang with them, Mr. Speaker. They bring back the Bandidos; they bring back the Mad Cowz. Is that what our trade missions are about? Is that what everybody is going down there for? The Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says, "Well, we talked about the weather. It is all good. We talked about the weather down in Texas." Well, you know, he can turn on CNN and figure out that the weather is not

bad in Texas. He does not have to go down there for that little junket to do that.

* (16:50)

This is a government, clearly, that has lost its path on issues related to justice and a lot of other issues. You know, I wish I had more time, and maybe the members opposite will want me to go on at greater length, but when we talk about issues, whether it is justice or whether it is other issues, we see it is a little bit like the *Wizard of Oz* sometimes. You pull back the curtains and you see that there is some kind of movement going on behind there, and all you see is smoke and dust that comes forward beyond that. It is all a mirage, you know. You pull back the curtains, and then you see it for what it really is.

We had that experience not too long ago when we were talking about police officers. Now this is an interesting topic all the time because the Premier stands up and he likes to talk about virtual police officers, phantom police officers. I probably have in my office 10, 15 news releases from the last year, talking about 54 new police officers making our community safer today in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, in Question Period a couple of days ago, I heard all those members, the backbenchers, the ones that are kind of kept in the dark, that do not know what is happening until it is too late, or until they hear it in Question Period. When we talk about the virtual police officers, they all clap. Somebody hit the applause sign and they all went for it, but it got real quiet after that. It got real quiet because we started to talk about what people were saying.

You know, the commanding officer for "D" Division last week was in Ottawa, and they asked him, of the 28 officers that were assigned for rural Manitoba for the highways, here in Manitoba, how many of those officers are actually patrolling. The curtain got pulled back when the answer was none.

So the obvious question after was this: If there are no officers patrolling after the government announced those 28 a year ago, in last year's Throne Speech, how many are out there and when are they going to be out there? The officer said, the commanding officer said, "April 1, 2006." It is almost like an April Fools' joke, but he said, "April 1, 2006, we hope to have those officers out there," despite being announced in last year's Throne Speech, and there is none out there today.

So the government says, "Oh, look at our vision, look at our announcement," but how can you believe them? You find out a little while later, when you really go through the numbers, that it is just not happening.

So I know, I mean you get the typical answer from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and from the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) who say, "Oh, well, you know, police officers, it is not like you add water and stir." You get one of those glib answers all the time, something that one of the communicators put out and said, "Say this; it will sound really good." But, when you look at him, you find out in the last year, there have been 1500 officers that have graduated from the RCMP Depot in Regina, and why have we not gotten one of those officers, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why have we not gotten one of those officers here in Manitoba?

Well, the answer apparently is because they were never asked for. The commanding officer said, "The reason that we did not get those officers is because they were never approved last year." The question is how could that be, because it was announced in the Throne Speech. Remember when the minister rolled out the cake and the balloons and the confetti. Then he had another announcement around the budget time, and he brought out the cake and the balloons and the confetti and said, "Look, we got all these officers and everything is going to be better."

You wonder, you know, this is a Cabinet decision and the Premier obviously is there, and it just simply did not go through. They did not ask for the officers, but it did not stop them from putting out the news releases. It did not stop them from trying to tell Manitobans things are better, things are safer. You know, you wonder about some of those officers; you wonder about the community of Brandon. I go to the city of Brandon and I hear things like, "Our MLAs are not out there talking about safety. Our MLAs, the two that we have in Brandon East and Brandon West, are not talking about those kinds of crime-related issues. They are not talking about community safety. When we raise issues about more resources, we cannot find the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) or the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith)."

Maybe that should not be surprising. I know when the rain was falling last spring, and the flooding was happening out in Westman, they could not find the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) either. It was like the rain fell and he disappeared.

Now, when the issues of crime are out there, they are talking about violence and they are talking about gangs that are operating in the city of Brandon, and they are saying, "We need more officers."

When we announced our plan, our *Enough Is Enough!*, the making communities safer plan, the mayor of Brandon said, "Yes, we think that that is a good idea." He stood up and said, "Yes, that is a good idea." He was probably surprised that somebody was actually standing up for the city of Brandon. Somebody was actually coming forward with ideas of how to make that community, other communities in rural Manitoba, safer. Not the mirage that we get, the phantom force, the phantom officers that are announced by this government over and over and over.

But I await for the next news release from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh). He probably is somewhere at a party story now, buying the balloons and getting the confetti, talking about another announcement to break, the crackdown on the gangs. You know, it is interesting, because at the same time that the announcement, the last announcement, though, about more prosecutors—you know, we talk about more prosecutors for the province, but if you cannot get the gang members from the streets to the courts to the prisons, those prosecutors are not helping you. But we do not have the police to get those gang members off the street, get them into the courts, and that is the issue. You know, one of the first things this government did when it came to office—this is its legacy on gangs—is that it decided to close down a gang prosecution court house, and some people wondered at the time, "Why would they close down a building that was dedicated to prosecuting gangs?"

Well, six years later we know the answer. They had no intention of prosecuting any gangs. You might as well close it down. It is going to be a useless building if you are not going to prosecute any gangs. They mothballed it.

You think that anybody else is noticing this? You know, over on Scotia Street, where the Hells Angels have their clubhouse when the Minister of Justice or probably joined by the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who kind of scurries around behind and tries to prop up some of these announcements, when that announcement was happening about getting tougher on crime by hiring a couple of more lawyers and rolling out some more cake, what was happening at the Hells Angels clubhouse? They were setting up

a hot tub. They were celebrating. Oh, they were getting ready and things were going great. They were undergoing an expansion at the clubhouse at the same time that this announcement was going on. Gord Mackintosh is still the Minister of Justice. He is making another announcement. Call your friends over and get the swimming trunks on. We are all going to celebrate.

They were worried; they were fearful. They were very, very concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about what this government was doing, another crackdown, another meaningless announcement on gangs. You know, we see it over and over and over again. You can almost set your clock to it. When something happens in the province of Manitoba, whether it is a tragic death of an innocent bystander or whether it is some other sort of event, you basically set your clock for 24 hours forward and you wait for the next announcement to come forward from the government that is not going to mean anything. You just simply wait, because it is like clockwork. You know, the smoke goes up and the mirrors go out and they try to deflect away from the real issues that are happening.

Who benefits by it? Well, the people selling hot tubs benefited by it, I guess, because the Hells Angels go and buy them because they are not at all concerned about it. They are not the least bit concerned about what this government is doing on crime.

So we bring forward an integrated strategy on crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what do we hear from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh)? Well, he says, "The Tories are just being reactionary, but hang on, because tomorrow I will have my own announcement."

Well, on one day he is saying, "The Conservatives are being reactionary, but hang on I will make my own announcement the next day." That is the kind of illogical approach we get from the Minister of Justice over and over. I credit the media, *The Winnipeg Sun* and the *Brandon Sun*, who said that it is unfortunate that the Minister of Justice would not look at the Tory plan, that he is so ideologically bent and ideologically narrow in his focus that he would not even look at someone else's ideas, that he would not look at somebody else's plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give credit to those editorialists who looked at it and said, "This is simply wrong that crime has been narrowed down to a point where the government says, 'It is all going to

be about us, and any other kind of idea that comes forward is not worth looking at."

I believe Manitobans expect better than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe they expect better from all of us than to simply write off a different area. I saw the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) looking at his clock. I am not sure if he is waiting for me to wind up or waiting for the next announcement. Maybe there is another announcement at five o'clock. I do not know. I did not see if there was a tragic event in the city of Winnipeg today, because then the announcement would be coming any minute now about hiring a couple of more lawyers or hiring a couple of more other people who are not going to make any difference to the system. But we are not going to look at hiring more officers. Oh, why would we do that, because we announced a phantom force? We have already announced our phantom force of officers. We simply do not have to worry about that.

Today we heard that the government has accepted part of what we had been asking for on the idea of crystal meth. I am sorry that it has taken eight months for the government to act on this issue. I am pleased that they took some of the recommendations that came from Stuart Murray and the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives, but I do think that it is too bad that there was not more that was taken on. There are other ideas that could come on with crystal meth, but I am glad that we were able to bring forward this issue and push it forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have 15 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Petitions		Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Gerrard; Melnick	86
Coverage of Insulin Pumps Eichler	79	Crystal Meth Korzeniowski; Oswald	87
Amending of The Architects Act Schuler	79	Members' Statements	
Crocus Investment Fund Lamoureux	79	Diwali Murray	88
Provincial Road 340 Rowat	80	Prendergast Centre Jha	88
Introduction of Bills		Government Ethics Cullen	89
Bill 6—The Dental Association Amendment Act Sale	80	Aboriginal Youth Awards Dinner Jennissen	89
Bill 5—The Dental Hygienists Act Sale	80	Electoral Reform Lamoureux	89
Oral Questions			
Flu Pandemic Murray; Doer	81	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Election Financing Murray; Doer	82	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Floodway Expansion Penner; Ashton	84	Adjourned Debate (Third Day of Debate)	
Crocus Investment Fund Hawranik; Selinger	84	Santos	90
Hawranik; Doer	84	Schuler	90
Lamoureux; Doer	87	Gerrard	93
Viewpoints Research Inc. Cummings; Allan	85	Stefanson	97
Cummings; Doer	85	Reid	101
Derkach; Allan	85	Eichler	106
Derkach; Doer	86	Struthers	110
Cummings; Chomiak	88	Goertzen	113