

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 24, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. In making this matter, I refer you to page 95 of Marleau and Montpetit. Last night the Legislative Committee on Public Accounts did not sit, and, therefore, I am raising this at the first possible opportunity.

Furthermore, I note that the sitting of the Public Accounts Committee for November 30 was cancelled. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I made special arrangements to be present at these meetings. It's clear to me that arguments and debates between the NDP and the Conservatives are preventing proper scheduling and procedures around the Public Accounts Committee, and that we are now near the end of November, with the requirement for four more sittings of the Public Accounts Committee which now must be scheduled and occur on short notice to be completed by December 31.

It is an abuse of the privilege of this House when the Public Accounts Committee is not sitting when it should be and when properly scheduled meetings are cancelled at the last minute.

I, therefore, move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster, that this matter be referred to a committee of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that contributions at this time to honourable members are to be limited to strictly relevant comments as to whether an alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on the issue that the independent Member for River Heights raises.

As he is aware, there have been challenges regarding the scheduling of Public Accounts. I understand there are some conflicts that have in fact at some points happened with the independent member. I understand there is a convention

happening at some point later this month which has been a difficulty for the member as well.

So we understand that there are issues regarding dates. Certainly we've had our frustrations with some of that as well, but I think, once again, the independent member aims his gun in the wrong direction. He should really be aiming at the fact that, while we have concerns about the dates and the number of dates that are happening with Public Accounts, we know that in fact the whole Public Accounts structure needs to be changed so that the committee is effective, that's its powerful.

Mr. Speaker, I for one would prefer to have 50 dates of a substantive committee than 150 dates of a committee that doesn't have any power or any ability to get at any kind of issues. So I think he should be focussing his attention on the fact that we can't get proper witnesses to come before that committee to answer the kinds of questions, that the members of that committee don't have the resources to do the research that a normal Public Accounts Committee in any other jurisdiction has and that they are not empowered to look at a number of different issues.

So, while the independent Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) stands up and tries to make a point, once again he's missed his target, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same privilege.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker. It would be unusual to enter into this House and not see a member of the independent party stand up on either a MUPI or a privilege. It's now become a daily routine. I don't know how many privileges we've gone from: where they sit in the Legislature; to it's a conflict of interest if you're a member of a First Nations, you can't have anything to do with land; to today's privilege by the Member for River Heights.

Yesterday, a MUPI, Mr. Speaker, after having not even asked a question on an issue, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) stood up and said, this is a matter of urgent public importance. We are very used to the members of the independent party having some difficulty in getting attention both in the public and in the Legislature.

With respect to the issue, I indicated to this Chamber that we had some difficulty with three dates we had set. I said to this Chamber, and if this member would peruse *Hansard*, he would note that I said there were three dates set. One of the parties had difficulties with one date, the other party had difficulty with another date, and the independent party indicated there was some difficulty with the third date. They had indicated that, Mr. Speaker, and I recognized as House Leader there was a particular event going on in Montréal.

Now, it's true that the member didn't say cancel the meeting. The member didn't say that, he didn't say that. At the time, I was trying to accommodate the interest of all the parties so that we could have a co-operative attendance at the meeting. Obviously, by going to the press and going to the media, the member of the independent third party, by making it an issue made it a little bit difficult to negotiate on the floor of this Chamber when the matter became a public matter from a matter of negotiations between parties. It made it a little bit difficult to then negotiate. Consequently, there is a bill on the Order Paper today that's being introduced that I mentioned and spoke to in the House, and I indicated that the bill would make mandatory meetings of the Public Accounts Committee a statutory provision. Mandatory meetings would have to take place. That bill will be introduced today.

On the larger issue, Mr. Speaker, it's clear we have to walk before we can run. We have to have structured meetings. All parties agree there are difficulties with Public Accounts. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) indicated in Rules Committee that we only needed four meetings a year. We have agreed in Rules Committee to try to do six meetings a year. We have had some difficulty scheduling. We try diligently to schedule.

I indicated in my statement to the House the other day that we would try to accommodate meetings before the end of the year, but the way to solve this is to set meeting dates. We are going to put them in legislation, and I hope members opposite are supportive and will pass that legislation so we can get on and commence those particular meetings. Having said that, I indicated the other day that I'm open to talk to members about meetings, trying to accommodate them as much as possible, but it is difficult when members of the independent party go public and make issues of this when we are negotiating and talking about setting meetings. It does cut off a little bit of negotiating ability on our

part to talk about these matters and to set these matters when members run out and discuss in the media what we're trying to do internally to make this House work better and to make it more committed.

Mr. Speaker, the member does not have privilege, insofar as: (a) it's a matter that is being dealt with by bills; (b) it's been a matter that has been an ongoing negotiation; (c) it's a matter that members have been involved in and have not been helpful on with respect to their own actions, which have by the very nature of their actions made it very difficult to schedule those meetings.

* (10:10)

There are dates. November 30 date is available. December 1 is available for members opposite. Perhaps we can have a discussion about that. We can have a discussion amongst the House leaders and amongst the independent parties, if they really want a date, if they really want to have a Public Accounts Committee on that date. We can discuss that, and I indicated in my statement to the House two days ago that I was prepared to discuss that, Mr. Speaker. I indicated that.

So, the member, because we're in negotiations, because the member knows there's a bill on the Order Paper to guarantee fixed dates for Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker, because the member has gone and made negotiations difficult, I don't think their privileges—just like their privileges weren't abused because they couldn't sit beside each other, just because their privileges weren't abused because they accused someone who was of First Nations background as being in conflict if you have anything to do with property—are not abused by virtue of the fact that we have a bill. We're in negotiations. We're prepared to have a meeting when members, maybe, want to be in some other province, and I'm prepared to discuss that.

So I indicate it is not an abuse of any members' privilege with respect to setting up the meetings insofar as we are in discussions. We're going to bring a bill to make it mandatory, Mr. Speaker, and we've already had more meetings since we've been government than at any time in the previous years.

Yes, the committee has had problems working. We've made changes to make it work, and we'll make changes to make it work better in the interests of all members and the entire public.

Mr. Speaker: I probably heard enough from—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It's customary for the Speaker to hear a representative from each and also from the House leaders, but if the honourable Member for Inkster is rising with some new information that I haven't heard yet, I would give him the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, this is information that I believe is very important to take into consideration in ruling on this privilege. We need to make it very clear that there is a genuine lack of respect, whether it's democracy, whether it's accountability or whether it's to the members, the individual members of this Chamber.

Let me tell you in terms of how we found out about the Public Accounts Committee meeting. I was instructed, not asked. I was instructed and told that the Public Accounts meeting was going to be on November 30, Mr. Speaker. I had said to the Government House Leader then: Well, you know, you could have maybe had it on a different date, given the fact that we're going to Montreal. Then the Government House Leader says to me, the government says to me that—[interjection] The Government House Leader then says to me: Nothing I can do. The committee is going ahead on November 30. I then shared that with my leader. As a result of that, my leader had to cancel a flight in order to accommodate—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members rise on a matter of privilege, it should be whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether the prima facie case has been established, but not to get into debate of the issue because I haven't ruled on that yet.

Mr. Lamoureux: The matter of privilege is dealing with the cancellation of Public Accounts Committee, and members of the Liberal Party, in fact, had made arrangements which included changing or cancelling of a flight based on what the Government House Leader was telling members of the Liberal Party. We at no time had indicated to the government that we would not be able to participate in that meeting. We made the arrangements, and the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) then tries to pass the blame on members of the Liberal Party for the cancellation of the Public Accounts Committee meeting, which is really unfortunate, and I believe gives credibility to the matter of privilege that has been raised. It is called "respect." A little bit more respect from this government to minority rights, to public accountability, to Chamber responsibility would go a

long way. Obviously, they have been government far too long, and it is time for that change, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 8, The Public Accounts Committee Meeting Dates Act (Legislative Assembly Act Amended); Loi sur les dates de réunion du Comité des comptes publics (modification de la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this bill sets a minimum of six guaranteed meeting dates for the Public Accounts Committee.

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

Bill 203—The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 203, The Liquor Control Amendment Act (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Prevention), be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this particular bill, Bill 203, actually demonstrates action. If the government was to actually pass this, what you would see, there would be labels, warnings regarding FAS on alcohol products. They would also see signs, warnings for the dangers of FAS and drinking while you are pregnant in licensed establishments. I believe it is a wonderful bill, and if the government wanted to do something actually to fight FAS, this is something they should get behind and support. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Robert Spice, Ryan Galbraith and I. Naurock 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.

* (10:20)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

That is signed, Mr. Speaker, by Dave Surrett, Pat Surrett, Anne Pistun, and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Doris Jones and her father, Tim. Doris holds many Canadian and world archery records, and recently won a gold at the Junior Women's Archery World Championships in Mexico.

These visitors are the guests of the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Red River Floodway Bridges Replacement

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In the government's November 13 Remembrance Day news release, we learned the Manitoba Floodway Authority has decided not to

proceed with the replacement of four of the six highway bridge structures that span the floodway.

Mr. Speaker, this comes on the heels of the decision to drop the improvements to the inner dikes within the city of Winnipeg, which would have assured Winnipeg residents the full protection of floodway improvements.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Given that in June of 2005 the Province had tendered for engineering and design and has taken delivery of less than half of the pre-cast girders required for these bridges, how much taxpayers' money has the Province wasted and squandered as the result of the cancellation of these contracts which had already been entered into by the authority?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are replacing a number of other bridges with girders. In fact, I am not aware of the update on the bypass at Portage, but it will expedite matters to replace that bridge as well.

Mr. McFadyen: We are advised that the Floodway Authority will be taking delivery of 182 out of 417 girders that have been ordered and contracted for by the Floodway Authority, and that there are cancellation clauses in these contracts, so I would ask the Premier if he could return to the House with information about what taxpayers are going to have to pay. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, since the cancellation costs are just part of the picture, can the Premier advise how much taxpayers' money has been squandered through the cancellation of these works on bridges including design, engineering and environmental consulting?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the environmental consultations basically were focussed in on the aquifer north and east of Winnipeg. There's been money set aside in the original floodway budget. It may not all be required for the aquifer mitigation. That mitigation was identified as not being dealt with in the first floodway. So far my last report was that that was the work that was going on there for the expansion of the floodway. It was not affecting the aquifer. Obviously, that's a condition of the environment licence which we will honour, and we have set aside money. Secondly, on the issue of the bridges, the bottom line was we had asked the previous federal government for 665; we had approval for the smaller amount, the 360. The 665, they had asked us to start tendering on that basis. We have an assistant deputy minister that asked us to start tendering because of the economy scale on the

larger number of tenders as opposed to the smaller number—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, and the point of order is based on traditions of this House and what we believe is abuse that has taken place. There was an agreement in which you were one of the participants that provided for what we call leaders' discretion in terms of asking a question and answering a question, or leaders' latitude as it's properly termed.

Leaders' latitude, when it was agreed to, was to acknowledge that in the past, prior to this agreement, leaders did have latitude, and that latitude was within reason. And when we entered into the agreement amongst the House leaders, myself, and you as the Chair, it was conceded that we would try to get more questions during Question Period, allow for more interaction. Through that interaction we agreed that what we would do is we'd put 40 or 45 seconds to pose a question or to answer a question with the idea of getting more questions and answers posed.

At the same time, out of respect for the leaders, we decided that we would allow for what we called the leaders' latitude. The leaders' latitude was something that was there previously, and if you were to review previous Question Periods before that agreement, you will see that there is on average, there were seven-plus questions that were being asked in any given day. The concern that we have is that leaders' latitude has been abused to the extent where we are not getting the number of questions that we were expecting to get, therefore calling into question that validity of the agreement that was signed by all members in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

I, as the Speaker, who was the Chair and initiated those discussions, personally don't appreciate results or negotiations that took place in my office—I think negotiations that I undertake with any honourable member of the Chamber are strictly confidential, and if any member has any questions or issues with those, my door is always open; please come and talk to me. But I do not appreciate them being brought to the floor of the Chamber, because

my office has to be there for all members. I don't want any member of this Chamber to lose the confidence of the office of the Speaker because of maybe some negotiations that I was involved in being brought out to the floor. Those negotiations I undertook was for the House leaders and the House leaders to take back to their caucuses. It's really not for discussions on the floor. If the member has some concerns about results please talk to me, and I would be more than willing to reconvene a meeting of the House leaders. That would be the appropriate place to discuss the concerns, but not on the floor of the Chamber.

* * *

*(10:30)

Mr. Doer: Yes, dealing with the environmental issue raised.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there were two ways to go with the rising costs of cement, steel, fuel, which were indicating higher increases in cost on the floodway. There is the B.C. Olympic example, to ask for more money. There is the issue of capital costs in the City of Winnipeg, the treatment plant, for more money or try to manage within the approved amount of money. We got that ratified by the federal government, the 665 which we appreciate.

All major bridges that are at risk are now replaced, five out of the six. They have been replaced at 1-in-700 years. That is the difference between tendering out the lower number, 360 versus 665. All major bridges are proceeding. There is a new tender that was authorized. In fact, Minister Toews and I met some four weeks ago to authorize the tender and we are proceeding accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River Heights, on the same point of order, or on a new point of order?

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): No, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River Heights, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue because insofar as the privileges of one member are breached, so, indeed, are the privileges of all members of this House.

Leaders' latitude, and we have seen an example, is a privilege of the leaders in our Legislature. It has

been a historic privilege and we recognize leaders' latitude. However, when the privilege of leaders' latitude is abused so that we are unable on this side to be able to ask a question and get two supplementary questions, then the leaders' latitude is being abused so that it is taking away the rights and the privileges of other members in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Order. For the information of the honourable member, I have just ruled on the issue you are raising, and on a matter of privilege, that you, sir, have raised, I would like to inform the House that a matter concerning the methods by which the House proceeds in the conduct of business is a matter of order, not privilege.

Joseph Maingot in the second edition of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* states on page 14: "That allegations of breach of privilege by a member in the House that amount to complaints about procedures and practice in the House are by their very nature matters of order." He also states on 223 of the same edition: "A breach of the standing order or a failure to follow the established practice would invoke a point of order rather than a question of privilege."

On this basis, I would therefore rule that the honourable member does not have a point of order. But also with the matter of privilege that was raised, I had ruled on it and I had invited members, if they have concerns, to contact me in my office and I will arrange a meeting with all parties. If there are issues, that is the place to resolve the issues, not on the floor of the Chamber. Negotiations should not take place on the floor.

So the honourable member does not have a matter of privilege.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, you had the floor. Have you concluded your comments?

Mr. Doer: Yes.

Cancellation

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): For the Premier to try to attempt to deflect their mismanagement of this project and blame it on inflation in concrete and fuel and other things is just not credible.

The \$665-million budget was set out just 12 months ago. There was a design and a set of objectives in design and works that was attached to

that 665 figure only 12 months ago, Mr. Speaker. So all the inflation he talks about had already occurred, and the inflation that has occurred in the past 12 months was entirely foreseeable given the direction of inflation. So this is a case of pure mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, nothing else.

Mr. Speaker, on my final supplemental on this question of the mismanagement of the floodway. The Province had negotiated a 50-50 cost-sharing agreement with the federal government for the replacement and twinning of the Highway 15 bridge, so my question to the Premier is: How much federal money has he left on the table as a result of the cancellation of this bridge?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Zero, Mr. Speaker.

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

Environmental Licences

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

The environmental assessment that was done in August 2004, in connection with what was then the proposed floodway expansion project, refers to highway bridges in the pre-designed process. It says, and I quote at page 53, and I'll table a copy of the assessment for the benefit of members. I quote, it says, "the condition of all bridge decks required either replacement or major rehabilitation."

It goes on to say that there are major structural deficiencies in the strength of the existing piers and abutments for existing highway bridges. Furthermore, it says that there are significant hydraulic and channel cost benefits to going forward with the replacement of these bridges.

Mr. Speaker, it also says that the logic to replace the structure above the 1-in-700 year water level was that the additional strengthening of the superstructure to resist the potential of lateral forces due to water, ice and debris forces, justifies and calls for the replacement and raising of all of these bridges.

So now we see, Mr. Speaker, after months of mismanagement of this project, the government cutting back on these critical components of the project. There was an environmental licence issued on the basis of this report. So my first question to the Premier on this issue is: Is the existing environmental licence valid as a result of these fundamental changes to the floodway design?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

As expressed, we are concerned with the length of time that it's taking to be able to answer and pose questions. We believe that there is abuse with using the leaders' latitude, and that there needs to be something done to be able to address—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

That point of order, I have ruled on earlier. I remind members that, when I do make a ruling on a point of order, the members have two choices: either they accept my ruling, or they challenge the ruling. No Speaker's rulings are up for debate. The member is raising the same point of order that I raised, so I would advise the member that, if I make a ruling, you either challenge it or you accept it.

I have to rule that the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member had the floor? Or have you concluded your comments? No? Okay.

Mr. McFadyen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the question was whether the environmental licence continues to be valid in light of these fundamental changes.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, certainly the environmental direction on the aquifer has continued to be ongoing with the direction of the Clean Environment Commission.

I would point out two of the bridges of six we have built or tendered. In fact, the last meeting we had with Minister Toews, we approved a tender of some \$32 million, I believe, for the sixth bridge that would (a) have the most significant traffic, either rail or car, and also would be at risk with flooding. I would point out since some bridges, even after '97, were still built at 1-in-100 years; we talk about lack of foresight, rather than built at 1-in-700 level. We have tried to adjust since the '97 flood accordingly.

There is going to be a certain widening of the floodway. Two of those bridges are railway bridges.

There are two trucks a week, if we ever get to 1-in-700 years, that would be required as a mitigating strategy, as opposed to replacing the bridge. Mr. Speaker, the—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do believe it's worthy of note that it takes this Premier longer to answer a question than it does for the Prime Minister of Canada to answer a question.

Mr. Speaker, we do believe that the Premier needs—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The issue on leaders' latitude I have dealt with, and I advised the honourable member of the avenues he has. So I would have to rule that the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

*(10:40)

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the bridge on Highway 15 that I said zero; obviously, we're trying to manage the project in the 665, and both levels of government have agreed to that. We haven't gone back like the B.C. Olympics. The member opposite talks about other construction projects. There's not a construction project in western Canada that's not over-budgeted from the last two years. We've tried to manage within it, and the water will flow around the city at 1-in-700 years. In fact, we will be at the highest level of protection in the spring of '07 than we've had since the 1826 flood. What we promised a few years ago, we're delivering for the citizens of Winnipeg and the Capital Region by the spring of '07.

Replacement

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about projects across the country running over budget, but I would remind the House again that the budget for this project was set only a year ago after the inflation had taken place and when the inflation over the past 12 months was entirely foreseeable. Well, it was announced. The 665 was announced. It was announced a year ago in connection with certain

works, which included the work on the six bridges in question. So, given that we have within the environmental review, which was based on advice from professional engineers, concerns about the structural strength and stability of the bridges in question, given that the Premier and the government have promised to Manitobans 1-in-700-year flood protection, protection in the event of a catastrophic flood at the cost of \$665 million, now they're cutting back bridges, and leaving in place bridges that their own reports indicate have significant structural concerns in the event of high water flows, debris, and ice, and given that the government is saying, well, we'll widen the channel, when the engineers say that they cannot go any wider with respect—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Given that we've seen a bill dealing with Public Accounts and the need to legislate things in order to make things happen, I'm wondering if it might be more appropriate that we look at legislation in regard to Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order are raised to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure of our practice, and points of order are not to be used for debate or other issues. The only issues that points of order are is to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure of our practices, and I didn't hear either one of those two. So the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, so, given that up until the date of the Remembrance Day news release that came out of the government, up until that time they thought it was an important part of the project to build these bridges, to raise them in order to protect Winnipeggers and Manitobans, and given that we have a union deal which flows union dues to big international unions south of the border; so we've got tax dollars, we have Manitoba tax dollars flowing south, while we've got, potentially, water flowing north, putting Winnipeggers at risk. How much risk is the Premier prepared to tolerate for the people of Manitoba as a result of his unwillingness to manage this project? Cancel the \$60 million overspending on the union deal.

Why doesn't he get his priorities straight? Put Winnipeggers and Manitobans first. Put the international American unions second. Why doesn't he do the right thing? Cancel the agreement and build the bridges.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The press release was issued on November 13. I believe Remembrance Day was November 11.

Red River Floodway Bridges Technical Reports

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the board of directors for the Floodway Authority is responsible for much of the final decision making on how the floodway expansion proceeds. This group, no doubt, requires as much up-to-date information as possible when it comes to making decisions on changes to this project, including the decision not to replace the six aging bridge structures crossing the floodway.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier just referred to reports. Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) tell the House what technical reports the board of directors used or had to indicate these aging decade-old structures are capable of withstanding a 1-in-700 year flood?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The Floodway Authority met with the federal officials of Infrastructure, I believe Mr. Cannon's department, about three or four months ago. They did, obviously, a lot of technical work to achieve the goal of staying within the budget. Almost every project that was agreed to two or three years ago, and the number that was used for tenders was well in advance of the date that the member opposite is talking about, and the request for the 665 was quite a bit more in advance to deal with the numbers, but we have two choices: to go the way of the B.C. Olympics and ask for more money, which would include more money from the Province, or look at how we could get the water going around the city of Winnipeg in a 1-in-700 years. This has all been agreed to by the federal and provincial governments.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that the reliable information is still crucial to the making of any decisions on the floodway with respect to its potential impact on the safety and well-being of Manitobans and their property, could the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) tell this House whether there are any technical reports available to reliably indicate that

these aging bridges crossing the floodway are capable of withstanding a 1-in-700 year flood event, and will the minister table those reports if they are available today?

Mr. Doer: I just want to point out that after the '97 flood there were bridges still being constructed and paid for by the former government at 1-in-100 years, Mr. Speaker. After the '97 flood, where we came within an inch of being flooded in this city, we have taken a different position in terms of long-term infrastructure. Every one of these bridge projects was agreed to between the federal and provincial government, and it was based on 1-in-700 year protection. We will have the greatest protection in the history of Manitoba to deal with the largest flood in the history of Manitoba for the spring of '07. That is what we promised, and that's what we're going to deliver.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Premier is backing away from his 1-in-700 year flood proposal. There is no doubt that the previous Minister of Water Stewardship in charge of the floodway at that time indicated in Estimates just last June that 1-in-700 year protection, and I'm quoting from the Estimates: "But we did that with a process that involved raising the bridges and widening, rather than deepening, the floodway channel itself. That is important because that avoids much of the concern that we would have ended up replicating from the issues with the municipalities, and they are quite..." The Clean Environment Commission reported that even with a small risk we could have very significant consequences.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Doer: I invite the four members clapping to go out east of the Perimeter Highway, the east side of Winnipeg, and they'll see bridges now. These new bridges, they may not have noticed them yet. They go way above the floodway on the Trans-Canada Highway, No. 1, and they'll see the floodway has been expanded and deepened there, Mr. Speaker. That's why we will have not only the bridges built appropriately, but we will, as opposed to building bridges at 1-in-100 years like the members opposite did in Cabinet, we're building them, and we will have protection for the 1826 flood in the spring of 2007. Mind you, we actually need more snow. We need more moisture for everybody in Manitoba.

* (10:50)

Red River Floodway Expansion Artificial Flooding (La Verendrye)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): We, on this side of the House, are glad that there are Manitobans who will stand up for those who were in the flooded areas and who may be artificially flooded.

One such individual is the mayor of Ritchot, one Bob Stefaniuk. Mr. Stefaniuk has been a passionate advocate for those who are in La Verendrye and Ritchot who might be affected because of flooding. Unfortunately, he's been stymied by this government and by the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux). He's been quoted as saying that nobody listens, we're always falling on deaf ears.

Now he's concerned, because of the redesign of the floodway, that there'll even be more artificial flooding in the area of Ritchot and La Verendrye. I wonder if there is anybody who will have the passion and have the audacity to stand up and fight for people who can be artificially flooded like this individual does.

Will the minister responsible stand up and speak up for those people, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, I want to congratulate Mr. Stefaniuk in his job. He was part of the feasibility group that we appointed. I have a great deal of respect for him.

I would point out—*[interjection]* There are concerns. We have improved the notches that will protect Grand Pointe from the flooding that happened artificially with the operation of the floodway in 1997. Artificial flooding was created by the government of the day in the Grand Pointe area in 1997.

Increase the capacity of the four bays, increase the capacity of the notches, increase the capacity of the Seine River, and we will continue to work on many concerns that Mr. Stefaniuk has, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: I know that Mr. Stefaniuk will appreciate the kind words from the Premier, because after Mr. Stefaniuk's announcement this morning that he'll be seeking the nomination in La Verendrye for the Conservatives, the Premier will be seeing much more of Mr. Stefaniuk in the future.

After those kind words that the Premier did endorsing his campaign, I'd also like to let the Premier know that Mr. Stefaniuk has referred to this government as chintzy, unco-operative and not understanding about the needs and concerns of the

people of La Verendrye who could be affected by artificial flooding.

So I'll ask the minister responsible, the MLA for that area who won't stand up and defend these people: Why doesn't he stand up? Why doesn't he say that this redesign won't negatively impact the individuals that he is supposed to represent in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: I'm sure the Member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux) will be only too happy to point out the Highway 59 water barrier for Grand Pointe.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to go door to door in Grand Pointe and talk about the Tories artificially flooding Grand Pointe and all the work we've done to protect that community.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's muzzling of his Member for La Verendrye on this issue demonstrates why there's good people like Mr. Stefaniuk who want to come to this Legislature and speak up for residents of that area. He's called the government chintzy. He's called them unco-operative. He's said that they're not understanding about the needs of the people in that area, and the Premier won't even let the Member for La Verendrye speak. I imagine he is also silencing Cabinet and that's why this issue goes on for the people in that area.

I want to ask the member: Will he finally stand up, will he finally stand up for the people who actually sent him here and do something to protect them from artificial flooding, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Stefaniuk is a gentleman, and I look forward to the opportunity to meeting him in the election.

Mr. Speaker, our government has provided extra work on transportation routes like Highway 59, for example, protection to Grand Pointe. We provided clean water for communities under the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure agreement, and there are many, many other opportunities that we'll be stepping forward with with regard to Ritchot, and other communities, quite frankly, in the southeast.

But when I take a look at the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, you know, when they were the government in the 1990s—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Red River Floodway Expansion Environmental Impact

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, this project has been a fiasco from day one. The forced unionization has been drained by an estimated \$60 million out of the project. As a result of this and other mismanagement, this government has been forced to redesign the floodway project. Manitobans are concerned that this will have negative environmental implications.

Will the minister tell the House how these changes will impact ground water quality?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, in all the briefings that we have received, the federal-provincial budget, the labour costs were within budget. The cement, the steel, the iron and the fuel were the only ones over budget like every other place in Canada. The labour costs, contrary to the members' opposite the-sky-was-falling predictions, he was wrong then, and he is wrong today.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, we know the forced unionization has sent our tax dollars south of the border. This mismanagement and other changes have forced design changes from the original design and environmental assessment.

Has there been a reassessment on the environment as a result of these changes going forward? Specifically, how is it going to impact the aquifer and drinking water for Manitobans?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): The member opposite should put the correct information on the record. You are going to affect the aquifer if you go deep, Mr. Speaker. Our project is going wider. With regard to the hydraulics, the hydraulics are not going to be affected on the information we have from our engineers by making the channel wider.

This coming spring, Mr. Speaker, we will have a 1-in-300 protection for the city of Winnipeg, unprecedented in our history. Unlike Duff Roblin, the members opposite should be ashamed to use the word "Progressive" in front of Conservative.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, because of this government's mismanagement and incompetence, changes to the floodway project are being made on the fly.

This question is on the safety of the project. The original plan will clearly not be on time or on budget. What is this government sacrificing? Are they

sacrificing water quality or flood protection for Manitobans?

Mr. Lemieux: We said we would be at the 1826 level by '07, and we are going to be there, Mr. Speaker.

"Spirited Energy" Advertising Campaign Sources of Funding

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, yesterday it became clear that some of the so-called million-dollar private contribution towards a \$2.4-million "Spirited Energy" campaign actually came from the publicly owned and publicly funded Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Competitiveness why he misled Manitobans. Why did his government categorize publicly owned and publicly funded Crown corporations as private contributors toward the "Spirited Energy" campaign?

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba there is an energy. In Manitoba, right now, there is a spirited energy that has been engaged by the private sector. It has been engaged by government, and it has been engaged by the people in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the Broadcasters Association has given \$300,000 in donated air time. They could have sold this to someone else. The *Winnipeg Sun* has given \$15,000 in its space. CanWest Global has given \$165,000. That is half a million already. The private sector and many of the businesses in Manitoba, Winnipeg and around the province have all contributed. They should get on board.

Mrs. Rowat: It is interesting that this minister has finally gotten the difference between private and public sector down pat.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, this government has stonewalled, misdirected and evaded questions every step of the way in this campaign. So it is very interesting that now, after I don't know how many FIPAs and requests for information, the information is slowly trickling out. So we must be on the right track.

Just this week, Mr. Speaker, on CJOB, the Premier (Mr. Doer) said, and I quote: We have had almost a million dollars in donations and in kind, if you look at Great-West Life, the big banner, CanWest Global, the big banners; they are all participating with their own resources to support this campaign. But they said to me, no matter what the

political flak is, we've got to do this. We've got to compete with other provinces, and I want to give credit to the business community for raising over a million dollars as part of this campaign.

I ask the Minister of Competitiveness: Will he tell the House today how he is going to support and funnel the money towards—

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

* (11:00)

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, negative nabobs opposite here obviously don't engage spirited energy. We have spirited energy sitting up in the gallery with us today. We have people engaged in being proud of Manitoba. The Broadcasters Association of Manitoba are extremely proud of Manitoba contributing over \$300,000 in their ad campaign.

Mr. Speaker, people in Minnedosa, people in Brandon, people throughout rural Manitoba have constantly approached us, saying: We need to promote our province.

We're doing it with the private sector, with the government and with Manitobans. They should get on board.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, this government has had numerous opportunities to provide honest and clear information as to the details of the "Spirited Energy" campaign and continues to stonewall. On Thursday, the Minister of Competitiveness had indicated that a million dollars in private and Crown corporation support does not include actual cash. So will the Minister of Competitiveness finally tell Manitobans how much the private sector has contributed financially to the \$2.4-million "Spirited Energy" campaign.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, the logic over here eludes reality. You know what, Mr. Speaker? When you buy ads with The Broadcasters Association, they don't give it to you for free. It is fascinating. There's been over \$300,000 given from The Broadcasters Association in kind. When you look at CanWest Global, they have given over \$165,000. The members opposite may get free advertising, but the rest of Manitobans don't. There's a cost to that. There is a cost when a newspaper prints ads, and there is a cost when things go on air on radio and television. They are wrong again.

Child and Family Services Division Foster Parent Screening

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, 10 days ago there was shock and outrage at the sentences given to Terry Ladouceur and Lynette Traverse, the couple who have been called by some our province's Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka in the way that they raped and violated young girls who they get drunk on alcohol and perhaps high on drugs. But what is perhaps even more shocking is the fact that Child and Family Services actually allowed or directed one of the girls, only 13 years old, to live with Mr. Ladouceur and Ms. Traverse as a place of safety.

I ask the minister: What kind of screening of this couple was done that allowed for this couple to have a foster child? What monitoring was done to ensure this 13-year-old child was safe and would be free to report any problems to authorities?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I indicated to the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) last week that the worst thing that we can do in this Chamber as honourable members is to breach *res judicia* and, in a case that is currently before the courts, to comment, because that could result in the entire case being thrown out and any individuals involved being absolved. The worst thing that we can do is discuss issues before the court as they are appearing right now. I do not think we will help anyone by discussing particular issues of the case that is being discussed.

Foster Parent Placement Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the child was allowed by Child and Family Services to be sent to a supposedly safe place which turned out to be one of the most atrocious places a child has ever been placed in demands a thorough investigation. The report of the external review of the Child and Family Services system unfortunately ignores the fact that many abuses were reported while individuals were under the care of Child and Family Services.

Will this Minister of Family Services assure this House that there will be a thorough investigation of this matter and that he will report back to the House with recommendations for changes to ensure a situation like this will never occur again?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Well, the member makes some statements, Mr. Speaker, of course, about any reference to the proceedings of the court and the findings the evidence presented. But I can assure the members that the issue is being referred to the Children's Advocate. If there is anything untoward, then she can take the appropriate action.

Compensation for Children in Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): It's absolutely frightful when a government which oversees the Child and Family Services system so completely and utterly fails to protect the children with whom it's involved.

I realize that the present government inherited the absolutely terrible circumstances from a previous cold, heartless Tory government and that the first direction of this child going to a safe place may actually have occurred under the former government in which the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) was involved. But it's absolutely shameful what has occurred since on this government's watch.

I ask the minister how his government could so badly have let down this child and what is this government going to do to make reparations or to address the needs of this child in order to provide some form of compensation or recompense to a child who's been hurt so badly by the system.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, if the member has evidence from the court proceedings that can back up what he's alleging, then he can table that in the House.

If he wants to talk about cold and heartless, too, I'll just spend a moment, Mr. Speaker. One can leave federal politics behind, but you can't leave your federal record behind, sir. In 1995, this member opposite was making a decision to do away with the increases, based on inflation, to child welfare on reserves.

Mr. Speaker, an independent review has showed that that hurt Manitoba children, vulnerable, on Manitoba reserves, more than the children in any other province in this country, \$27 million lost to this province because of his decision. That's cold and heartless.

Interfacility Ambulance Transfers Rural Manitoba

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to get up in the House to ask a question. A decade ago, the former Filmon Conservative government whose chief of staff was the current Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen); a decade ago, the former Filmon Conservative government downloaded responsibility for intercity ambulance transfers to Manitoba Health authorities.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard each and every day to ensure equality for Manitobans wherever they reside in the province of Manitoba. Could the Minister of Health please inform the House and the public what action she is taking to correct the policies of the former Conservative government, policies which left rural Manitobans saddled with the cost of paying for interfacility ambulance transfers?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'm delighted to announce that as of November 15 of this year, we're eliminating, in full, the patient cost of medically necessary land ambulance interfacility transfers. Manitobans spoke to us about the unfairness of the policy that was a result of Conservative members opposite. They were concerned about the inequity. We've listened and we've addressed that.

That's not all, Mr. Speaker. In past years, we have replaced the ambulance fleet, 160 new vehicles, to provide excellent service to people in Manitoba.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we've also addressed issues concerning dispatch by creating the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre in Brandon. We're very proud of that.

"Spirited Energy" Advertising Campaign Sources of Funding

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): We've heard a lot of talk about "Spirited Energy" and they have to tell Manitobans what they already know, that they do have spirited energy. But what we don't find out is the truth from this minister who says one day that there's a million dollars of private money, and the next day we find out that there isn't any real private money. But when he tries to say that there are some investments involved, he can only account for \$500,000.

Can the minister today for this House table for all Manitobans who are on the hook for this a detailed line-by-line contribution of the private sector to this campaign, the pre-election campaign?

*(11:10)

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade): Mr. Speaker, the only large spending pre-election campaign that was done in the province of Manitoba was done under the now sitting person who is from—where's their leader from? Fort Whyte. Prior to the 1998, 1999 election, they spent \$3,500,000 of Manitobans' money running up to election campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, for the companies hanging the banners in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba, there is a cost. If you had to identify that cost during an election campaign, you would be charged and assessed the costs on that. To CanWest and many others that have locations there is a cost. It is in kind, and the member opposite should know that. The only ones that spent on ad campaigns were them.

Mr. Goertzen: The minister practically agrees it is an election campaign because it has to be accounted for as though it were an election campaign, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that finally we get an admission, but will he give Manitobans transparency? Will they give them a line-by-line, detailed contribution? Because one day he says it's all private money, and then the next day we find it's from MPI or WCB, which last I heard weren't private corporations unless they have a hidden agenda, which probably happened over there. I'd like to know the figure. I'd like to know. Put aside your hidden agenda, put aside your re-election campaign. Table a list for Manitobans, they have the right to know, Minister.

Mr. Smith: I know the Member for Steinbach was not around during the late '90s. The only hidden agenda in Manitoba was a large proposition saying he wouldn't sell MTS. The main policy person for the Filmon government is sitting in a chair over there. The hidden agenda is selling Hydro. Mr. Speaker, look across at the floor opposite of us. We said we'd defend MTS. They said they wouldn't sell it; they sold it. They say they won't sell Hydro. Manitobans don't believe them. I don't believe them. They will sell Crown corporations. I know it's a touchy subject, but you know what? MTS is good for Manitoba. Manitoba Hydro that we're building is good for Manitoba. They'll sell them.

Mr. Goertzen: This minister from Brandon East has a number of failed campaigns on his record. The last failed campaign he had was the one where he tried to take out the mayor from Brandon, where he tried to remove him from office. Now he's onto this failed campaign of "Spirited Energy." I want to ask the minister, because he has some responsibility for public funds, he needs to table for all Manitobans a line-by-line account. He said this should be done in an election; this is like an election campaign, table it for all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I know where Steinbach is, and I know where Brandon East and Brandon West. I'm from Brandon West. They're wrong again at the start of the statement. They're wrong about us putting out information. It's quite out there for anybody in the public to see. This province is the first province that's had private industry engaged in a "Spirited Energy" campaign. Other provinces have paid for it completely out of government revenue. We've got the engagement of Manitobans, we've got the engagement of all the industries in Manitoba. We've got the engagement of private business and individuals. We've got the engagement of the government. The only thing that aren't engaged are the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Daniel McIntyre Maroons

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Speaking of spirited energy, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report to this House that 2006 saw Daniel McIntyre Maroons return to the Winnipeg High School Football League.

Daniel Mac has a football tradition and has won many city championships in the past. Current CFL players Marcus Howell and Dave Donaldson are graduates of the Maroons' football program. However, in the 1990s the team encountered difficulties and the team folded. But this year, thanks to the efforts of Daniel Mac alumni, including Jerry Kissack, John Jamieson and many others, the enthusiasm of principal Gilles Beaumont, head coach Darrel Mazur and his staff, and most of all the support and energy of students at Daniel Mac, the Maroons took the field once again.

With many new players, including several players newly arrived in Canada, the Maroons started slowly, but gained momentum throughout the season. The team has a solid nucleus of returning

players. I know they will be a force to contend with in future seasons.

Football is the truest team sport, requiring discipline and hard work. A team's success depends on the co-operation and combined effort of all players. The men and women who play Maroons football learn valuable lessons to make their future brighter.

Daniel Mac is a proud West End school with a history spanning more than 80 years. The school features first-rate academics, excellent performing and fine arts, and competitive athletics. The return of football is one more great step for a school and a community with much to celebrate.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to have the names of this year's DMCI Maroons' players, coaches and training staff entered in the permanent record of *Hansard* to recognize their achievements that tomorrow's champions can look back at this important season. Thank you.

DMCI Maroons: Marvin Aceta, Nick Anderson, Adamson Aquino, Matthew Asham, Rigo Aviles, Sean Bare, Matthew Benoit, Francis Bowers, Lewis Bowers, Awot Btesamlak, Ryan Clarke, Mark Cruz, Richard Cruz, John De Guzman, Jason Degagne, Taimé Doucette, Stephen Ferreira, Yoko Fwamba, Richard Gajes, John Johnson, Craig Kwiatkowski, James Legiehn, Ricardo Madierios, Lawrence Medel, Kyle McCourt, Aaron Painter, Jordan Pastushenko, Dino Petrelli, Justin Rego, Tristen Rodriguez, Chris Ross, Steven Rowntree, Scott Soriano, Jarrold Sorr, Eric Tangtakoune, Will Tanjo, Rene Thomas, Charmaine Vedoya, Oliver Vesario, Ethan Zacharias.

Chief Operating Officer, Gilles Beaumont; Head Coach, Darrell Mazur; General Manager, Erin Armstrong; Student Manager, Pauline Dizon, Line Coach, Mark Sears, Line Coach, Don McPherson; Linebacker, Darren Sharpe; Line Coach, John Hearn; Strength and Conditioning, Melanie Talastas; Receivers Coach, Sudlow "Kim" Alphonso; Videotaping, Nadia Bousquet; Student Trainer, Marc Cousans; Cheer Team, Carrie Maier; Booster Club, Wendy Gillespie; Alumni Consultant, Jerry Kissack; Alumni Consultant, John Jamieson; Student Coach, Javier Argel; Student Coach, Jesse Clark; Student Coach, James Quirante.

Doris Jones

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): A member's statement, Mr. Speaker, as

the second Silver Heights alumni to speak on a member's statement today. I want to thank the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) for his support of what I think is a great cause, maintaining the great name of Silver Heights Collegiate.

But that's not the topic of my member's statement today, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour of acknowledging an extremely talented athlete and a great role model for young Manitobans. It's my pleasure, and it will be my pleasure after we complete today to meet with Doris Jones. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge her presence here and her many accomplishments. Ms. Jones has a list of achievements that, at her young age, could match what many people could only hope to achieve in a lifetime.

In 2006 alone, she has won more than 15 gold medals in archery events all across North America and I'm sure will continue to bring home the gold for Manitoba as she continues to compete for our great province. She has also set numerous Canadian and world records. It's always great to see a young Manitoban reach their full potential, and Doris is an example of the great reward that can be derived from hard work, commitment and passion to a cause.

Mr. Speaker, Doris is a great role model for all young Manitobans. It's my distinct pleasure to honour her and to meet with her later today. Thank you.

Creating Opportunities Action Plan

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of my honoured colleagues to the recently announced Creating Opportunities Action Plan. This action plan is the product of hard work and open consultation between the Creating Opportunities committee, government departments, concerned professionals and rural Manitobans. It builds on this government's success in forging links between these stakeholders, and has laid the foundation for the growth of an even stronger and more comprehensive rural economic development plan.

Mr. Speaker, this government has achieved significant results by working in partnership with rural communities. I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Ms. Wowchuk) for constituting the committee and putting forth a sustainable plan for future developing and stabilizing of rural economies. Undoubtedly, new economic development projects will build on

this government's forward thinking and successful initiatives in the areas of wind power, biofuels, rural entrepreneurship, tourism, agri-foods, composites and other projects. In addition to building on these successes, the action plan uses the findings and recommendations of the Creating Opportunities committee consultations to guide Manitoba's rural and northern economic development.

On a personal note, I want to thank the minister for the opportunity of sitting on this committee. I very much appreciated working with the three other rural Manitobans: Susan Proven of Minnedosa; Gaye Lenderbeck of Roblin; and Paul Gregory of Fisher Branch.

As well, I thank those individuals from across the province who took the time to share their ideas for promoting value-added enterprise in rural and northern Manitoba. Their knowledge and input are at the very base of the plan. Having been involved in the process, I know the focus on value-added opportunities directly reflects the suggestions and ideas that rural and northern Manitobans want. The plan focuses on economic development in six key areas.

On behalf of all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister, once again, for constituting this committee.

P.C. Nominee Meeting (Neepawa)

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a statement about an event that occurred Wednesday of this week in my home town of Neepawa when over 1,100 of my closest friends gathered in the Yellowhead Centre at Neepawa, and, of that, 1,032 were voting delegates to choose a replacement for myself as part of the Conservative Association.

Mr. Speaker, I want to proudly point out that there were people who demonstrated that democracy is alive and well. Five of the finest businessmen in our area put their names forward, and Stuart Briese was ultimately the winning contender over Ed Stroeder, Ken Waddell, Ron Floyd and Bob Gass.

But, during that night, Mr. Speaker, something else happened which is really the core of my statement. There's the lady who manages the Yellowhead hall and arena, who, while setting up chairs in the afternoon for the hall, was informed that her house was gutted by fire. She, of course, rushed home to see what was going on, but that evening the

attendees in the hall raised well over \$3,000 to help her with her immediate—*[interjection]*

This was a spur-of-the-moment, generous gesture by the people in the hall that evening. I am both humbled and gratified by their actions and the fact that I have had the opportunity to represent them for a number of years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I simply want to close my comments by saying thank you to those people for their generosity, and best wishes to them.

* (11:20)

Silent Witness Project

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Manitoba's Silent Witness Project, an initiative that seeks to increase awareness of domestic violence and, in particular, those cases where women have been murdered by their partners.

This important campaign coincides with Domestic Violence Prevention Month and the upcoming day for the elimination of violence against women. These days give us pause to remember all those who have been and continue to be victims of violence, tragically at the hands of those whom they should be able to trust.

The Silent Witness Project is a travelling exhibit that consists of life-size silhouettes of both those women who have been known to have been killed by their partners and those who are caught in the cycle of domestic violence.

I am pleased that this week marked the occasion of Gimli's first annual Silent Witness Project vigil held at the Gimli Community Health Centre. The public nature of this vigil was important in drawing attention to these all-too-common tragedies and in reminding each one of us to work intentionally toward building safer communities.

Much organization, effort and dedication was required to develop this significant and unique event. The Interlake Women's Resource Centre was instrumental in creating this exhibit on behalf of those that can no longer speak for themselves. Their continual work with women and children does not go unnoticed and is vital in creating a safe and healthy community.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would ask that all honourable members take a moment to remember the Manitoba women who are caught in the web of

domestic violence and to honour all those Manitobans who make it their duty to give voice to these silent witnesses.

Mr. Speaker, I ask leave if the members would join me in a moment of silence. Thank you.

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

It's been agreed to, so please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to return to Throne Speech debate.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick),

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

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

And the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few brief comments on the record with respect to this year's very disappointing Throne Speech, I might say.

First, though, I'd like to pay tribute and provide a very hearty welcome to the pages and the interns who make this Legislature work, and thank them for their support inside this Legislature.

I'd like to also pay special mention and a special tribute to members from Emerson, Ste. Rose, Carman and Fort Rouge. I thank them for their service to their constituents, for their service to this province and for their service to this Legislature. All have made this province a better place to work, to

live and to raise a family, including their constituency as well.

I can also say, Mr. Speaker, that the members from Emerson, Ste. Rose and Carman, the members from those three constituencies on this side of the House, have been mentors to those with less experience in the Legislature. I can say that they have helped me personally, particularly, I think, during the 2002 by-election. They came out and gave me support during that by-election. I thank them for that. They also helped me, I think, as a new member and helped defining issues, defining the questions that I have been privileged to pose in the Legislature in Question Period, and, of course, with respect to the procedure in the Legislature. As a new member, of course, there's a great deal to learn, and they have been particularly helpful in my term as an elected Member for Lac du Bonnet. I thank them for that.

I'm sure the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), as well, has been equally helpful to members of the government and, particularly, new members. I noted that he gave his speech yesterday with respect to his response to the Throne Speech. He started out by saying—it was quite odd that he started out by saying that he didn't want to get personal, and then what he did was he made very personal remarks, I believe, for the Member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) that I think were very unwarranted and unprofessional.

I'd like to remind him that he did say he wasn't going to get personal in spite of the fact that it would be very easy to talk about the Member for Fort Rouge in terms of what he has not done in this Legislature. I believe the Member for Morris had indicated previous to that that he was the architect of the scandals in CFS and the health care system. It is absolutely correct. She wasn't getting personal about that. She was talking about what he had done or what he had not done. It is a fact that, in fact, he's the architect behind most of those scandals in Child and Family Services. He was the architect behind the health care system that's rated dead last in Canada, Mr. Speaker, in spite of the second highest per capita spending in Canada.

The only disaster that we can't really pin on the Member for Fort Rouge, the only disaster that we couldn't pin on him yet, and I say yet, Mr. Speaker, because there may be further evidence coming forward, is the Crocus scandal, where 34,000 Manitobans lost more than \$60 million. So he certainly shouldn't sling mud when we're talking

about scandals in this Legislature. He certainly was part of all of those scandals.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was not at the nomination meetings of all four of those members: the Emerson nomination meeting, the Ste. Rose, Carman and Fort Rouge nomination meetings. I was busy in the constituency dealing with meetings and events within the constituency, but I note that there is a Conservative movement in this province, a Conservative movement, I think, that's going to be hard to ignore by members of this government when you look at the more than 1,000 members coming to each of the nomination meetings in Emerson, Ste. Rose and Carman. More than a thousand members came to vote to bring in new Conservative members who will run in the next election. When you compare that to what happened that same evening in Fort Rouge when there's a contested nomination, only 200 members showing up to that nomination meeting. There's a lot to be said for what's happening in this province. People are starting to take notice about the lack of action, the lack of policy, the lack of new ideas by this government. They're not showing up at their nomination meetings like they are showing up at ours.

I know that the members, the NDP members, must be disappointed as well. Not only are Manitobans disappointed in the sense that they're not showing up in their nomination meetings, but they must be disappointed in their own Throne Speech, in the fact that there's no new ideas in that Throne Speech. It's obviously a signal of a tired government, a government that's out of steam.

* (11:30)

There's absolutely nothing new in that Throne Speech. I know that members opposite will perhaps dispute that, pointing to the fact that they're going to build Conawapa by 2019. Well, I have news for members opposite. I have news for you. Conawapa was scheduled to be built by Manitoba Hydro by 2024. All you did was move it up by five years. That's the only change in the Throne Speech. That's their big announcement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the big announcement about Conawapa, which is within the long-term plans of Manitoba Hydro. They had stated in their long-term plan that they're going to build it by 2024. All the Premier (Mr. Doer) did was move it up by five years. That's something new? There's nothing new in that Throne Speech.

When I look at tax-relief measures that were proposed in the Throne Speech, I'm equally disappointed. It's almost laughable what they did in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There were five tax-relief measures that were announced in the Throne Speech, three of which were announced in the previous budget, in '06-07; absolutely nothing new to them. The fourth tax-relief measure was following the lead of the federal Conservative government in Ottawa in income splitting for seniors, and that, in fact, was announced prior to the Throne Speech as well. The fifth tax-relief measure that was announced within the Throne Speech was following our Progressive Conservative annual general meeting recommendation for hybrid cars. No new and meaningful tax-relief measures. Obviously, a sign of a government that's tired, that has no new ideas, and is clearly out of steam.

In this province we are not competitive with other provinces. The only thing the government responded with prior to the session here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is with a response by creating a new Ministry of Competitiveness. Obviously, they realize that they're not competitive in the rest of Canada. Otherwise, they would certainly have not appointed a minister responsible for competitiveness. So they finally admitted that they weren't competitive. But along comes the Throne Speech. Another disappointment to Manitobans because it did nothing, it did absolutely nothing to improve our competitive position within the country. We had the highest personal income taxes west of Québec before the Throne Speech; we will have the highest personal income taxes west of Québec after the Throne Speech. We are always two or three steps behind other provinces, and as a result we are losing more and more young Manitobans to other provinces.

Let me read to you some of the responses even, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by third-party interest groups after the Throne Speech, and they agreed with us.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, there's little to nothing real in this Throne Speech for taxpayers. Too many spending initiatives and new programs, not enough tax cuts. All of their efforts to keep young people here are useless if taxes are so high. There was nothing in terms of tax relief.

The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce indicated that it was very disappointed. The government did not tackle the problem that Manitoba has with retaining talent, and everyone knows that we are in trouble in Manitoba with retaining youth in this

province. Everyone knows, except the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province. Even BC Hydro took notice, and they came around Manitoba recruiting skilled young workers from Manitoba. The very first day that they set up shop in Manitoba they took 100 applications from Manitobans anxious to leave Manitoba because we are not competitive in this country. None of the initiatives in the speech will lead to the creation of jobs in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce also indicated that this government acknowledges that there is a retention problem. They acknowledge that in the Throne Speech by rolling out the tuition rebate program, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As correctly pointed out by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, they indicate that's only a small piece of the puzzle to solving a retention problem. We can't retain our graduates simply by giving them a portion of their tuition back. That's only a small part of the puzzle. We have to create an economy in Manitoba that's competitive with other provinces across this country, an economy in Manitoba that's capable of creating long-term, meaningful jobs that youth want, and there's nothing in this Throne Speech that will do that.

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce indicated that by 2008 we'll be the only province in western Canada with a capital tax, in spite of the fact that Saskatchewan is phasing theirs out. The lead was taken by the Saskatchewan NDP government, of all places, to phase out that tax, and there's absolutely nothing being done in this province to deal with the corporation capital tax. That interest group also indicated that there is a need to get serious about youth retention, and we can't do that until we get serious about tax relief.

I urge members opposite to read our amendments because I think if they actually read the amendments, they would agree with them, and they'd probably vote for our amendment to the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I refer to one of the amendments, in particular, that we indicate that hallway medicine continues to exist in Manitoba, and now it has progressed to a crisis in Winnipeg's emergency rooms due to a critical shortage of doctors. It wasn't long ago, in fact, in June, when the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up in the House and indicated that there are zero people in the hallways in our hospitals. That proved wrong, of course. He was very embarrassed having said it,

and he should have been because of their promise in 1999 to end hallway medicine in six months for less than \$15 million. We are still waiting for those six months to end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because there are still people in the hallways in Manitoba's hospitals.

We've also indicated that the government has failed to keep rural emergency rooms open despite promising to do so. A little over a year ago in Pine Falls we had the situation where we didn't have enough emergency room doctors available, and they had to close the emergency room in Pine Falls hospital for over a one-week period over Christmas time when there was a lot of travelling. A lot of people were travelling out to Pine Falls to visit relatives, and so on. A disaster was just waiting to happen, and the government ignored that.

Another part of our amendment deals with the government's failure to call an independent public inquiry on Crocus. Thirty-four thousand Manitobans lost more than \$60 million due to the inaction of this government. The Auditor said that there could have been political interference. He didn't say there wasn't political interference in Crocus when we were at the Public Accounts Committee. My question to the minister during Public Accounts was: Who is the higher authority? He wasn't willing to answer that question. That higher authority, obviously, is political interference in the Crocus scandal, and we are going to be getting to the bottom of that once government finally calls back Public Accounts. We are going to get to the bottom of that matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There have been seven scandals by this government in the last seven years. It's cost taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that not only the scandals have cost hundreds of millions of dollars, but, certainly, the decisions of this government. The decisions that they feel are positive have cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

I point to the fact that this government is intent on ensuring that there is a transmission line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg from the north, instead of what Manitoba Hydro is recommending which is a transmission line on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. The cost of that decision alone to Manitoba taxpayers is going to be \$550 million. There is also the cost of a conscious decision to ensure, by this government, that the floodway workers are unionized, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that they are

forced to pay union dues. That decision itself is going to cost taxpayers in Manitoba an additional \$60 million because of a decision by this government to load up the pockets of the union movement in this province and in this country.

The government has also failed to ensure the level of flood protection that is required for the city of Winnipeg. They have cut out seven bridges in a desperate attempt to cut down costs. They still say, in spite of those seven bridges being eliminated from the floodway expansion, that we are still going to get a 1-in-700 year flood protection. I don't understand how that could happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because, in order to expand the floodway, to widen the floodway, you're going to have to lengthen those bridges. You are going to have to replace those bridges. So it is not going to happen. It is clear from the reports that, first of all, we are way over budget; and, secondly, they are making desperate attempts to try to reduce the budget in order to try to stay within that budget, but it is not going to work.

* (11:40)

I contrast that to the actions of Premier Duff Roblin in the 1960s when he, in fact, built the floodway to protect the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He built the floodway on time and under budget, unlike members opposite who will be not building the floodway, but, obviously, expanding the floodway at levels much above what was budgeted for.

This government failed to address the out-migration of Manitobans, especially our youth, and that was confirmed in the 2005 report of Statistics Canada when 9,880 more young Manitobans left our province than other young individuals from other provinces coming back into Manitoba. That's an airplane load of Manitobans a week, leaving Manitoba for hope and opportunity elsewhere. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that not a week goes by in my constituency that I hear from constituents who complain to me that there is no hope and opportunity in this province, that we have to become competitive, we have to create an economy that's capable of creating the long-term, meaningful, high-paying jobs that our youth require, and we have to compete with other provinces. We're not doing so. As a result, their nephews, their grandchildren, their children are leaving the province by an airplane load a week to seek hope and opportunity elsewhere.

The NDP solution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Throne Speech is simply to give a tuition rebate to

students. Graduates don't stay within Manitoba simply for a tuition rebate. They stay in Manitoba because they're looking for a long-term, meaningful job, with hope of advancement, and that's what we have to work toward in this province to keep our youth in this province, not tuition rebates. That could be part of the solution, but it certainly isn't the whole solution to keep Manitoba on track and to keep Manitobans within our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for those reasons, and I've only suggested a few, and I know that members opposite, if they take the time to look at all of the suggestions we have in the Throne Speech amendment, they will agree that there's a lot of work to be done. We need a vision for this province that's going to turn this province around and create the economic opportunities that Manitobans want and deserve. It will give us a chance then to make meaningful tax cuts and create an economy within this province that will create long-term, meaningful jobs for Manitobans.

With those very few brief words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would urge members opposite to support our amendment. In fact, I think, if the Premier gave a free vote in this Legislature, I think you'd probably see more than half of them supporting our amendment because they probably agree with us. But, with those few brief comments, I would urge members opposite to vote with us on the amendment. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating and welcoming the new Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees, Ms. Tamara Pomanski, and I look forward to receiving procedural advice from her when I'm chairing standing committees. I also want to acknowledge the members of this Chamber who won't be running in the next provincial election, beginning with the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale), whom I've known for about 26 years. We will miss his advice and his comradeship in the Chamber. I'm sure that he won't be totally retiring; I'm sure he'll find something to do in the area of health or social justice, or economic or environmental justice. I look forward to continuing our friendship. We're going to miss the MLAs from Carman, Ste. Rose and Emerson. The MLA for Carman has been very friendly to all of us in this Chamber over the years. I would commend the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), who is one of those people who can give and take in the cut and thrust of debate and Estimates as a minister, but still remain friendly

outside of the political realm. We'll miss the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) because we've had fun from time to time quoting him back to his colleagues for various things that he has said. That's always very helpful when, you know, people say things that are offside or praise the government, and so you remind them of what they've said. So we'll miss him for that.

Now, I want to begin with a piece from CJOB by Vic Grant and it's called, "Excuse me, politics aside, we've got it pretty good here in Manitoba." I think the members of the opposition parties will really enjoy this. So I'd ask them to listen up to this, because it's very interesting. So this is a direct quote from Vic Grant, and this is what he said on CJOB on Wednesday, November 22, 2006. *[interjection]*

Well, CJOB is not normally that nice to us, so this is rather interesting that Vic Grant would say this on the public record. So here it is.

He said: Excuse me, but setting the politics aside, we have got things pretty good in this province. Not too big but not too small either. We have got affordable houses by comparison. Most of the people who want to work can find jobs. We can drive 80 kilometres down a highway and enjoy lake country, and most importantly, it is a great place to raise a family, again by comparison. What makes this top of the mind today was the reflection around the city, basking in the success of the Grey Cup Festival, and then noticing that our automobile insurance, which ranks amongst the most affordable in the country, is going to get cheaper. Even better news, *The Globe and Mail*, a national newspaper, tells the rest of the country that, while many provinces are struggling mightily with wait times for cancer treatment, our province, Manitoba, is leading the way and currently provides the quickest response time in the nation.

I have lived here long enough to recall the huge negative reaction when the NDP government of the time declared that auto insurance would become public, and that had insurance agents fainting dead away, predicting our rates would skyrocket, and public insurance would never do as much as the private could do. I was one of those naysayers, and over the years I have had to keep reminding myself how wrong I was. The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation has not only kept our rates amongst the lowest in the land but also became a major corporate citizen, sponsoring an impressive array of community ventures. It has far exceeded anything that private insurance moguls would have returned to

this province. Ask any good insurance agent today if they prefer to go back to the way it was, and the response would be a resounding chorus of nays.

While it appears that Manitobans are constantly facing hallway medicine in times of health care need, we must come to realize that we have it much better than most other provinces. The fact that our province has turned the clock right now on cancer care is a huge accomplishment and kudos should be forwarded to those who addressed the patient jams and provided the solutions. Yes, we have other wards to contend with and we bleat and whine about a lot of things, but generally speaking, we have it pretty good here, and our values are never too deep and our peaks are never too high. It is refreshing every once in a while to think about the good things, the positives this province has to offer. It is a respite from digging up the negatives. I'm CJOB news director, Vic Grant.

I really like that last sentence: "It's a respite from digging up the negatives" because all that we hear from the nabobs of negativism from the opposite side is all the bad things. I would like to remind them that, you know, not only do we release public opinion polls, which the previous government didn't, but they're very positive. For example, I would like to quote from a news release from June 7, 2006, and this was from pre-budget polling before the '06-07 provincial budget. Some of the findings included: 77 percent of Manitobans believed the provincial government was doing an acceptable, good or very good job in the previous six months; 77 percent of Manitobans believed their personal finances would improve or stay the same over the next year; 80 percent of Manitobans believed that protecting the water quality of Manitoba's lakes and rivers is a high priority; 76 percent of Manitobans believed that improving funding for health care services is a high priority; and 72 percent of Manitobans believed that fixing Manitoba roads is a high priority.

And what are we doing about those priorities in Manitoba? We're acting on all of them. It's all in the Throne Speech if the opposition members would only read it. Or if they would even comment on it, they would see that we're acting on all these priorities of Manitobans.

For example, I have some news releases. I asked for just the news releases in the last week, and they said, Well, it's about 50 pages, and I said, I want them all anyway because there is so much good news here. I am only going to read the first sentence or

two of each of them because there are so many and there is so much good news that I couldn't possibly cover all of it in the 20 minutes that's been allocated to me.

So, for example, on November 23, the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister announced an investment of \$18 million in new funding for municipalities that will support more affordable and accessible transit systems across the province. The minister said: "I am pleased to confirm today that, beginning in the new year, Manitoba is restoring a 50-50 funding partnership with our cities that was eliminated in 1993."

* (11:50)

Well, now, who was the government in 1993? Progressive Conservative government under Premier Filmon. And what did they do? They eliminated 50-50 funding for transit, and our government brought it back. In addition, capital grants to Winnipeg for Transit have increased 28 percent, and it includes supporting a new diesel hybrid electric bus.

Here's a news release from November 22 from the Minister of Justice which says: The province will give police investigators new tools to tackle gang activity by doubling the provincial investment in the Manitoba Integrated Organized Crime Task Force. The increase in funding to \$800,000 annually in 2007 from \$400,000 will bolster intelligence-led enforcement directed toward serious disruption of organized crime. Another good news announcement.

Then the background includes—*[interjection]* The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) wonders why I wasn't at his meeting. Well, I did have somebody from Burrows NDP at the meeting, and so I know how many people were there. I know that he had two public meetings with 18 people at the first one and about 12 at the second. He sent out 4,700 invitations. By contrast, I sent out about 600 invitations and I had 100 people at the first meeting and 40 people at the second meeting. So I got about 10 times as many people out with sending out one-tenth of the number of invitations because—well I think it's the advantage of incumbency and being maybe a better organizer and having credible solutions to problems.

But it was very interesting to listen to the Justice critic at his meeting about his solutions to crime in Manitoba. I even complimented him afterwards, and I said he sounds kind of moderate. I'm sort of surprised because the audience was more right-wing.

In fact, somebody in the audience said: Enough talk, let's have action, let's go out of here and clean up Burrows Avenue. A few vigilantes in this Tory-sponsored public meeting that he had, and there was a Liberal there who votes for me, Emily Reimer, yes. But I'm glad that the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has been heckling me, because now I can read into the record all the good things about the recommendations that our minister made at a federal-provincial meeting recently of federal, provincial and territorial ministers.

Here are some of the recommendations from Manitoba:

First of all, attacking gang violence; making gang murders an automatic first degree murder charge; creating a new drive-by shooting offence; modelling on the federal anti-terrorism provisions; listing established criminal organizations in the Criminal Code.

And on protecting child and youth: establishing gang-free zones throughout Canada, so that places youths tend to go, such as schools, playgrounds and parks will be free of gang activity; establishing a new offence to recruit a person to become a gang member.

And protecting communities: expanding the dangerous offender provisions of the Criminal Code to include hard-core gang members; clarifying that judges can impose any reasonable condition necessary to protect the public when granting recognizance orders; reviewing whether legally authorized random searches of offenders on parole and conditional sentences involving house detention are feasible in Canada; targeting guns and drugs; toughening the bail provisions of the Criminal Code where a gun was used or possessed during the commission of offence; increasing the jail terms available for marijuana grow operations, including mandatory minimum sentences where the evidence demonstrates a significant and commercial-level operation.

And proving how cases are processed, and there were four recommendations there.

So we are constantly urging the federal government to change the Criminal Code, to attack problems in Manitoba and across Canada. It will be interesting to see if the Minister of Justice, a former member of this Legislature, listens to the concerns of the provincial and territorial ministers.

An Honourable Member: What are we doing here?

Mr. Martindale: What are we doing here? I'm glad the Member for Steinbach asked that question because, first of all, I just mentioned some things that we're doing here in Manitoba, and now I'm going to continue with an announcement from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) from November 22, who proposed legislation that we give Manitoba consumers the tool to protect themselves against identity theft.

These measures include that consumers who suspect they are or may become the victim of identity theft would have the right to have a credit reporting agency place a security alert on their file. When there is a security alert on a consumer's file, the credit grantor who checks that file would have to identify the identity of the person applying for the credit by phoning the consumer at the number specified by the consumer in the alert.

Also, going on to another important policy that was announced. This has been in the works for a while and there have been some really interesting people working on this issue. For example, a number of months ago, I went to the Fort Garry Hotel to listen to Craig Kielburger speak. Interestingly, Craig Kielburger comes from Thornhill, Ontario, which is where I am from, and he started a non-government organization called Free the Children.

Just to give a little bit of background information, Free the Children was founded by 12-year-old Craig Kielburger in 1995 when he gathered 11 school friends to begin fighting child labour. Ten years later, and Free the Children is the largest network of children helping children through education in the world with more than one million young people involved in programs in 45 countries. He began his organization because he was concerned about child labour.

Well, child labour is of a concern to our government, and so we brought in a policy under our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to purchase clothing and apparel used by government workers from responsible manufacturers. The minister said Manitoba's not interested in dealing with vendors who conduct business with sweatshop practices. We will only buy products manufactured in a responsible manner so Manitobans know their tax dollars are not going to child labour. This is known locally as a "no sweat" policy. I commend the minister for bringing that in, and I know that a lot of Manitobans support that.

I have another news release here dated November 22 from the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), who says that the provincial government will work aggressively to build on recommendations contained in a new committee report on boosting economic opportunities across rural and northern Manitoba. A new province-wide campaign encourages shoppers to support local producers by buying Manitoba. This is the first step in a major strategy to co-ordinate and expand initiatives to strengthen Manitoba's rural economy.

This is a province-wide example of community economic development, something that members opposite might want to find out about. For example, this morning I was at the LITE Breakfast. LITE stands for Local Initiatives Toward Employment, and they have a fundraising pancake breakfast every year at this time. I was there and I was given a button which says "I am a 10," meaning that I've attended all 10 of their fundraising breakfasts. The purpose of LITE is to get the consumers to spend their money in the inner city, to make purchases in the inner city so that people who are unemployed in the inner city will get jobs. This is really a CED or Justice solution to unemployment as opposed to charity and handouts, and that's why I support it.

Interestingly, there're always half a dozen members of the NDP caucus at this event. This year there were no Conservative members that I saw. I would encourage you to come next year and support this very good organization, even if there are no votes for you in the inner city in the North End. Well, there are a few votes; I mean seats, no seats for you. But, you know, a lot of suburban people were there. I saw a lot of United Church people there, and I was told there were a lot of Anglicans there. These are suburban people, and that's where you're trying to win a few seats. So you might want to support something, even though it's at the Friendship Centre in the North End that some of your voters will actually be at, or maybe I should say, potential voters, would actually be at, but it's a good organization to support.

On November 22, our new Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) had a news conference at Misericordia Personal Care Home. I actually missed the news conference, but I did get there to congratulate some people. What was announced was, as part of the Manitoba Bone Health and Fall Prevention Strategy, Manitoba's investing more than \$85,000 over two years in a pilot project that reaches

out to seniors to identify vision problems that may lead to falls.

This is a program that I was familiar with because an individual, Ms. Sandy Bell, got a very good idea, and she promoted it within Misericordia Health Centre and with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Department of Health. Health said, yes, this is a good idea. This is going to save money because, if you do a vision screening for seniors and their vision is corrected, then they're not going to fall, and, if they don't fall, they're not going to break their hips. They're not going to be in emergency rooms. They're not going to be occupying ORs, and they're not going to be in hospitals, and they're not going to go to personal care homes.

* (12:00)

So this is an excellent idea. It's a pilot. I hope that it gets expanded province-wide someday, if there's money to do that, because we want to keep seniors out of emergency rooms, and we want to keep them out of ORs, and we want to keep them out of personal care homes. We want them living at home in their own environment as long as possible. So I commend all the partners in this, not just Ms. Sandy Bell, but also Misericordia Health Centre, the regional health authority, the Minister of Healthy Living, and the government for instituting this pilot project. I should add that Ms. Sandy Bell was nominated for the Fred Douglas Humanitarian Award last year and was a recipient. I did a member's statement about her.

Now, there are so many news releases here that are so much good news that I can't possibly cover all of them because I'm running out of time. So I am going to have skip some of them. I would, though, like to highlight a news release of November 21 from our Minister of Advanced Education and Training (Ms. McGifford) saying that the Manitoba government has approved an additional \$200,000 for adult literacy to address two key priority areas. Now, the reason I wanted to highlight that is because your federal cousins, the opposition members' federal cousins, the federal Conservative Party, cut funding to adult literacy programs. I'm sorry I don't have the total dollar amount. I think it was about \$17 million. The result was that adult literacy programs were eliminated in Manitoba. They had to close their doors because the federal Conservative Party doesn't believe in giving people literacy skills so they can get more education, actually get a job and maybe get off social assistance. I did a members' statement on

this recently, because I think it's absolutely appalling that a government would actually eliminate money for literacy.

An Honourable Member: Shame on them.

Mr. Martindale: Shame on them. That's how I concluded my member's statement. I'm glad to be quoted back by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). Maybe she even agrees with me. If she does, she should certainly let her colleagues know.

On November 20, also, our new Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) announced that new legislation would be brought in to enshrine Manitoba's nationally recognized Healthy Child strategy. I think this is one of the best things that we've done as a government, whereby we have interdepartmental co-operation. In fact, it refers that the Healthy Child Manitoba strategy works across government and with community partners to put children and families first. I know I work with some of those partners in the community because there's the North End, Point Douglas parent-child coalition, and there's the Inkster-Keewatin Parent-Child Coalition. I try to attend their meetings once or twice a year.

I know that the Positive Parenting Program is going to be expanded to the Inkster health region, and we look forward to seeing that program delivered in Burrows constituency, amongst others. I commend the staff because I think they're doing a wonderful job. We have many, many Healthy Child programs, and they've been nationally recognized.

I could talk about committing \$4 billion over 10 years to highways. I could talk about new protection for children. For example, we announced three new unpaid family responsibility sick days and new protection for children as part of proposed changes. This has to do with very important legislation that I hope the opposition will support. That has to do with changes to the Employment Standards Code, which hasn't been changed for 30 years. It's based on consensus, a consensus report of business and labour and so—[*interjection*] I don't know how the opposite members could possibly have a problem with that or possibly vote against it. We look forward to seeing them support the changes to the Employment Standards Code.

I don't have time to talk about the new Financial Services Centre or \$10 million for the University of Winnipeg for a capital program, because I want to get on to some of the highlights, especially having to

do with health care and some of the progress that we've made.

Well, I see my time is up. There are just so many good news announcements about tax cuts for 2007, about a new ramp to the front door of the Legislature. Now, this is another missed opportunity of the former government because the stairs were replaced. Those of us who were here then will remember that the front steps had to be repaired, and they were shut down for a time. There was a demonstration from people from a persons with disability organization, and one of them tried a little civil disobedience. He climbed up on one of the machines out in front and got a lot of media attention. But did the government of the day listen and make the new entrance accessible? No they didn't. But this government is making it accessible.

An Honourable Member: You needed seven years.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the former government had 11 years, and they did nothing. They actually rebuilt the front steps. They had an opportunity when they were rebuilding it to make it accessible, and they didn't. We are making the front entrance to the Manitoba Legislature accessible.

I could talk about our commitment to build the 1250-megawatt Conawapa Dam, I think one of the largest and most significant announcements in the Throne Speech.

I'm really sorry that I don't have time to read into the record all the good things that we're doing in the area of health, in the area of crime, especially. I know that the official opposition is going to run hard on crime because they're so desperate. They're going to say almost anything to form government. *[interjection]*

Well, I'm glad that the member opposite believes in justice because I think, you know, when there is justice in the community, there is less crime. With those few remarks, I will conclude.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my privilege to rise in the House today to put some comments on record in regard to this 2006 Throne Speech from the New Democratic Party here in this House from the government of the day. It's my honour to be able to speak to our amendment in regard to attacking, if you will, some of the issues that have been put forward in the Throne Speech.

I must say, though, first off, that having spent seven years, seeing the eighth Throne Speech of this

government since I arrived in the Legislature in 1999, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was certainly one of the weakest Throne Speeches I've seen from this government. It seemed like they were out of steam and didn't have a lot of new ideas. It was a rehash of many announcements that they have already made in press conferences already, and it reminds Manitobans, I believe, why a change is needed in the future government in Manitoba in the upcoming election whenever this Premier (Mr. Doer) decides to call an election, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As we move forward across the province with thousands of people committed to coming out to constituency nomination meetings, I'm looking very forward to that because it's a challenge to run the province of Manitoba, and it's one that this side of the House takes very seriously. I believe, one that the present governing side of the House has reneged in its responsibilities in many areas, particularly in the areas of health care and even in the infrastructure side.

You know, we had a conference that the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) were both at almost two years ago, where they knew then that infrastructure was one of the major issues, not just here in Manitoba, but across Canada. So they were very forewarned about this situation. What did they do? Nothing; pleaded that they didn't have any money when they've been getting record transfer payments from the federal government all along. I think something Manitobans need to remember is that they are collecting more taxes from Manitobans, not because our base is expanding like it is in other provinces where they're collecting more taxes provincially, but because they've broadened out the amount of items that they are taxing in Manitoba and included more taxes on items in Manitoba. Manitobans will not forget that when they go to the polls in the next election.

I want to first say, however, as I begin my remarks today, what an honour it is to speak as one of the 56 members of this House with the opportunity to talk about the issues in the Throne Speech and the budgets. I say 56, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know, as you know, that the Speaker of the House does not have the opportunity to speak to the budget and the Throne Speech because his responsibility, as you have capably accepted, is the responsibility of controlling the Legislature and managing the daily business of the House. Therefore, you've foregone the opportunity to speak on items like Throne Speech and budgets,

bills, resolutions, and a lot of other areas where we have that opportunity to speak to as regular members of this House on a daily basis.

Of course, I would also know that you would comply with me in thanking the Clerks of the session for the work that they do in keeping everything moving. We rely on you tremendously for your advice and your abilities. I also want to thank the interns for the work that they've done on each side of the House, and the young people that are dealing with us here in the House on the items of counting the votes, doing the votes. I want to hand all of our pages a vote of credibility and thanks from both sides of the House, particularly from our side as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it is an honour to be a member of our side of the House and I look forward to the changes that will take place.

*(12:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans look to this House and the 57 of us here, including the Speaker, for accountability. I think that's sort of a key word that's been lacking in this whole process. It goes back to—and I want to say, as well, that we have colleagues in this House, all of us, that will not be running in the next election, that have taken the opportunity to retire, if you will. I want to say that, in case there's an election called before a budget, I want to commend my thanks to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) and the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) for their years of judicial responsibility in this House, and I want to thank the members from Emerson and Ste. Rose for their wisdom that I have always accepted, whether or not I was a member of this Legislature or not because it goes back to before I was here. I also would say that the Member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Sale) is retiring as well. I know the future plans are open for the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) as well, and I commend him for his years in the Legislature at this point. So, while there may be others who choose to retire before the next election is called, I wanted to put this on the record today.

I want to say about the Member for Emerson, one of the things that he said the other day in his speech, and I thought it was a very moving speech where he thanked his constituents, more importantly, his family, but one of the things that he said is, and I'd like to quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that "we spend far too much time holding our children's hands" and not nearly enough time teaching them to

be responsible. I think that's a very telling statement. It's a very fitting statement because I know how responsible the Member for Emerson has always been in his work in this House, his work as Keystone Agricultural Producers' president, his work as a farm leader, his work on his own farm operation and with his family. But, more importantly, as I thought about this, I thought this was absolutely the difference between the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba. The members of the House on the New Democrat side, who are trying to govern this province, I would say that their parents held their hands far too long because, you know, their actions speak for that raising that they had. I would say that the members of this side of the House, their parents taught them responsibility and how to be accountable. I think that is a solid difference between the members of the government today and those on this side of the House, and I commend the Member for Emerson for saying those words of wisdom that he put on the record. I know he wasn't quite using them in the context that I had just defined them, but he very much made his point, and I respect it.

I also want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as others in this House have done, that it was a pleasure to know the Reverend Harry Lehotsky. I got an opportunity to meet Reverend Lehotsky. The first time was as a newly nominated candidate coming to a meeting before the 1999 election when Reverend Lehotsky was a candidate for our party in downtown Winnipeg. I got to pay attention a little bit more to him and the work that he did on behalf of other people in his area. Now, I know all of us in this House have worked hard for the people in our own constituencies in our areas, but I think we owe a special thanks to people like Reverend Lehotsky and others who do similar work throughout the province. It is a tribute to have Manitobans recognize him, and not just him, but his recognition goes, I think, for many others in this province who do similar types of work. Now, Reverend Lehotsky was certainly a dedicated individual. I found out much later about all of the homes that he had rebuilt, and the teaching that he'd done, and the church that he'd developed. I think that he really brought forward a good deal of regeneration, if you will, of the core of our city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that, coming from the rural constituency of Arthur-Virden, we have seen many opportunities in that area that have been developed. But those opportunities have been

developed from those individuals taking responsibility for their futures because they know they have to because this government has failed in its efforts to support agriculture. It's failed in its efforts to recognize lower taxation for our developing industries in this province. It's failed in regard to the health care situation in our rural areas. It's failed even to make some of our centres regional centres of health care for, and I speak particularly of Brandon in western Manitoba. I give them credit for the CancerCare development in one of my communities, in the town of Boissevain, but I also say that you might just be careful with that one, even though they've said that they've put the money out there. This Throne Speech also announced the one for Pinawa; again, repeated it. Well, I may remind the government that they opened the one in Pinawa last June. They haven't started the one in Deloraine yet, so I look forward to making sure that it gets going.

I would also commend a group in those communities who began a process of—because there's such a shortage of health care workers and doctors in our area, they began to collect dollars amongst a program locally, I believe, headed up by Bill and Judy Morningstar in the community of Deloraine, around there with Keith Dickie and others who have begun that process of putting a fund together so local individuals could donate dollars towards the help of getting doctors in their local hospital, paying tuitions for young doctors who would give several years of service to come to those communities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure, I know other communities have done this as well. I know Boissevain is looking at it; Virден's looking at it now as well. I know others across Manitoba. But that's a symptom of the shortfalls of the understanding of rural needs of this government, and it's forcing these communities into a situation where they have to work in these particular areas to maintain the basic services that those people have liked. Now, I've met the young doctor that they have contracted with in the town of Deloraine, and he's a fine individual. He comes from the Justice area northeast of Brandon. I wish him all the best as he finishes his education in the medical field, and look forward to his work in our rural community.

I also want to say that it's a privilege to be able to commend some of the communities on the work that they've done. Boissevain, for being recognized as the International Communities in Bloom winner this last fall. They just celebrated their 125th anniversary in the rural municipality of Morden, and

the 100th anniversary in the town of Boissevain this summer, huge celebrations that have gone on and are not over yet. The community of Kenton had a wonderful 125th anniversary as well, and the huge community of Sourisburg, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sourisburg is a park south of Melita, for those who may not know in this House, and they had a wonderful celebration there this summer to recognize the North West Mounted Police crossing over to the west side of the Souris River on their trek on the Red Coat Trail, and it's a—

An Honourable Member: Are there still RCMPs in the province?

Mr. Maguire: —credit to those, well, the member says, are there RCMPs in the province? Well, we're certainly short at least 37, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What kind of justices do we have when we know that they are still short of other services because of the staffing situations that, when someone has to take leave, there's no one to replace them? So we're even shorter than that.

I want to say that this government has neglected, if you will, the area of medical help in our rural communities. None was more pointed out than the situation that we were left with—right as the House closed—in Virден this summer, with a shortage of nurses' aides, not doctors, not degree nurses or RNs, but nurses' aides in the community of Virден. They had to move, where there had already been eight beds open up that just weren't filled because of staff shortages. Then we were in a situation of having to move 10 people out of Virден into other communities' personal care homes in June. Many of these people were in the 90-plus age group. They were very disoriented when they were moved into some of these other communities. Families had to drive miles and miles, hundreds of kilometres, in some cases, to see their family members that they were dealing with, sometimes two or three times a day within the community of Virден, where they were right next door to the person to the West-Man Nursing Home in Virден.

I think that's a shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we had to get into a situation like that. There is retraining going on; these people have been moved back. It was somewhat longer than the eight weeks that was indicated at that time. I would hope that, as we try to have a review in the regional health authority—and I give the government credit for picking up on our idea of having a review, finally, of the regional health system in Manitoba. It's not just

the administration that they need to look at. As well, they need to have a plan on how we're going to continue to develop that area. So I look forward to none of these types of issues happening again in the health care field, and that we do come up with, the government does come up with in the short while that they have left before the next election, an opportunity to develop further systems that will limit the shortages that we have in our doctor and medical situation that we're faced with in our communities today.

* (12:20)

I want to say that this government has—when I say that they haven't helped our agriculture, and I want to finish by saying that there are many issues of agriculture that this government has overlooked. It's had seven years to show Manitobans what it could do in regard to industry, developmental opportunities in this province. We worked with them to get land-use planning in place in Bill 12, which was an opportunity for municipalities to take over land-use planning and be responsible for it, as the rural municipalities of Manitoba had asked for. We have a technical review process put in place for the development of industries in our rural areas. There are environmental assessments that need to be done through those processes.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

They just brought in the toughest phosphorus regulations anywhere in North America and our industry accepted those.

Yet the heavy hand of government came out and said: We're going to put a pause on the development of any future hog barns in Manitoba. Now, it could have been sheep, could have been cattle, but in this particular case they chose hogs when, by the University of Manitoba's own admission, the work that has been done there, that only 1 percent of the phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg could be attributed to the hog industry.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is just completely unacceptable to an industry in Manitoba that is the largest sector of our agricultural economy in Manitoba today. It impacts, and the decision—I know this government doesn't know how deeply rooted its impact is in Manitoba. They have completely impacted the grain industry as well, because, of course, all we were trying to do was provide an opportunity in Manitoba to build finishing barns to finish some of the four million piglets that are in

Manitoba that are already going to the United States to be finished. With those animals go the jobs and all of the processing for those four million as well.

Now, whether it's in the right place as far as the packing industry or whether the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon has doubled, you know, are decisions that those boards will make in those companies, along with complying with any environmental regulations. But the impact on this, if it's not allowed, is the fact that those hogs would eat close to a million acres of barley in Manitoba. The significance of that is that we only have 10 million acres of land in Manitoba for arable acres. So they have impacted the grain industry tremendously in this province.

Now, I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there are many, many issues we could say about that. I have had many phone calls from irate farmers in regard to the limitations that this government has put on them by making these decisions. But I have also had calls from many, many farmers in regard to the marketing of grain in this province, and, of course, the government has brought out a red herring with their plebiscite question that they have put forward from this House to have one provincially. But our party is in favour of a plebiscite for the marketing of barley if there are any changes to it as has been proposed by the minister already federally. We need to look at opportunities of our young and brightest farmers getting an education, coming back and actually being able to use those marketing skills in their farming operations today. There are so many issues around that that we will have to use some other time to, I think, develop that.

The issues of transportation and infrastructure in this province have been neglected, as I said earlier in my comments, Mr. Speaker. The government of the day is now giving lip service to some funding for roads, even at a time when they talk about No. 1 highway when they haven't finished it. They are keeping it—they have not connected it back up. They said it was because there was a shortage of money. They laid down 10 kilometres of pavement in July, west of Virden, west of Hargrave actually, but forgot to connect it back to No. 10. I hope, and I just put this across, I hope I am wrong. I certainly hope that no one is injured on that stretch of highway this winter because this government is completely responsible. They have indicated that they didn't have any money in July to connect the 10 kilometres of new pavement that's lying there ready for use. Actually, they cancelled that tender a year ago in October, brought it back out this summer, paved the

work, did it in June. The 10 kilometres are lying there. All it needs is a connection and we'd have 10 more kilometres of twinned highway today.

They are waiting so that they can cut the ribbon with Saskatchewan on the border to open those highways jointly. I contend this minister will never have that opportunity because his Premier (Mr. Doer) will call an election beforehand. I look forward to being there when that ribbon is cut. Because they said they didn't have any money at the end of July to make the connection, it is a little bit of, you know, can't walk the walk on this issue. Good with the talk, but after, within weeks of saying they didn't have any money to make this reconnection. They come out with a \$300-million package over the next two years for increased highway development in the province of Manitoba, and still say it's just not worth the safety of making that connection on their own for Manitobans.

I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that the only way, the only reason the Premier of Manitoba hasn't rejoined that section of road out near the, within 10 kilometres of the Saskatchewan border, is to make sure that he slows down and provides as much congestion on the west side of the province as he can to stop young people from driving to Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to say, in closing, that this government has lapsed so many dollars in the past when it had many fewer dollars than this to work with, that I look with anticipation at this government's plan for the future. Because, if they just multiply the amount of money they've lapsed by the amount that they've increased this budget, we're going to probably see \$100 million of this money that never gets spent in this province. That is atrocious. It's terrible to be discussing that in regard to the safety of Manitoba, never mind the economic opportunities that we're foregoing which provide for the expansion in the province.

Lastly, I want to say that the proposed highway that we would build on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, the government has indicated that they still don't want to do that. They want to run the line down and, in future, the power lines down to the south by going between the lakes instead of down the east side, at an extra cost of about \$450 million to \$500 million to Hydro to do that. This is going to be an expense on tax on the ratepayers' bills in Manitoba, the users of Hydro in this province, while we continue to develop and are

in favour of developing wind energy, ethanol opportunities, biodiesel. We have to make sure that we allow those businesses to expand in Manitoba. This government, with the highest tax rates in corporations, even though they're saying it's reduced, they're still the highest in western Canada, with the highest taxes west of Québec, personal taxes, with the payroll tax. That's the only province left that has one in western Canada.

With all of these still disincentives to doing business in Manitoba, I have to commend that business community and the families for their integrity and their ability to stay in Manitoba and continue to work hard to develop this province. We will work with them as we form government, Mr. Speaker, and, on this side of the House is the Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of our leader from Fort Whyte. We look forward to managing the affairs of this province much better than it's been done in the past by the government in power.

I just want to say, as I close, that I look forward with anticipation to working with the fine people in Arthur-Virden during the next election, and, certainly, enjoy presently and will, I hope, after the next election with their support, being able to work with not just my supporters, but with all of the people of Arthur-Virden, with all of the citizens, regardless of what party they vote for, because that's our job. It's to work with, on behalf of all of the citizens in our local constituencies, and on behalf, in our responsibilities, of the rest of the citizens of the fair province for their responsibilities that we have in this House, whether it's on the government's side or our critic responsibilities.

So I look forward to being at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities' meetings next week. I enjoyed being at the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association breakfast this morning to deal with the ongoing liaison and hearing the issues of those representatives. I look forward to working in whatever capacity our leader has for all of us here in this House, particularly myself, in the future, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy the present role that we have.

I would just like to end by saying thank you to all of the citizens of Arthur-Virden, and thank you to our retiring members of the House.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Seeing that the time is very brief here this afternoon, and I know I'll have

an opportunity next week to continue with my comments, I'd like to first start by welcoming you back, Mr. Speaker, to this particular session of the Legislature, and also to welcome our new pages with respect to the duties that they perform for us, for the members of this Assembly in this House. I'm quite impressed.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Transcona will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 24, 2006

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