

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
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IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Concordia	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 10, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 9—The Electricians' Licence Amendment Act

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 9, The Electricians' Licence Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Electricians' Licence Amendment Act. Currently, the act allows electrical journeypersons licensed in other Canadian jurisdictions to obtain temporary Manitoba licences. The bill will extend this to other electrical licences issued for specialized electrical work. The proposed amendment will ensure that Manitoba complies with the obligations of chapter 7, Labour Mobility, under the Agreement on Internal Trade and The Labour Mobility Act. The Labour Mobility Act underlines Manitoba's commitment to full labour mobility in Canada.

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

**Bill 217—The Phosphorus Curtailment Act
(Municipal Act Amended and
City of Winnipeg Charter Amended)**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill No. 217, The Phosphorus Curtailment Act (Municipal Act Amended and

City of Winnipeg Charter Amended); Loi sur la réduction du phosphore (modification de la Loi sur les municipalités et de la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg), be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable—*[interjection]* Order, please. It's been moved by the honourable member for River Heights, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster, that Bill No. 217, The Phosphorus Curtailment Act (Municipal Act Amended and City of Winnipeg Charter Amended), be now read a first time.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, one of the significant sources of phosphorus getting directly into our streams and rivers, our waterways, is phosphorus coming from the effluent of municipal lagoons. This act would require that there be limits on the amount of phosphorus and time lines for reaching those limits, which would parallel the time lines for reducing phosphorus from the—in the effluent of sewage from the city of Winnipeg.

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

**Bill 215—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Booster Seats)**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member from River Heights, that Bill 215, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Booster Seats), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this bill ensures that a child who is under eight years of age is to be properly secured in a booster seat while riding in a vehicle. An exception is made for children who are at least 145 centimetres or 36 kilograms in weight. Thank you.

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

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Lisa Jackson, Tammy Lubkiwski, Henry Harder 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.

PTH 15–Twinning

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

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

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

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

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore, does not fulfil the current nor future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by M. Corneillie, G. Bannerman, A. Bannerman and many, many other Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Ophthalmology Services–Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The total—the local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program, however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Heather Robb, Gary Bird, Sherry Popke and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Whiteshell Provincial Park–Lagoons

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009 the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April of 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, this petition has been signed by Jamie Zayac, Kevin Ginter, Grant Barron and many, many others.

Provincial Nominee Program–90-Day Guarantee

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first priority in processing nominee certificates.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 90 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by R. Balbuena, C. Tolledo and J. Jaramilla and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Report for the six months ending September 30th, 2009.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery. [*interjection*] Order, please. Order, please.

I'd like to draw attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Sisler High School, we have 28 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Orysyia Petryshyn. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

And also in the public gallery we have from Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School, we have 13 grade 10 students under the direction of Mr. Mark Walterson. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro

Review of Mismanagement Allegations

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in the quarterly report just tabled by the minister, we see a drop of revenue projected of more than \$100 million at Manitoba Hydro in the current year.

In the course of the speech just given to the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a joke, and he said, I'm here with Bob Brennan and we're working on Manitoba Hydro even with the whistles blowing, but we'll deal with those issues together.

I just want to ask the Premier what he meant when he said that he and Mr. Brennan are gonna deal with the issues of the whistle-blower together.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank the member from Fort Whyte—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —I'd like to thank the member from Fort Whyte for attending the speech. It was a great crowd, and we put forward a solid vision for the future of the province.

And what the comment simply meant was—is that we have—are the first government in the history of the province to put whistle-blower legislation in front of this Legislature. This Legislature has passed that legislation, and when a complaint is made we have an obligation to work through these problems as a government, as a Crown corporation, and we will work through them together to satisfy the public requirement to be accountable for any complaint that's made.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, he owes Manitobans a better explanation than this. The one time that he left the text today in his speech—and it's gonna air on the news tonight—he made the comment that he and Mr. Brennan are gonna work on the issue of the whistle-blower together.

Now, Mr. Speaker, at the same time as he's making that comment, Manitoba Hydro, this morning, is before the Public Utilities Board saying that there should not be a review of the risk issues raised by the whistle-blower until after the Auditor General does a review into it, even though the Auditor General has recused herself from it.

I wanna ask the Premier why it is that he's joking to the audience today about working with Mr. Brennan—about working with Mr. Brennan to deal with the issue of the whistle-blower at the same time as his officials at Hydro are stonewalling the Public Utilities Board.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have been the first province in the history of this community to put whistle-blower legislation in place, and we believe—we believe in the value of that because it gives—it gives protection to people that wanna bring forward a whistle-blower complaint.

The member asks me questions. The member asks the minister questions—responsible for Hydro. We have a responsibility to respond to those respectfully. Manitoba Hydro's CEO has a responsibility to respond respectfully. Together, the government with the Crown corporation have an obligation to take that legislation seriously and address the concerns being put forward, and that's what we will do.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, he still—he still hasn't answered the question, and it's an important question 'cause we have an external consultant who has raised concerns about hundreds of millions of dollars of losses, has raised—has raised the possibility that the debt-equity calculation is based on a serious miscalculation, has raised concerns about future projections which could lead to blackouts and major rate increases for hydro.

They're applying for rate increases of 15 percent over five years. The report they just handed down shows a reduction in revenue of more than \$100 million from last year to this year, and he goes to the chamber today and makes a joke that he and Mr. Brennan—by the way, he and Mr. Brennan were the only ones who were laughing—they were gonna take care of the whistle-blower together.

What did he mean by that? Did he mean that they're gonna fire the whistle-blower, just like they have with every other whistle-blower? The legislation's meaningless when all they do is fire people who come forward with concerns.

Will he explain the reckless comment he made in front of the chamber today when Manitobans are being asked to pay more for his mismanagement?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as the government that brought in the whistle-blower legislation, we will respond to any concerns raised under it. That's our obligation to do that, and we're pleased that there is that legislation that gives people protection if they wanna bring forward a serious concern, protection from reprisals, protection in terms of anonymity.

And yes—and, yes, when a—and, yes, when an allegation is brought forward we have to take it seriously, and the government and the Crown corporation have to work through these things. And we will do that, and we will do it together to satisfy the public concern. It means nothing more than that; it means nothing less than that.

* (13:50)

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

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, he and Mr. Brennan had a good chuckle today at lunch about how they were going to take care of the whistle-blower, in front of—in front of some 600 Manitobans. It was the one time he left the text: even with the whistles blowing, but we'll deal with this issue together.

When he talks about dealing with the issue of whistle-blowers together with Mr. Brennan, does that include the strategy of stonewalling that his Hydro officials took today in front of the Public Utilities Board?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Hydro puts its own position in front of the Public Utilities Board. That's their choice to do that. The Public Utilities Board is an independent body. It will decide how it wants to respond to that.

We have a minister for the Public Utilities Board. We have a minister for Manitoba Hydro. They do not—they do not get involved in the management issues of either of those organizations. They simply are the conduit for accountability to the Legislature, which is why we're happy to answer questions on whistle-blower or any other matter that's brought forward.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, this is the same—the same person that when he was the minister, he wrote a letter to the board of Hydro directing them on where they're going to run the transmission line.

Now his officials at Hydro are in front of the PUB this morning taking a stonewalling position about dealing with the very serious issues raised not

just by the whistle-blower contractor but by another independent contractor, as well as by the PUB itself.

They have a role to play in terms of Hydro's positions that it takes to the PUB. They've obviously approved, as he joked about today at lunch, of a stonewalling position in front of the PUB, even after, Mr. Speaker, even after, in this House, in this House two weeks ago, the Premier said in the House two weeks ago that he wanted a full and open review.

When he made those comments two weeks ago, was he misleading the House or is he just completely incompetent?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, if we didn't want a full and open review, we wouldn't have brought the legislation forward.

We have to bear in mind—we have to bear in mind that the opposition promised whistle-blower legislation in 2004. We still haven't seen the bill that they proposed for this House.

We brought the legislation forward in 2006. We respect the terms of the legislation. We ensured that any whistle-blower has the proper protections, and we will—and we will, of course, respect that, Mr. Speaker.

By the way, I was also the minister for the Public Utilities Board, and I'm pleased to support their role as a quasi-judicial independent tribunal doing the job they do. Is he now going to accuse me of directing the PUB to ask for this information?

You can't have it both ways. If you're the former minister of Hydro, you can't be accusing me of being directly responsible for Hydro's behaviour—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: —as the former minister of PUB. Is he now accusing me of being directly responsible for the PUB asking for the information? He really can't have it both ways.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, you know, every time he opens his mouth, Christmas comes early for the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, he, you know, he brags about the fact that it took him two years to copy an opposition bill on whistle-blower legislation. Usually it takes him only six months. That's an unbelievable thing for him to say in the House. And then he goes on to

remind everybody that he was—he was the PUB minister.

He was also the Crocus minister. Why don't we mention that while we're at it, Mr. Speaker? What a remarkable record of achievement from Crocus to the disaster at Hydro. Then he writes a letter directing them on where to run the next transmission line. Then he promises they're going to get to the bottom—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: —of the issues. And then he comes into the House, Mr. Speaker, half an hour later, says, oh, I can't hear—I can't work with Manitoba Hydro on anything. Half an hour ago, he's joking with Bob Brennan in front of 600 people about taking care of the whistle-blower. I mean, this is just absolutely unbelievable.

This is a—this is a Premier who interferes where he thinks it's to his advantage to, but won't take responsibility. He's not on the side of the people of Manitoba. When is he going to side with Manitobans? When is he going to ask Manitoba Hydro to be open and transparent about the serious issues that are causing hydro rates to skyrocket for regular Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's remarkable—it's remarkable that a leader of the opposition that never produced one scrap of paper on whistle-blower legislation, then tries to allege that we copied the bill they never produced. You know, that is a remarkable statement by anybody. They do absolutely nothing. There's not one scrap of paper to justify any whistle-blower policy that they put forward, and then they try to say we copied their bill that was written in invisible ink. That's a remarkable achievement.

Mr. Speaker, I simply make the point that this government brought forward one of the most comprehensive whistle-blower legislation—pieces of legislation in the country, that this government has ministers responsible for both the PUB and for Manitoba Hydro. Both of those bodies carry on their policies under the guidance of the board. In the case of the PUB and under the—in the case of the Hydro, in the case of PUB, they carry on under the chairmanship and their board, and each of those bodies has a responsibility to do their job according to their legislative mandate, and we support both of them doing their job appropriately.

1999 Election Tabling of Minister's Letter

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. McFadyen: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. And the same minister who wrote the Cabinet memo warning of the pending insolvency of Crocus, even as they were out promoting it for years afterward, the same minister who wrote to the board of Manitoba Hydro to direct them on where the power line runs, now wants to say, oh, you know, none of these things are my fault. I have no responsibility for anything going on at Crocus or Hydro or anywhere else. I'm hands off. I've got nothing to do—no responsibility.

What's the purpose of being Premier of Manitoba if he won't stand up for Manitobans when their rates are going up and when their investments are going down because of his mismanagement of Crocus?

Mr. Speaker, speaking of mismanagement, this is—this is a—this is the same minister who, even as he's—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: —writing these memos—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McFadyen: Oh, we'll get the last laugh on that one.

Mr. Speaker, even as—even as the—even as he's saying that he has no responsibility as he's writing memos, we also know this is the same minister who showed up at a meeting in 2003 asking for a letter absolving himself of responsibility from the NDP election finance fraud.

I want to ask the Premier: Mr. Treller said that this—that this minister was very upset at that meeting. If he was so upset that he got a letter protecting himself, why isn't he upset enough to take steps to protect Manitobans?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition promised to crank up rates of hydro by over 40 percent—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Selinger: —to bring 'em to a market rate, we went out and told the public that that wouldn't happen under this government. That's how we protected Manitobans. When the member opposite—when the member opposite hinted—hinted at the fact that he thought Manitoba Hydro should be privatized along the lines of the telephone system, we—we brought in legislation to ensure Manitoba Hydro could not be privatized without a referendum. That's how we protected Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, last week the member tried to argue that under a market regime, the price for hydro-electricity would go down. I put on the record that the rates have gone up 8 and 9 percent and 6 percent in other jurisdictions, and Manitoba Hydro rates remain the lowest in North America. That's how we're protecting Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, that would have been a great answer if there was even a shred of accurate information contained in it, but the fact is he just said that market hydro rates have gone up by 40 percent. Well, there's a respected publication that just released numbers and the headline is: Electricity prices plummet. Market electricity rates are down by 40 percent for the first half of this year, and I'll table the document.

So, I know that he thinks that flat is the new up, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is that a 40 percent decline in prices is not the same as a 40 percent increase in prices. It's no wonder he's the most incompetent Finance Minister that's ever worked in the province of Manitoba.

And I wanna ask—I wanna—I wanna—I wanna ask him if he'll just try responding to the question. Mr. Treller said that he was so upset when he learned in 2003 about the NDP election finance fraud that he demanded a letter. Mr. Treller said he was so upset he looked like he was going to have a stroke or something and he wanted a letter to the effect that he knew nothing about this.

* (14:00)

I just wanna ask the minister: Will he table that letter, and will he go a step further and call an

inquiry into his election finance fraud and Elections Manitoba to show the same level of concern for the people of Manitoba as he showed for himself when he demanded this letter, Mr. Speaker?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: The member—the member—the member conveniently escapes—tries to escape the facts that hydro rates in Canada have gone up. He tries to argue they've gone down. That's incompetence, Mr. Speaker. That's profound incompetence by the member opposite, and no matter how he tries to gloss it, he was dead wrong and he just doesn't have the courage to admit it.

Now, with respect—with respect to his question about Elections Manitoba, we are—we are pleased—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. I'd like to remind members that I need to be able to hear the question and the answers. We have guests in the gallery that come down here to hear the questions and the answers and let's have some co-operation here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the questions about Elections Manitoba, we're pleased to be the first government in history to bring forward a ban on corporate, union donations. And let's remember, the opposition opposed that. They did not want that to occur. They wanted to keep special interests in the driver's seat.

We have banned corporate and union donations in Manitoba. We complied with the recommendations of Elections Manitoba and have moved on to create a better form of democracy in Manitoba, a better form of democracy where every Manitoban has the chance to contribute to the political process.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition—[interjection] Order. Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. McFadyen: No, second—second supplemental.

Mr. Speaker: Second question?

An Honourable Member: No, no—

Mr. Speaker: Second supp, second supp.

Mr. McFadyen: Second supp.

Mr. Speaker, it matters not whether they pass laws banning things if they simply go and violate those laws. I think that's the whole point, that's the whole reason—it's the whole reason we're having this discussion.

And I want to ask the Premier, who demanded a letter absolving himself of responsibility but who also said that the practice had been going on for years, why he hasn't taken any steps to protect taxpayers the way he took steps to protect himself with the letter. And I want to also ask him why he told a media outlet earlier today that the letter he received from the NDP has now gone missing.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the one thing that Election Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, sorry, I can't hear—order. Order. Order.

Order. Order. You're just—you're just wasting your breath here 'cause no one can hear a thing in the House here.

We're here for question period to hear the questions and the answers. If people are not interested in hearing the questions and the answers, you're welcome to leave the Chamber because there's a lot of members here that are trying to hear the questions and the answers and we have the public here that come all the way down to hear them.

If you're not interested, I welcome you to go to your office or to leave the Chamber 'cause it's not fair to the members that are here to hear the questions and the answers. So I'm asking for co-operation here.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Electoral Officer for Elections Manitoba has gone on the record and said there is not a political party in the House that hasn't refiled a financial statement, that has not repaid reimbursement at one point, in some cases more than once.

So this has happened in the past, across the board, having not resulted in prosecutions in other cases either. Refiling of election expense returns has been a practice that all political parties have been

required to do, if they follow the recommendations of Elections Manitoba.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) himself has had to refile his election expense return. We don't need an inquiry into that. We don't need an inquiry to any of the political parties that have done that if Elections Manitoba is satisfied, after doing its due diligence, that things have been done properly.

Expenditure Management Measures Update

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, we know the Province is suffering through some severe financial pains of its own making. Revenues are down, wasteful spending is still the signature of the NDP government, and the minister refuses to share the second-quarter financials with the Legislature.

On October 1st, Mr. Speaker, I asked the then acting Finance Minister what expenditure management initiatives were being considered by all government departments. She wasn't very forthcoming in her answer then but perhaps after a few months in the big chair she is prepared to share with us the measures that have been put into place to attempt to reduce the fiscal bleeding.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, indeed there are—these are challenging times for the Province and if we would have a Conservative government right now, I know he would have a slash-and-burn attitude and we'd be firing nurses, we'd be closing hospitals, because that's how Conservatives operate.

I want the member opposite to recognize that this government thinks about things in a different way. This government believes that if you can stimulate the economy and keep people working, then it is better for all of us, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we are committed to the national stimulus package, and that's why we have made those investments, and we will continue to provide for the very important services that people look for in this province.

Whether it be health care or social services or protecting people through justice, we will continue to make those adjustments.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, it seems the Finance Minister fell right into this one.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious the minister doesn't pay much attention to memos from the

Treasury Board marked rush-urgent. On August the 5th, all ministers and all deputy ministers received an urgent memo telling all departments, and I quote: Expenditure management measures need to be implemented immediately.

Some of those measures, Mr. Speaker, refrain from refurbishment and relocation of office space, but I guess that doesn't pertain to new and used Cabinet ministers.

Restricting out-of-province travel: I guess Copenhagen is located in northern Manitoba, but maybe the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Government House Leader (Mr. Blaikie) will be doubling up.

And this little—and this little suggestion, Mr. Speaker, slowing down programming: Can the Finance Minister tell us what programming has been affected? Is it health, AFM, justice or agriculture, perhaps?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member wants. First he says we shouldn't control spending. Today is a cut day, because we've had spending days from that side of the House. A little later on we'll be getting a question for more spending.

Mr. Speaker, the member speaks of a memo. I can assure the member—and I think he knows this, as some of his colleagues do—it is a standard memo, and, yes, there was a memo that was sent out in August. When there is times of restraint, departments are asked to restrain certain types of spending, and a memo did go out, and I can assure the member—and I want to recognize the ministers and the deputies in each of those departments who are taking vigorous steps to ensure that what we're ever spending can be controlled or brought under control.

It will be brought under control, but we are not going to do that at the price of their services that are very important to the people of Manitoba, like the stimulus package, like services in health care, like education, and, Mr. Speaker, in areas of justice that are very important to the people of this province as well.

Mr. Borotsik: Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, some of those very important expenditures are a \$250,000 ad campaign from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) or perhaps \$14 million for an enhanced ID program that nobody wants. Maybe those are the programs of expenditure that this government and this minister wants to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a memo from the Treasury Board just to remind the Finance Minister of the urgency of the request.

Proposed reductions to programming were to be submitted by August the 19th. It goes on to say, and I quote: If proposed reductions do not result in significant progress, further measures will be needed to be implemented immediately. That sounds pretty ominous, Mr. Speaker. These measures were needed before the full impact of H1N1, flooding and revenue shortfalls were felt.

Can the Minister of Finance please tell us what measures have been put into place to stop the bleeding, or is the plan simply to keep on spending and borrow more money and put us deeper and deeper into debt?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for recognizing the work that this government is doing, for the steps that we are taking to ensure that we meet the physical challenges that we are facing, because there's no doubt—I've said many times in this House—that there are challenges. I just tabled the Hydro report that shows that there are challenges.

But I want to assure the member that I'm sure he would not want us to cancel construction in Brandon. I'm sure he doesn't want us to cancel construction in Brandon cancer centre. Mr. Speaker, if we keep two children—if we get two children diagnosed with cancer and saved, then that is worth the spending, and we are going to continue to make those investments that are very important to people, at the same time following those restraints that the member just tabled and recognized us for the work that we're doing.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just to remind members, when you're tabling documents the House—under our House it's required that you table three copies.

United Nations Climate Change Conference Advisers' Board

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in today's *Winnipeg Free Press* it's reported that the previous premier has been asked to go to Copenhagen and sit in on the 16-member group of eminent expert advisers.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the government if either the Premier or the minister responsible for

climate change has been asked to sit on the 16-member group of eminent expert advisers.

And, furthermore, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) still believe the federal government is showing a lack of enthusiasm, and still, as Canadians, do we have a cloud hanging over our heads?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to be invited by the federal government to attend in Copenhagen. We will be chairing a major session of people from around the world at the subnational government level that have taken leadership on climate change. Manitoba has—being recognized for the initiatives they've taken. We will work together at the subnational level to further the climate change agenda on behalf of the planet in terms of global warming, although you wouldn't know it today with the temperatures in Manitoba.

The reality is that Manitoba will be making at least three presentations there on various panels for the climate change initiatives that we've taken, including protecting the UNESCO World Heritage Site, including protecting other areas of polar bear habitat, including being the No. 1 for efficiency at Manitoba Hydro and including being the geothermal leader in North America.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Kyoto Targets

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of bringing forward warm and fuzzy legislation to try to reflect some of the real issues and—on behalf of Manitobans. In fact, this government has passed The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act, and this legislation indicates the province will be reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 6 percent from the 1990 levels by 2012. Conveniently, this date is one year after the next election.

And at last report, Manitobans' emissions are up fifteen and a half percent since 1990, and the disturbing thing is the trend is on the way up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government left this target to after the election? Why are they waiting for that, and why are there no repercussions if they don't meet these guidelines under the current—their own legislation?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I know all of us as Manitobans are

somewhat self-centred, but I think the honourable member goes too far when he imagines that somehow the Kyoto Accord and the various years that targets were to be met were somehow set with regard to when Manitoba elections were called.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, maybe the new minister will have a chance to look at his own government's legislation, and if he looks at the fine print that's exactly what it says.

Now, if he—Mr. Speaker, it's just—it's warm and fuzzy legislation. It's same as whistle-blower legislation. It doesn't mean too much here. There's no repercussions in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, greenhouse gases are increasing in Manitoba. There's no way this government is going to meet its targets. When will the government proclaim the rest of its legislation dealing with greenhouse gases? It hasn't even proclaimed all the legislation it's brought forward. When will the government proclaim the legislation introduced a couple of years ago?

Mr. Blaikie: I presume—I presume, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member's referring substantially to the cap-and-trade legislation that the—that the government has made a commitment to in the past. That is a commitment that we intend to keep and we intend to bring in that legislation very soon.

Persons with Intellectual Disabilities Legal Protection

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans were shocked this past summer when they learned that two severely intellectually disabled women were left in their vehicle while their caregivers were viewing a movie. The shock was compounded this week when Manitobans also learned that no charges would be coming forward, and there would be no sanction against these two caregivers because the Crown attorney had recommended that there not be any sort of sanction brought forward.

Can the Minister of Justice indicate whether or not he's asked for a briefing from his department on this decision and whether he can inform Manitobans the reason for that decision?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, and I do—I do thank the member opposite for the question. It is a case that I know has raised some questions. The member should be aware, though, that thousands of

times each year, the police go to the Crown attorneys for requests on whether charges should be laid and what the nature of those charges should be.

As the Minister of Justice, I know my predecessors get involved in those discussions. The advice from the Crowns to the police was that there were not sufficient grounds—sufficient evidence to lay charges under the Criminal Code.

So we don't get in the way of those discussions. We don't get in the way of the advice that the Crown attorneys provide to the police and, indeed, as the Minister of Justice, I won't be involved in directing Crown attorneys how to give that advice to the police.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I think that each of us in this House and all Manitobans would say that the actions of these caregivers was indefensible. We are all glad that it didn't result in a death or a more serious incident. Unfortunately, that always hasn't been the case in the past.

People living with intellectual disabilities are among the most vulnerable in our province because they can't always advocate for themselves, and they may not have somebody to advocate for them.

Has this minister talked to his department and met with the Department of Family Services and the minister responsible for disabilities to see, under provincial legislation, how this loophole can be fixed where there would be some sanction provincially and how we can ensure that those caregivers who are entrusted to take care of individuals who are vulnerable actually have sanctions against them when something like this occurs?

Mr. Swan: Again, I appreciate the member opposite has interest in this. Indeed, in the spring of 2009, our government established an interjurisdictional working group on that very thing—on a protection strategy for vulnerable adults. There are representatives on that—on that interjurisdictional working group from disability programs in the Disabilities Issues Office, the Winnipeg Police Service, the RCMP, officials from Justice, Health, Seniors and Healthy Aging, Protections for the Persons in Care Office, Mental Health and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. And we'll be looking at The Vulnerable Persons Living with Mental Disability Act and The Protection of Persons in Care Act to see if, indeed, there are gaps.

We're expecting that committee will report back with some recommendations by June of 2010, and

we will listen very carefully to suggestions for improving the scheme here in Manitoba.

So I do appreciate the member opposite's interest in this—in this information.

Canadian Wheat Board Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the major problems emerged this week under this government with the loss of about 550 jobs in Convergys and the expected loss of 270 jobs with the closing of the Pine Falls Tembec plant.

I want to ask this morning—or this afternoon about another file where Manitoba could lose jobs and that's at the Canadian Wheat Board.

I ask the Premier what representation he is making to ensure that the Canadian Wheat Board is protected and that we continue to have the Canadian Wheat Board here in Manitoba. Has the Premier talked to or written to the Prime Minister to make sure the Canadian Wheat Board is protected in the WTO talks which are under way?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it's a long-standing position of this government and this political party to support the Wheat Board. It's played a critical role in allowing farmers from all regions of Manitoba to market their products on a collective basis through that agency and to get a price that recognizes the contribution they've made through their labour to producing that product, and we do support that agency.

If the member has any specific new avenues that he would like us to pursue in that, I'd be happy to know them. We do support the fact that the Wheat Board now elects farmers to the board. Manitobans and in the agricultural community in the majority support the Wheat Board. We know that, and we will continue to advocate for the Wheat Board being an agency that helps farmers, headquartered in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Premier, the situation is serious because within the last 12 months the protection of the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly under WTA has—WTO has been removed and the Conservative government in Ottawa is making absolutely no attempt to restore that protection.

Is the Premier going to act on this file to ensure that the Canadian Wheat Board is protected? If it is not protected, we stand to lose 500 jobs or more in the Canadian Wheat Board. We stand to lose the

central position of Winnipeg in the global grain trade.

I ask: What is the Premier doing? When is he going to act? What has he done so far?

* (14:20)

Mr. Selinger: This government—and we have acted continuously over the years to argue for the value of the Canadian Wheat Board. We will continue to do that. If the member's now offering to work with us on that, we welcome that offer. I think that would make for a stronger case.

And I can tell him that the Wheat Board has played a fundamental role in the promotion of agriculture, particularly in western Canada, where many producers live quite a long distance away from adequate transportation resources. And without the Wheat Board marketing those products on behalf of all farmers, some farmers would thrive; others would be out of business.

We think it's been a very good instrument for the promotion of western Canada and producers, and wheat in particular, the wheat economy, and we will continue to support it, and if the member would like to take an initiative with me, I'd be happy to do that.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly most ready to work with the Premier to make sure that the Canadian Wheat Board is protected and have worked in the past on this file and in this direction. I mean, the fact is that this is a very serious matter, if the protection from the Canadian Wheat Board is removed.

There are people who are even now talking about the fact that they might have to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board in 2013. The Premier needs to be aware of the seriousness of this situation, and I certainly am ready to act with the Premier to do what we can to prevent this tragedy from occurring, and make sure the Canadian Wheat Board is protected.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the offer. We'll follow up together, make our representation with respect to the potential impact of the WTO on the Wheat Board and we'll move forward. Perhaps even members of the official opposition would join us in this regard.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy Program Award

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, auto theft is a crime that has huge costs to our community. Members of this House know that the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy made up of Manitoba Justice, the Winnipeg Police Service and Manitoba Public Insurance has been successful in reducing auto theft in Winnipeg by over 70 percent, meaning that auto theft in Winnipeg is at its lowest level since 1992.

Can the Minister of Justice please inform the House about the recognition that this outstanding strategy has recently received?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for Kirkfield Park for the question.

I was certainly proud to celebrate yesterday with the Winnipeg Police Service, with our Crown attorneys, with Corrections and with officials from Manitoba Public Insurance. We were indeed recognized as a finalist for the 2009 Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Goldstein Award through the WATSS, the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy.

As the member said, auto theft is down 70 percent since 2004 and, indeed, we've reversed not just that amount, but the entire decade of growth in car theft before that time. As we've said, we have pillars, we have supports in the community, intensive suppression, meaningful consequences and, of course, mandatory immobilizers, which have all been part of this strategy.

I am pleased with the work of my predecessors and with our safety partners in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

CP Rail Interlake Rail Line

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, transportation infrastructure is so important to our economy. Time and time again, we have seen the loss of critical rail lines in Manitoba. We cannot afford to lose any more.

Unfortunately, CP Rail has given notice that they will shut down a portion of the important Interlake rail line next year. This is a lifeline to communities of Selkirk, Winnipeg Beach and Gimli.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister responsible: What steps is he taking to ensure that this line is not abandoned?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I, first of all, want to thank—I want to thank the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), who raised this with me personally a number of weeks ago, in fact very shortly on my taking over as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

We were there, Mr. Speaker, before, to ensure the continuous line. We've recognized the importance of that line to the Interlake, to Diageo, and we will be working with the communities and with the rail service provider, as we have done in the past, to find ways to continue what is a very important link.

And I want to indicate we've done this in a number of other situations. We've taken a leadership role. We recognize the importance of rail lines in our province and we will continue, in this particular case, to work to maintain that very important link in the Interlake.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the people of Gimli and area expect their government to stand up and fight for them. Our producers ship grain on that rail line, and the loss of the line would be huge for them. Also, the largest distillery in Manitoba, Diageo, relies on that line for moving product both ways. It's imperative that this line stay in place.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again: Will the minister responsible ensure the people of Selkirk, Winnipeg Beach, Gimli and area that this viable line will stay in place to serve with those in areas of farmers and surrounding business?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I've indicated where I'm prepared to work with anyone and everyone, and just as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) pointed out earlier, in terms of the Wheat Board, I noticed the member talked about the movement of grain. Perhaps the member, as Agriculture critic, will join us in supporting the Wheat Board, which has been a significant supporter of rail transportation in this province, including the Port of Churchill.

So while this spirit of co-operation is continuing, let's work on saving that line, Mr. Speaker, and let's work on saving the Wheat Board.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

United Nations Human Rights Day

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today is United Nations Human Rights Day. The focus this year is non-discrimination.

The realization of all human rights, whether economic, social, cultural, civil or political is, after all, fundamentally comprised—compromised by discrimination. For its part, discrimination is a beast of many faces. Sometimes it is subtle, other times blatant. Sometimes it is perpetrated against small groups. Other times against great nations.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a recent address, victims of discrimination are not alone.

We stand with victims of discrimination and accept our responsibility as Canadians, Manitobans and as members of this House to ensure that our communities are places of tolerance and acceptance. Our province has a proud tradition of human rights achievements. Manitoba, as members will know, was the first Canadian province in which women won the right to vote. It is on the back of this tradition that the Canadian Museum of Human Rights will be built and, yet, Mr. Speaker, we should never be complacent about ensuring the rights of all members of our communities.

As the vigils earlier this week for women slain in 1989 École Polytechnique killings remind us, discrimination continues to exist and demands that we maintain a constant struggle to both support victims of discrimination and educate perpetrators. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Neepawa Access Community Television

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to recognize the contribution of the Neepawa Community Media Committee and their NACTV access channel have made on our community.

Ivan Trail manages NACTV and is a jack of all trades for the organization. Whether it's parades, business openings, centennials, school cairns dedications, sporting events or political gatherings, you can always count on Ivan and his dedicated group of volunteers to cover the event.

NACTV also covers question period from this provincial Legislature, and I find when I'm back in the constituency that the people of Neepawa and area

are very well informed of what is happening in this building—in the Legislature. They've also done a lot of interviews with seniors of the area on their lives and their memories, which has resulted in a large library of historical information regarding our area of the province.

NACTV also works closely with the Gladstone and the Ste. Rose local access channels by exchanging tapes and AVAs so that everyone knows what is happening in a much larger geographical area.

The majority of the production work is done by volunteers, with nearly 35 to 40 individuals contributing at any one time. This is a great opportunity for anyone interested in journalism or broadcasting, as some volunteers have gone on to work for the CBC and other organizations.

A number of years ago, NACTV opened a used bookstore in Neepawa to raise money for their operations. The book store is also managed by volunteers and has been a successful fundraising undertaking which, in turn, allows the access channel to be largely self-sufficient.

Once again, I congratulate the NACTV and their volunteers for 31 years of dedicated service. They are truly an asset to Neepawa and to all of Manitoba. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Father Oleg Krawchenko

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize a remarkable milestone of one of our province's religious leaders. Recently, Father Oleg Krawchenko celebrated 50 years in the priesthood.

Father Krawchenko was born in the Ukraine in 1935 and immigrated to Canada in 1951. He graduated with a Bachelor in Theology from St. Andrew's College at the University of Manitoba in 1956 and a Bachelor in Philosophy from the Université de Montréal in 1959.

He went on to obtain a Masters in Slavic Studies from the University of Saskatchewan in 1969 then returned to St. Andrew's College to obtain a Masters of Divinity in 1984. Finally, Father Krawchenko became Father Doctor Krawchenko when he earned his Doctorate in Philosophy from the Ukraine Free University in Munich in 1993.

He was ordained in the Ukraine Orthodox Church of Canada on August 9th, 1959, and officially joined the priesthood on August 16th at St. Mary the Protectress Cathedral in Winnipeg.

Father Krawchenko's ministry has taken him all over Canada, including Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He's also spent a lifetime teaching. He has lectured in Slavic Studies at both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

He served as assistant professor at Ukraine and theology and associate professor of Theology, as well as dean and chaplain at St. Andrew's College. In 2002 he was made a full professor at St. Andrew's.

Father Krawchenko has received numerous awards and recognition from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, has served as president of the Ukraine academy of arts and scientists—and science—and is a long-time member of the Church's Board of Consistory.

This year he was also fortunate to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary with his wife Maria, with whom he has raised five children.

Mr. Speaker, Father Krawchenko has dedicated his life to the spiritual development and education of his community. I would ask all members to join me in congratulating him on this momentous occasion. Thank you.

Dancyt's Foods

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, for many people, a fire in their community would be a nightmare. Fires can destroy a family's history and livelihood. However, a fire can also cause community members to come together and demonstrate the generosity and friendships that are so common in the small towns of Manitoba. That is exactly what happened when a fire started at Dancyt's Foods in Lac du Bonnet on October 20th. The town rallied to put out the fire and is continuing to support the Dancyt family as they rebuild.

Dancyt's Foods was a landmark in Lac du Bonnet since it started—it was started by Alex Dancyt in 1946. Now owned and operated by his—by his son, Curtis, and his family, the store has served many loyal customers over the years. While the Dancyt's building has been destroyed, the fire could've been much worse had it not been for the generosity of community members.

Paul Gibson of Provincial Helicopters was flying home from Pointe du Bois when he saw the smoke from the fire. As soon as he landed, Paul phoned 911 and volunteered to take off again to help fight the fire. Without the assistance of the helicopter pouring water on the blaze from 160 feet in the air, the fire could've easily spread to other buildings downtown.

The Lac du Bonnet Fire Department also worked tirelessly to put out the fire. The firefighters spent 16 hours fighting to put out the flames and also stayed overnight to ensure that the fire did not re-ignite. The efforts of the fire department were supported by the generous community that provided food and drinks to the fire crew, the same community that has sent cards to the family and is continuing to order food from Dancyt—for Dancyt—to support him.

It is true that this fire has destroyed a landmark in Lac du Bonnet but it has also brought together the town's entire community. I am proud of the dedication the people of Lac du Bonnet have shown and I would like to congratulate Paul Gibson, the Lac du Bonnet Fire Department, and all others who supported their efforts for the outstanding work in fighting this fire and protecting their community.

Eaglets Day Care Co-op

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the Chamber today to tell of the official opening of a new day care in Eriksdale Elementary School on December 8th of this year. The dream commenced in 2005 when the Eriksdale CDC brought community stakeholders together to form a day-care committee.

Together with Manitoba Family Services, Manitoba Community Places program, the R.M. of Eriksdale, the Lakeshore School Division and Community Futures West Interlake, the committee saw that dream become a reality when the doors of the Eaglets Day Care opened for business on October the 15th. Among the many organizers I want to especially thank are Jackie Torgerson, Monica Fuchs, Todd Goranson and Bruce Law for their hard work and determination.

Manitoba has established itself as a national leader in child care through Family Choices, a comprehensive plan based on accessibility, affordability, and quality. In 2008-2009 the government made a \$2.5 million available to renovate surplus space for child-care facilities. An additional \$20 million will be made available over the next four years, beginning in 2010. In particular,

this project was supported by a \$323,000 grant from Manitoba Family Services. Of course, securing funding and space is only half the battle in providing quality care.

The other, often understated, half is staffing these facilities with committed early childhood educators. Campus Manitoba, a consortium of Manitoba's post-secondary institutions, was able to offer training in Eriksdale through the Red River College Distance Education program. Three young women from the Eriksdale area who took part in the program are now working at the day care.

On behalf of the provincial government and the people of the Interlake, I congratulate the community of Eriksdale on this successful endeavour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), 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 Fourth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I had the pleasure of meeting the now-First Minister in June 1980. I was invited by Anna Tynes, the community worker employed by CEDA, the Community Education Development Association, at William Whyte School, and she wanted me to meet the executive director who is now the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And we sat on the grass, on the boulevard outside William Whyte School in the North End, and I was introduced, and he invited me to join some of the community organizations that CEDA was involved with.

And, as I recall, the first one was the Inner City Committee for Rail Relocation, and we met weekly for a number of years at Rossbrook House. And, although we were trying to move the CPR yards out

of downtown Winnipeg, we were also involved in a fight to stop the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass. And I was probably on the wrong side of that issue because I lived and worked in the North End, and it would've made it actually faster, more convenient for people to go from the North End to downtown had that bridge been built. However, it was also about saving an inner-city neighbourhood because governments were putting money into housing on the south side of the tracks, and it didn't make sense to put a major arterial road connecting the overpass through that neighbourhood, and, in the course of events, it would have demolished Rossbrook House.

So that's probably why the meetings were at Rossbrook House. And Sister Geraldine MacNamara was on that committee, and Sister Geraldine MacNamara was probably the driving force behind helping to stop the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass.

And I worked with the staff of CEDA on a number of issues, including—and community projects, including the North End Winter Festival, the North End summer fair, the Anti-Sniff Coalition and other very interesting organizations. For example, twice I was involved with the now-Premier in stopping the destruction of inner-city neighbourhoods and, in both cases, we were successful. And we were working with the residents and residents association to protect neighbourhoods and houses from being demolished.

And there is a theme running through this, and that is that the now-Premier was the head of an organization involved in community development, the Community Education Development Association—and I think it's no coincidence—and now we have a new Ministry of Housing and Community Development. And I think that was probably one of the first acts of our current Premier to put his stamp on this government; and it's a good one because we believe in community development.

I was also involved with the Winnipeg Education Centre when the now-Premier was a professor of social work and teaching at the Winnipeg Education Centre, and I helped supervise 13 students on their field placement. They were placed at North End Community Ministry when I was working for the United Church there. And later, as a member of the Legislature, when I was elected, students were assigned to me for a part of their learning experience, and we got them involved in housing issues.

* (14:40)

So the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I go back a long way, and I'm very pleased to be part of his government and support him and our government. I think he's a good leader for our times. He's very progressive on social policy, but he has a long and a good record, as a minister of Finance, for 10 years of fiscal prudence, 10 years of balanced budgets and I think that's a good combination taking us into the next election.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think our approaches to government and our approaches as to political parties could be nicely summed up with a couple of acronyms. And one acronym is YOYO and that stands for, you're on your own. So the parties opposite are YOYOs. You're on your own sums up their political ideology. For example, they believe in individualism. They wholeheartedly support capitalism, which is a dog-eat-dog society, and they believe in providing opportunities for individuals so that individuals can get ahead.

We, on this side, could be described as the party of WITTs, W-I-T-T, and WITT stands for, we're in this together. We are the party of community. When you cross the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge into the North End, on the roof of an autobody is a slogan saying, people before profits, and that's something that many of us in this party believe in.

We believe in people helping people. We believe that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. And I found a wonderful quote which I am paraphrasing. This is adapted from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' *Monitor* of June 2009. And so this is a, I think, quite a good vision statement for us and for Manitoba and it says: Manitoba is a young, vibrant, multifaceted entity in its geography, its history, its population, its culture and languages, its beliefs and religions. Its goal is to bring all facets together so that the province, its citizens and its resources are stronger as a whole than the sum of its parts, to the end that the province can play a leadership role by example and, where requested and appropriate, participate in improving the lot of others as well as ourselves.

So this illustrates, again, that we are the party of WITT. We are the WITTs—we're in this together—as opposed to the YOYOs, who believe you're on your own. And if I could continue that theme with a quote from Tommy Douglas, because I found his Throne Speech from the Saskatchewan Legislature in 1959, speech of Premier T. C. Douglas, in the debate on the

Speech from the Throne, called Planning for People, and he concluded this way.

He said: "Mr. Speaker, if ever the world and if ever this nation needed the vision of a co-operative Commonwealth, it is now. I am suggesting that we will never be free from the problems of unemployment, of agricultural dislocation, of surpluses and of war until we have changed this competitive, dog-eat-dog society into a co-operative society in which we plan all our human efforts in order to build an economy in which people can live together in peace and prosperity."

So this is, I think, further evidence of our philosophy that guides us, that we're in this together. We believe in supporting other people and in—*[interjection]*—and in having a society led by a government that believes in fairness and justice and equity for all people.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now, I would like to continue by talking about some things that have happened—some very positive things that have happened in Burrows constituency. There's a saying that all politics is local, so why not start with the local and go on from there.

So I've been at a number of very exciting announcements, and in one of them I'm actually gonna pay tribute to a former Conservative MLA from the opposition, so the members opposite might want to listen and they might even want to join me, in their speeches, in paying tribute.

So I'm going to begin with the announcement about the addition to Centennial recreation centre—and I was at the sod turning with Mayor Katz and with Councillor Pagtakhan—and we are investing a large sum of money there. I don't have the exact sum; I believe it's about \$6 million, and they're building a new gymnasium and some other facilities to serve the North End community. And I want to congratulate the federal government, because I believe they had some money in that, and the City of Winnipeg as well as the Province of Manitoba, because we need recreation facilities.

Now in the past there's been a philosophy—I believe it actually started under previous Mayor Glen Murray, and he thought that we should rationalize recreation facilities, and so there's this idea that there should be regional recreation centres. You know, I don't have a problem with this in suburban Winnipeg, where people have vehicles and they can drive their kids and drive themselves to recreation

facilities, but it doesn't work in the inner city and the North End.

So, for example, when I originally heard that we were allocating 7—or that this project would be \$7 million, I said, let's not put all 7 million into Centennial recreation centre. Instead, let's put a million dollars in the Sinclair Park Community Centre because they had a plan for renovation and expansion and very old facilities dating back to 1947. And so the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs at the time said, yes, we can do that. And so we did; we allocated 6 million to Centennial and 1 million to Sinclair Park. Now, when I shared this story with Councillor Pagtakhan, he said it was his idea to allocate a million to Sinclair Park. But it doesn't matter whose idea it was, it was a good idea. The three levels of government went along with it.

And so there was a sod turning at Sinclair Park Community Centre, and the mayor was there and our former minister of Infrastructure was there and certainly it was a happy occasion. I have the news release here with students from Robertson School, and they all look happy because we really need to expand and build new facilities at Sinclair Park and the entire community appreciates that.

Then, I was at an announcement where a former Conservative MLA was honoured. I was at the official opening of what was called the North End Wellness Centre but was renamed. It is now Win Gardner Place and it was named after John Loewen.

John Loewen had a significant role, including—it was named after his mother—including when he was a member of this Legislature. Unknown to me, he was on the committee that spearheaded the fundraising for this and he personally raised about \$1.7 million and I commend him for that. He had the contacts amongst rich people to go and do the ask, which he did, and he was very successful. And so it was very appropriate that he was there and they could have named it after him, I suppose; they could have called it John Loewen Place but they didn't. They called—they named it after his mother, I think at his suggestion, and that was very appropriate.

And the—he worked very co-operatively with the partners, with the North End Community Renewal Corporation, with Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the YM-YW of Winnipeg, and the Y are providing staff in that building.

There's also a day care, Splash Day Care relocated from Strathcona School to this new facility and it is a huge success. When it first opened I was told there were about 150 children a day using the facility and now, I'm told, it's 300 a day. So that's 300 kids that aren't on the street or aren't bored, 300 kids that are involved in recreation and it's a wonderful facility and we thank John Loewen and the other partners for their hard work in making this a reality.

And I'm glad to see that at least one member opposite is applauding this.

Now tonight—one more local announcement and that is that tonight I am doing the official opening on behalf of the provincial government of an expansion at Robertson School and this is a very exciting day. I'm sure that there's going to be lots of people there going on tours of the new facility, which includes a gymnasium, a library, a computer lab, an autism centre, complemented by the renovations for a multipurpose room, kitchen, grooming room, staff room, staff washrooms and administrative offices. And this commitment reflects the fact that we are committed to inclusive special education and we've incorporated universal design guidelines.

*(14:50)

Now I've been to this school. I've had a tour with the principal and it's absolutely beautiful: a regulation-size gymnasium which they've never had before—they had a very tiny gymnasium; they have new offices for the staff and a new staff room; a beautiful library with lots of windows. And this is a very exciting day for the staff and the students and the parents and the whole community at Robertson School, and they also have before- and after-school programs there as the former minister of Education points out.

So I'm very pleased to be doing this on behalf of the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) tonight.

So, as you can see, our government is investing a lot in the inner city and the North End, not just in Burrows constituency. In fact, one of the projects that I mentioned, the Win Gardner Place, is actually in Point Douglas constituency. And this is really an unprecedented amount of funding and investment in the inner city and the North End, because we remember what it was like in the 1990s under the Filmon government.

In fact, one of the things that I forgot to mention was that the first time I ever came to the Manitoba

Legislative Building was with the now-Premier (Mr. Selinger) and people from the community. I believe it was about 1980, when the Lyon government was repealing rent control, and there were many, many people that came and spoke out against it, in spite of which the government went ahead and did it anyway.

Now, in the 1981 election, when Howard Pawley formed government, that was a major issue—rent control, and it caused the NDP probably to win about 10 seats just on that one issue, especially seats in south Winnipeg, like Riel. And because it was popular, the Filmon government never repealed rent control; they learned from what the Lyon government did.

And I came back about 1982, and I presented a brief to the standing committee in support of rental control and we have kept it and, to their credit, the Filmon government followed through on recommendations from a landlord and tenant review committee that I was a part of and combined the former Rent Control Act and The Landlord and Tenant Act into The Residential Tenancies Act, and I was here in the fall of 1990 when that act was passed, and we made improvements to that legislation.

And that's not to say that it can't be further improved upon, but it certainly does protect tenants. And if you talk to the staff in the department, they will say it also protects landlords, and they think it's fair legislation, because whenever you ask them, well, you know, landlords think it's biased in favour of tenants and tenants think it's biased in favour of landlords, and they will tell you that they think it's balanced legislation because they, basically get an equal number of complaints from both sides—*[interjection]*

Well, one of the members opposite would like to debate rent control as a philosophy. It sounds like what he's saying from his seat suggests that he's opposed to it. We know what happens when rent control is deregulated in other provinces. The rent goes up. And the number of affordable housing units does not go up, and, in fact, there are significant options for landlords. I believe that there is no rent control for the first 15 years on new construction, and we don't have strict rent control. We have rent passed through legislation so that if landlords do capital repairs, they can pass on the cost of the repairs—100 percent of the capital costs are passed on to tenants in new rent, and when they are paid off,

'cause they're amortized over one to six years, the rent doesn't go down, the rent continues on that new plateau.

So I probably only have a few minutes left here. I will—I will continue with this good news of our government, and I think that I should just do one more announcement and then actually talk about the Throne Speech. It might be good if I talked about the Throne Speech.

But, I want to highlight our poverty reduction strategy, which was announced on May 21st, an investment of \$744 million, including \$212 million of new investment initiatives under four pillars: safe, affordable housing and supported communities; education, jobs and income support; strong, healthy communities; and accessible co-ordinated services. And, we've already made great progress.

Our poverty reduction strategy did not start in May of this year. It started in 1999 when we were elected government. And we have reduced poverty in a number of categories very significantly, especially for single-parent women, and we will continue to make improvements. And the news release of November 24th, 2009, says, Province seeks community feedback to strengthen ALL Aboard poverty reduction strategy. Our poverty reduction strategy is called ALL Aboard.

And I've been part of that community consultation. I've already had one meeting to which tenants attended and gave us their ideas of what the government needs to do in the future, and I'm currently organizing further meetings in the North End and with church groups because we really do want community input to give guidance to the government on what more we can do to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion because we are the party of social inclusion.

As I started off I said we're the party of WITTs, we're in this together, as opposed to the people on the other side who are the YOYOs, you are on your own, an acronym, Y-O-Y-O, you are on your own. That's their philosophy. We are the WITTs, we're in this together.

Now to continue with the Throne Speech highlights, very briefly. There are many highlights in the Throne Speech. I don't have time to include all of the highlights of the Throne Speech, of course; however, under the economy we are organizing two-ten economic summit to focus on skills, training and investment. We are saying no to a harmonized sales

tax, HST, due to \$400-million impact to Manitoba families.

And I really regret that I don't have time to read into the record more good things that our government is doing, which we announced in the Throne Speech, but we're in this together and we've agreed to give the other parties equal time. So I look forward to hearing the response and the comments of members opposite, who might even consider voting for this Throne Speech because it's full of good news.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased today to rise to respond to the amendments to the Throne Speech put forward by our leader. And I just want to indicate that it is a true honour and a privilege for me, I feel, to speak on behalf of the people of Charleswood.

I feel very, very privileged to represent the group of people, the community of Charleswood, and I'm very impressed with the people that live there and with the kind of community we have. It is such a caring community. It's an involved community. It's a community that does a lot to help take care of each other, and I love the spirit of the people, and I love their willingness to dig in and to try to make a difference in the lives of their families, and the lives of their community. And it's an impressive community to be involved in and an impressive community to have the opportunity to represent here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also like to welcome back all honourable members to the House. I would indicate that we are missing one member. That is the first time that he's not here for a Throne Speech in a very, very long time, and that's Gary Doer, who has left to become the Canadian Ambassador to the United States. And I would like to indicate that, you know, after having him in here for so many years, it really is quite a different environment—[interjection] It is quite a different environment to have him absent from here, and it's a very noticeable absence, I have to indicate. But I do feel that he will very capably serve this country in his new position as ambassador and I wish him well.

I would also like to welcome back the table officers and the pages, and the Sergeant-at-Arms, and just to tell the people that work here and have the opportunity to be in this building that it indeed is a privilege to be in the building. And it is really exciting to be part of a legislative family and, you know, it becomes a family, you know, the longer we're here, the longer we get to know each other.

And I'm sure for many people that retire, leave this place, it's like saying goodbye to a family because you do get very close to people.

So I just—I'm thrilled to be part of this legislative family here in Manitoba. And also I would like to thank Mr. Speaker for his patience and fairness in dealing with all of the challenges that all of us present to him on a very regular basis, and we certainly appreciate how he handles himself in the Chair.

* (15:00)

At this time I would also like to recognize all of the staff that I feel very, very privileged to work with, as well as the colleagues that I have the honour to work with. I have a caucus that I am thrilled to be a part of. I have great respect for our caucus. I have great respect for our legislative staff and all of our constituency staff, and it is very humbling to work with so many people that care so much about what they're doing, and I feel very privileged to be able to have that chance.

I would also like to acknowledge at this time, and say a big thank you from the people of Charleswood to all of the front-line staff and volunteers that have worked on this H1N1 vaccination program. I think it was a massive initiative, and I know I've spoken to a lot of people in Charleswood that, although there were some problems in the rollout of the vaccination campaigns, it was a very complex initiative. And I do want to say to those that were there on the front lines—from the people of Charleswood—we're very appreciative of all of the work and the effort that has gone in to try to make those vaccine clinics run as smoothly as possible.

I, too—I, too, would also like to acknowledge at this time, John Loewen for his fundraising to bring together an incredible North End Wellness Centre, which was named after his mom, Win Gardner Place. And I know that John has been working on this particular initiative for a number of years, and he did it with great compassion and a great understanding of the need for this in that area of town. And he put a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of compassion, a lot of caring into raising money, and I'm thrilled to see the success that that place is already having. I would indicate that John is a former MLA within our caucus and was here for a number years and is now out in private business. And I do want to acknowledge, you know, his contributions here when he was a member of our caucus, but to also recognize this great facility

that he has been so instrumental in making happen in the north end of Winnipeg. And I think it's going to have a huge impact on the people in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also indicate that with this Throne Speech there are aspects of it that are certainly pieces that I can support. However, for the most part, it is not a Throne Speech that is easily, you know, acceptable, when we see so many holes in it and so many gaps and so many challenges left unrecognized by this government. They really seem to have been paralyzed in terms of not putting what needed to be put in there in order to take Manitoba forward and make it a better—a better place. And, you know, they seem, as a government, paralyzed at a time when Manitoba cannot afford to have a government like that.

Manitoba has so many challenges before it, and we're in the midst of some of them and there will be more coming down the road. This is not the time for a government to fall asleep at the switch, to lose the energy that is needed to move this province forward and, in fact, in many instances to become absolutely paralyzed.

This Premier's Throne Speech, this steady as she goes, is more paralysis of the same kind. As steady as she goes is not what Manitobans are wanting at this stage, and I don't think anybody—very few people out there are accepting of it.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very, very difficult to support a speech that was so lacking in solutions and so lacking in a positive attitude for the abilities of this province to become better than what it is. There was no entrepreneurial spirit shown by this government. In fact, no even knowledge or recognition that in order for a province to be strong, you need the leadership right at the top, but you also need an entrepreneurial spirit to—from the government and a government that's prepared to work to take Manitoba forward.

This tin cup approach that we have seen from this government for so many years has put Manitoba in jeopardy.

Now, I indicated there was some things in the Throne Speech that I do support and, certainly, the announcements on CentrePort were very good for Manitoba, and I'm very supportive of that.

On the environment side, we acknowledge that there were some positives in the Throne Speech, but we do have to wonder what has taken this government so long in bringing them forward.

They've had 10 years to do a lot of things and they've heard of these issues for a very, very long time, but they tend to drag their feet on so many things, and we certainly see it in conservation and environmental issues. They're really good about talking but they're far less prepared to move forward once they have had their quickie news release or their ribbon cutting and then somehow they seem to lose their way. But certainly in conservation there were some things that I could support.

I would indicate that something positive arising out of the Throne Speech was the government's commitment to upgrading the polar bear facilities in Churchill and the new Polar Bear Research and Arctic Exhibit at the Assiniboine Park Zoo. I would indicate that my colleague from Tuxedo and I both attended that announcement at the zoo, and we thought it was a very, very good announcement and, again, a long time in coming from this government but it was a good announcement to attend.

But, you know, other than that and, you know, there may have been a couple of other things in the Throne Speech that I would support. Other than that, the glaring gaps and what they didn't talk about raise some serious concerns. There was no mention of improving graduation rates and although we have terrible graduation rates in Manitoba, it wasn't mentioned in last year's Throne Speech either. So, considering the significance and the importance of students graduating and, you know, moving into our work force and contributing to our work force and contributing to the economy, having better graduation rates is absolutely significant because it takes all of those grads into a whole number of other opportunities that won't be there if they don't graduate. And because it is such a big deal, I'm very, very disappointed that this government did not address it at all in their Throne Speech.

Also, in Family Services, there was nothing to discuss to reduce staggering caseloads for social workers, and I think that is something that absolutely has to be done. We've heard so many horror stories from this government from, you know, the lack of action by this government over many years in the area of Family Services, that it was very, very disconcerting to see that they really didn't tackle that issue at all in the Throne Speech.

The tax cuts that were in the Throne Speech were nothing more than reannouncements, and according to the Conference Board, Manitoba will rank seventh in Canada in terms of GDP for 2010.

And once in—the rest of the country pulls out of the recession, we're going to be left behind. Outlooks from the major banks confirm that we will be left behind in 2010, and when we need leadership from this new Premier (Mr. Selinger), this rookie Premier, and when we need leadership from a government to move this province forward, we did not get it in these areas. There was no economic plan in that Throne Speech.

It's funny how this government thinks some tiny little announcements here and there make for a vision. They really don't get it. They don't seem to have a grasp on what you need to develop an economic plan and move a province forward under a strong strategy, but we've seen this in many departments. The way this government responds to things is not necessarily by moving forward in a strategic way with a strategic plan. Most of the things they do is just throw money after solutions or after problems and think that is solutions and yet most of the time all it does is prop up the status quo.

So we're not seeing, from this government, the kind of leadership that is needed to make Manitoba benefit from the many opportunities that are here in this province. This government has a tendency to wait until problems reach crisis levels, and we've seen it actually in a number of departments. They wait till the red flags are really, really flying out there before they do anything. They don't have a tendency to anticipate, and they don't have a tendency to get in front of issues. But this NDP government is notorious for ignoring red flags. We've seen it with Crocus; we've seen it with Hydro; and we sure have seen it in health care.

*(15:10)

And this new Premier has shown that he is weak in terms of addressing the economic challenges that are before him, and he really does not seem to get it. And we—we've seen by some of his, you know, some of the things he is saying right now. We've seen it by appointing another Cabinet minister and creating another department in government because of it. He wants everybody else to tighten their belts, but instead he is not leading by example, and he's not leading in example in many, many ways. And it wasn't just by expanding his Cabinet, but that was a foolhardy decision to make at a time when Manitoba can least afford to have another Cabinet minister at the table.

So, you know, typical with this government, they say one thing and they do another, but, you

know, we've seen that for 10 years. They're really good at rhetoric and they're really good at spin. They're really good at the ribbon cuttings, but they fail so badly in following through on a lot of the things they even talk about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's clear that we're headed for troubled times. There have been increases in the number of people using food banks in the province. There's increased job sharing happening in Manitoba, particularly in the manufacturing sector. There has been an increased demand for welfare and government housing, and, when you look at some of the government housing right now and you look at how they have allowed it to become so decrepit, they have become the biggest slum landlords in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, projects that were moving forward before that could have a really good impact on Winnipeg have now stalled and, also, in Manitoba there was a 14 percent increase in the number of people collecting regular EI benefits in September. We're still the child poverty capital, according to the Social Planning Council of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the transfer payments are expected to decrease, and the government should have known that. I mean that wasn't—it didn't take any genius to know that with the kind of spending that has gone on at all of these levels something has to give soon. The roosters soon to come—the roosters soon come home to roost, and I think this government just, you know, kind of lives for the day and does not have an ability to think—to think further ahead. Right now they depend on transfer payments to cover almost 40 percent of their budget. I think it's Manitoba and one other Maritime province that are the most dependent provinces in Canada on transfer payments from the federal government. Well, shame on them. That means that other provinces like Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia all pay their taxes and some of their money comes here to allow this government to spend, and not in many cases to even spend wisely. We've seen some of their dumb decisions lately, and those dumb decisions are going to cost Manitobans money. And yet they don't feel any accountability not only to Manitobans, but they don't feel any accountability to other provinces because they're willing to just suck whatever money they can out of the federal government and other provinces and then use it for their own—they want to use it for their own little pet projects here. And not all of those projects are worth doing what they're

doing, and this government needs to be more accountable.

This is embarrassing to be the only have-not province in western Canada, and I don't know why this government doesn't feel embarrassed to be the last have-not province in western Canada.

An Honourable Member: Why?

Mrs. Driedger: And the Finance Minister says, why? Well, if the Finance Minister sits there and says, why should we be embarrassed about being a have-not province, shame on her. She's the one that can help to take us into a better economic position, and she sits there saying, why should we be embarrassed about being a have-not province? Well, if that's the kind of leadership we have in this government, we have bigger problems than we even thought.

Other provinces—you talk to people in other provinces and they aren't so happy about sending a lot of their money here, and they want Manitoba to pick up their socks, and they want Manitobans to—and this Manitoba government to become better fiscal managers than what they are. And why they're so happy to be where they are is beyond me because they are, you know, they've been labelled a western weakling by another province. How can they be happy with that? How could this province be happy to be called a western weakling?

And then we saw the new Justice Minister, while he was running for leadership, saying, if I become leader, I'm going to go to Ottawa and I am going to tell them that we're in such dire straits and we're gonna try to bring back as much money to Manitoba as we can. Those kind of comments are not good for Manitoba and they are not good for, you know, the dreams that people have here, but it sure does give you an indication of what the members on the other side of the House of what they really think. And, you know, they're really happy being where they are.

You know, we're left out—we are being left out of all kinds of talks between the three western provinces. They're getting together on justice issues; they're getting together on economic issues; they're getting together on discussing highway issues. And Manitoba is not at the table. They are ignored by those provinces because those provinces see this government as weak—as weak and incapable of taking Manitoba to economic prosperity.

So, they don't want to have anything to do with this government here, and that's a pity because what

it does, it hurts the image of this province, it hurts our ability to develop synergies with this—provinces so that we could make Manitoba better and stronger, and we won't be able to do that because those provinces don't want to have anything to do with this government.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad situation. We've already been seeing some of the cutbacks that are occurring because they have spent a lot and they've had a lot to spend. They've been so flush in all of this money that's coming from the federal government that it allowed them to do a lot of freewheeling spending, but they did it on a live-each-day-as-you-go kind of basis and, in fact, didn't do what they needed to do to prepare Manitoba for, you know, the economic challenges.

You know, there are so many aspects of this Throne Speech that are so disturbing and health care is certainly a huge one, and I think—I wish I had more time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about all of the death issues here that they have cranked up, the death which is at an all-time high.

I don't think they even go out and talk to Manitobans about the fact that they have increased health-care debt to almost a billion dollars, and that when the Conservatives were in government in the '90s, CancerCare and a lot of mental health projects were cash financed. This government has been spending all of this money on health-care buildings, capital projects, but they're borrowing all the money. They have doubled the health-care debt in their period and time, and now they're having to pay \$132 million a year on principal and interest payments against that debt in health care. Imagine how many front-line health-care workers you could have if they had been better managers of their finances.

There are so many other areas, and health care under this government, I think, has some severe challenges, but we've also got crumbling infrastructure. We've got horrible bullying and intimidation of whistle-blowers in this province. We've got a government that isn't giving local governments the kind of transparency and support that they need. We have rising crime and gang activity in Winnipeg, and this government is making a huge mess of Hydro.

And they like to talk about, you know, they will never sell Hydro, but what they're doing it—doing with Hydro is they're chipping away at it, and they're taking the stability away from Hydro and they're

driving it into the ground with their mismanagement of Hydro. And while they may not sell it, they are certainly working away at making it far from the kind of economic engine that we should be seeing in this province, because they don't have an understanding or a clue about how to manage the opportunities that are before them.

*(15:20)

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the challenges in health care are very severe in this province despite the self-congratulatory back-patting on themselves during this Throne Speech. They—all they really talked about was a lot of reannouncements but they never really talked about things that will make health care better for patients, where it was more patient focussed, where it was more outcome based, where there is more timeliness and availability of services to people.

And, all they did, again, was talk about capital commitments that were reannouncements from 2003. They didn't mention that the capital was all debt financed. That, despite all the money that was coming in, they couldn't take any of that money and finance, with cash, some of the health-care capital. Instead, they do it the NDP way and they borrow, and they borrow, and they borrow. So now we've got an elephant of debt in this province and that debt elephant is going to cause problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because there are interest payments that are phenomenal, and that money could be better used on the front lines of health care. And, instead, what we see is a government that chooses to, you know, build administrative offices for bureaucrats.

All we had to do yesterday was listen to the question from the member from Arthur-Virden about this 90-year-old lady who had appalling care in our Manitoba hospitals, that spent seven hours on stretcher in an ER hallway in Brandon and then was charged for the ambulance paramedics who had to stay with her. So, not only did they not get rid of hallway medicine, they're now charging people to be in the hallways because the paramedics have to stay with that patient. This elderly lady, in the last few days of her life, did not have a very dignified life and probably did not have a pain-free life either, and I can understand why her five sons are very, very distressed by what happened to her, and that was a very, very sad situation.

But we're not seeing this government address those challenges in the emergency rooms. We're not seeing a commitment from them to take on the

tsunami of diabetes. Diabetes should have been a significant part of that Throne Speech. It is a tsunami coming. There are going to be huge financial challenges. Why could they have not, like many other provinces, have funded insulin pumps? That in itself could have saved a significant amount of dollars for the province, but also it could have made the lives of children so much better, children that fight every day with this disease.

There was nothing in there to address addictions. Like, for the first time, we're seeing a closure of addiction services in Manitoba over Christmas, and, you know, that's a significant cutback.

We've also seen them cut back. We've seen them cut back surgeries in community hospitals—emergency surgeries in three community hospitals. That's another cutback.

We've seen them drop the ball on personal care homes and we have found that a significant number of standards are not being met in our personal care homes. We are seeing the minister drop the ball on, you know—an announcement that was made for unannounced visits to ensure that personal care homes did, in fact, keep up with standards and meet standards. The minister, again, had a great announcement and then fell flat on her face in terms of delivering on that, and only in the last several years have we had 12 unannounced visits. What happened to the promise?

It's very easy for this government. They're good at making announcements. They're good at the ribbon cuttings. They're good at the smiling at the camera, but they don't follow through on so many things.

They haven't fallen—they haven't followed through on patient profiles, and then, what do we see is a doctor that has had all kinds of allegations made against him being allowed to practise in this province. Well, what happened to physician profiles?

What has happened with the—with the maternity care report that sounds like it still continues to gather dust in this province? We have horrible, horrible evidence showing that maternal child care in Manitoba is in trouble, and yet we hear nothing from this government in following through on the recommendations from front-line workers who said this government needs to be doing something. Where are they? Those are not—when you're looking at infant mortality, when you're looking at stillbirths,

those are not things that a government should be sitting quiet on.

You know, they closed the maternity ward at the Victoria Hospital and now they're talking about building a birthing centre in south Winnipeg. Well, where have they been? That's been out there for years and years. Why are they dragging their heels on a birthing centre? And I'll tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's because they dropped the ball on midwifery training in Manitoba. Again, they had a grandstand announcement that they were going to train all these midwives, and they failed. They didn't put a program properly in place. They don't have enough midwives to mentor students, and now they can't even follow through on their announcements, and so, you know, we're gonna be waiting and waiting and waiting for them to follow through on I'm sure a lot more announcements in health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many things that need to be challenged in health care in this province and I wish I had more time for it, and I'm sure the members opposite are—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Driedger: —they're groaning because they know I've got pages and pages. Certainly, we know that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Honourable member, the time is over.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today and respond to the Throne Speech, and to support the motion of my colleague, the honourable member from The Pas.

In listening to debate from both sides of the House in response to the Throne Speech, a re-occurring theme has emerged, interestingly, with two dichotomous perspectives. I know that's a big word and, if necessary, we'll supply a dictionary definition for members opposite. The theme is best captured in the epigram by French writer Jean Baptiste Alphonse Karr who, in 1849, said: plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, or, as most here are probably more familiar with it: the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, let me explain the reason for citing this epigram and its relevance to previous responses to the Throne Speech.

Since my arrival in this Chamber, the global economy has changed drastically. International financial instabilities resulting from poor economic policies and investment practices elsewhere set in motion a global downturn that every jurisdiction in the world is feeling to some degree. That is the change that I reference in using this famous saying by Monsieur Karr. So the more things have changed in global economy, the more the fundamental values and behaviour of both sides of this House have remained the same.

Across the way, it remains a chorus of gloom and doom, coupled with a full-blown case of chronic collective amnesia regarding the long-term impacts of the slash-and-burn economic approach taken in the 1990s. So, rain or shine, the song remains the same. They can find a cloud for every silver lining and refuse to acknowledge the long-term consequences of their actions while they were on this side of the House.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I really wonder if they think the citizens of Manitoba can take them seriously when they now come into this Chamber claiming to champion the causes of those whom they victimized while they were in power. Nurses, doctors, front-line medical health-care workers, students, labour, Aboriginal and First Nations communities, members of the disabilities communities, and, today's recent addition, the environmental movement, to name a few—sorry—to name a few thousand Manitobans they trod on.

* (15:30)

Mais, Monsieur le vice-président, à ce côté de la Chambre quand on dit plus c'est la même chose, ça veut dire que on continue avec des solutions productives et de chercher et de créer des occasions améliorées pour tous nos citoyens et citoyennes.

Translation

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this side of the House when we say the more things are the same, what we mean is that we are continuing with productive solutions and to seek out and create better opportunities for all our citizens.

English

That is to say that on this side of the House, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, our form of consistency remains that of productive problem solving and looking for ways to implement and create positive

outcomes for Manitoba, its economy, its citizens, and its future.

This government invested and built in the good times, creating growth in both human and physical infrastructure so that when the downturn caught other jurisdictions off guard, Manitoba was buffered. Its economy stabilized, and as a result, has not felt the same degree of economic and human suffering experienced in other regions.

Donc, dans ce palais législatif, plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, et le résultat est que notre gouvernement continuera de travailler pour nos peuples dans les périodes économiques forts, et on travaille plus fort dans les périodes économiques difficiles. C'est dommage, mais à l'autre côté ils ne font rien sauf que dire que la ciel tombera.

Translation

So in this Legislative Building, the more things change, the more they stay the same, and the result is that our government will continue to work for our people in good economic times and we work even harder in difficult economic times. It is unfortunate, but all the other side is doing is saying that the sky is falling.

English

They may say that the sky is falling, but that is only because they are only familiar with dismantling infrastructure and undermining or rather, shall I say, selling off Crown corporations. So, in good times or bad, they wring their hands and fearmonger, forgetting that not every government exists to unravel the social safety net that has been built for the benefit of all citizens.

Some of us on this side of the House embrace the radical notions of such leaders as Gandhi who encouraged people to be the change you wish to see in the world, and I'm pretty sure, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that Gandhi never fired a nurse or sold off a telephone company.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I was fortunate to come into office after two terms of strong and progressive governance by the NDP and fortunate to have seen the difference between a well-run, successful province under the NDP and the two disasters that I fled previously, provinces devastated by governments under Conservative rule. The first disaster that I fled was the Manitoba of the 1990s where tuition rates rose as fast as classroom sizes for doctors fell. Then later I fled the travesty known as

the Harris regime and its so-called common-sense revolution in Ontario, which could best be summarized as a social justice nightmare where people felt compelled to rally en masse at Queen's Park to an unprecedented level due to the draconian legislation and policy changes, only to have the government of the day greet them with riot squads. Social justice and civil rights were under attack in a Canadian democracy. Shame.

It was a relief to return to Manitoba in 2001 and be greeted by an NDP MLA and an NDP government and to see the transformations that were under way so early in this government's tenure. Here again, the more things changed, the more they stayed the same. Both of these provinces had been devastated by governments that included someone who envisions himself as the heir to the Premier's chair in this Chamber.

I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) is proud of the work he did in both of those governments, and that is one of the reasons why I chose to run in 2007 to represent the neighbourhood that he and I grew up in. I was familiar with the damage that could be done when the levers of power were even near, much less in, his hands.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to say to my colleagues that the prospect of a week-long, slasher movie marathon is less frightening than the thought of members opposite in power for the same short period of time. At least you can walk out of the movie theatre with your well-being and future intact and the recovery time from such theatrical horrors is decades less than the rebuilding process required after a Tory government.

Je suis fière d'être une députée dans ce gouvernement qui cherche le équilibre entre la compassion et la sensibilité économique. Notre premier ministre nous donne un avenir fort à cause de sa prudence fiscale comme le ministre de Finance, et encore, plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Translation

I am proud to be a member of this government that seeks a balance between compassion and economic sensitivity. Our Premier is ensuring that we have a strong future thanks to his fiscal prudence as Minister of Finance, and once again, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

English

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, members opposite have gone on and on and on since we returned to session about how they believe things have changed for the worse on this side of the House and for the province as a whole since the departure of the former premier.

I never realized they were such fans of the new ambassador. During his tenure here it certainly wasn't reflected in the way they treated him during that time. However, the more things change, the more they remain the same. And while they now seek to disparage our new Premier (Mr. Selinger) and drive some sort of wedge between this government's past and future accomplishments, they also choose to ignore the fact that so many of the successes of this government in the past decade are, in fact, due to the work the current Premier did as the Minister of Finance. It is this past record that gives Manitobans confidence in a future under his leadership.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, when the person who's bringing in the budget and later leading the province comes to both positions with skill sets and degrees from both social work and the London School of Economics, the result is a balance of compassion and fiscal responsibility. I am proud to have taught in the Inner-City Social Work Program, as has our current Premier, and I am proud to be a part of the team that he leads.

This Throne Speech, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, demonstrates that leadership is tested by how well a government and its Leader deal not just with prosperity and the building of a strong economy when times are good, but how, when external forces have a negative impact, how to cope with such adversity in a manner that protects the investments of the past and builds through such challenges to a stronger tomorrow. By continuing to invest in the economic, environmental and social health of our province and our people, this government is ensuring that much stays the same for Manitobans in their daily lives, while so much around us in the world changes.

Manitobans will not have their health care, education and training opportunities jeopardized as this government continues to invest in them. Over the course of this government's tenure, it continued to build up the rainy day fund through the good times, a fund that had been gutted and abandoned under the previous government. This prudent

planning meant that the fund is there now and will provide Manitobans the peace of mind in assuring that fiscal needs can be met in a way not possible had the fund been left to languish as it had been by others.

The building and the investment this government engaged in earlier in its tenure ensured that we have a strong, diversified economy, one of the strongest in Canada, and I know that this something that bothers the members opposite, because they have a hard time dealing with the fact that even during an economic downturn, that our population numbers continue to grow at record breaking rates. People are fleeing the bust economies elsewhere to the safe, strong economic environment they find there. The Manitoba Bureau of Statistics recently reported that the provincial growth of nearly 17,000 people, means a 1.4 percent increase ahead of the national growth rate and the largest 12-month growth rate since they began tracking these numbers in 1971. And what's good to know about these numbers, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, is that these are not just a result of people like myself returning home, but people coming from near and far to call Manitoba home.

Recently I had the pleasure of meeting a couple newly arrived from Boston to put down roots in Winnipeg. She's my optometrist and her husband is a chemist who found that the impact of the downturn that it was having in the Boston employment market was making it difficult for him to find substantial work once he had completed graduate school. However, in very short order he found work at the University of Manitoba, and she has a new practice here in the city. They are thrilled about the real estate market here and are looking forward to many years of enjoying the quality of life they have found here. So Boston's loss has become Winnipeg's gain, and we see yet another example of how our stable economy will continue to draw young, successful families here to make this province even more vibrant and a rewarding place to live.

I've also enjoyed working with the members of the Assiniboia Chamber of Commerce and, as we have seen, the CentrePort Canada become a reality, our part of Winnipeg has numerous small businesses and large corporations from the local Foodfare stores run by the Zeid to the international leader in packaging, Winpak, all of which will directly benefit from the development and success of this venture.

* (15:40)

As CentrePort grows, so too will the entrepreneurial and economic success of my neighbourhood and that of the rest of the province. We are not just the gateway to the west, but the heart of the continent, and with heart, spirit and sound economic growth, Manitoba's future with CentrePort is bright.

I would like to thank the previous premier and the former minister of Infrastructure, the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux), for the time that they and their departments spent with the Chamber members to share with them the details of the potential that CentrePort will have for the economic growth of the province as a whole and the benefits specific to our neighbourhood.

The members of the Chamber are also proud of the fact that our new Premier (Mr. Selinger) is of St. James heritage, and they look forward to building on the relationship that developed during his time as Finance Minister.

So, again, regardless of the nay-saying opposite, business in Manitoba has benefited under this government and knows they will continue to grow under our new leadership.

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, how could they not? Under members opposite, who like to tout themselves as the friend-of-friends of business, the small business tax was at 8 percent, but in the new year we will have brought the corporate capital tax and small business tax down to unprecedented levels. Now, what level might that be, you may ask. Well, we've eliminated it, brought them down to zero percent. Yes, zero, the same number of doctors and nurses members opposite promised in the '07 election.

But helping business isn't just about cutting taxes; it's about investing in new and green economies. It's about providing long-term, sustainable support for organic producers, providing more support to farmers' markets and investing in buy-local campaigns. Among the benefits of buying local and supporting organic farmers is that Manitobans, we get healthier and we get a healthier economy. This goes back to a saying that many of us who came from the environmental movement are familiar with: Think globally, act locally. In supporting local agricultural producers, Manitobans will get fresher food to their tables and do so while cutting down transportation costs, resulting in lower fuel use and lower greenhouse gas emissions into the

atmosphere. Again, members opposite have touted themselves as the friends of agriculture, but fail to acknowledge what this government has done to work with farmers to build a healthier province.

And I thank the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) for the years of dedication she demonstrated as the Minister of Agriculture, and I look forward to the continuing growth and development that will occur under the new minister, the member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers).

I also wonder if the new Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has noticed the frequency with which questions and debate directed to him from the other side have been filled with references to his apparent lack of understanding regarding the nuances of manure spreading—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Blady: I, on the other hand—I, on the other hand, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, would like to thank him—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Order, please. Order, please.

Ms. Blady: —for his integrity and for putting facts on the record, rather than spreading anything of a fertilizing nature in his responses.

Another area that members opposite like to claim as their turf, their forte, is Justice and being tough on crime. But in keeping with the other examples of the strengths of the government and this Throne Speech, the reality of the situation is far different than the debate of members—than the debate of members of opposite would indicate. This province has benefited from the guidance, prudence and hard work for the member of—for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) for many years as the Minister of Justice, and it is under his tenure that many ground-breaking improvements have been made. I would like to thank him for his patience, integrity and diligence, especially the work that he has done working towards ending two-for-one sentencing practices, a thankless battle that he undertook not just for the benefit of all Manitobans, but for all Canadians.

His work with local law enforcement and MPI resulted in a drastic reduction in auto theft in this province, work that was recognized when the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy, WATSS, was one of the six finalists from 44 submissions for the 2009 Goldstein Award. The last time a Canadian submission was selected as a finalist

for the award was 2002. So this is no small feat, and one that members opposite failed to support or acknowledge its success, as we saw here earlier today in question period. Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, since 2005, WATSS has reduced auto theft in Winnipeg by over 70 percent, resulting in 9,000 fewer vehicle thefts and attempts in 2009 than took place in 2004. The result is improved safety on Winnipeg streets, reduced strain on police resources and substantial reductions in auto theft claim.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

According to the CEO of MPI, keeping 9,000 vehicles from being stolen saved MPI approximately \$25 million in claims in just one year. Ms. McLaren has gone on to say that Manitoba Public Insurance immobilizer program is a key part of WATSS, and she estimates that the strategy has helped saved our customers more than \$102 million in claims, making it possible to reduce premiums for ratepayers.

But this just isn't about saving money, it's about the quality of life for all Manitobans and about ongoing commitment. And who better to look to for feedback on the success and commitment needed to maintain this success than Winnipeg Police Chief, Chief McCaskill, who has stated, and I quote: Exceptional work has been done within WATSS, and I'm really glad to see that this has been acknowledged in such a meaningful way. Auto theft is not just a property crime. It's an important public safety issue that requires continued attention, and we remain committed to addressing auto theft, and I end my quote.

The success of the WATSS model has now been taken to the next level in dealing with gang issues through Project Restore, and the hiring of gang prosecutors and the development of new legislative tools such as Bill 7, which would impose driver's licence suspensions for those convicted of drug trafficking.

I look forward to members opposite co-operating in the business of this House so that we can pass this legislation in a timely manner for the benefit of all Manitobans. I also look forward, Mr. Speaker, to working with our new Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) and can assure Manitobans that, in the member from Minto, they have found another person of integrity and determination who will continue the diligent and forthright work of his predecessor. It is a privilege to have as a long-time friend, classmate, and colleague a person of such compassion and integrity, and I know that the people in my end of town are thrilled

to have another home-grown boy looking after such a significant portfolio on their behalf.

We all look forward to the work that he will do with the Winnipeg Police Service in their acquisition of a helicopter, in the growth of Project Restore, in expanding Tracia's Trust to stop the sexual exploitation of children, as well as his work to ensure that the Province continues to provide increasing protection for victims of domestic violence and improving maintenance enforcement.

Again, we have a person who sees the compassionate aspect of the law, protecting the most vulnerable and victimized and who also recognizes the need to be firm and diligent in dealing with sentencing issues and consequences for offenders. I thank the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) for undertaking this new portfolio and look forward to working alongside him for many years as this government leads this—leads the province through these current travails and into a bright and secure future.

Et, encore, mon vieil ami, plus ça change plus c'est la même chose, et nous travaillerons ensemble pour nos voisinages, notre province et notre avenir.

Translation

And again, my old friend, the more things change, the more they stay the same, and we will work together for our neighbourhoods, our province and our future.

English

Mr. Speaker, before I wrap up, I would like to point out a moment from yesterday's debate that, while it has a lighter note, continues to reflect the theme that I've been discussing today. The member from Minnedosa began her response to the Throne Speech by referencing the children's classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, and then tried to compare this government to the residents of Whoville in a negative way.

I presume the member has only seen snippets of the Jim Carrey movie of the same name and never sat down to read this classic morality tale to its conclusion. The citizens of Whoville were not addled by a mix of consumerism and blind optimism, as outlined by the member for Minnedosa (Mrs. Rowat), but rather, through the course of the story, and the Grinch's theft of the Christmas presents and decorations, they were able to teach the Grinch that Christmas came without the trappings of ribbons and

bows because Christmas, like any other celebration, exists in the heart.

It was from that understanding that the Grinch's undersized heart grew three sizes that day, and he gave up his nay-saying ways to embrace the positive, can-do attitude of the Whos. I would invite members opposite to go and read that story in its entirety, and I thank the member from Minnedosa for comparing us to the residents of Whoville who, in the face of despair, found hope and a positive solution, and I hope that she, too, may find similar rewards as the Grinch himself received.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Et, encore, Monsieur le vice-président, plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Translation

Once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

* (15:50)

English

And, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there is so much more that I could say in support of this Throne Speech and this government's commitment to Manitobans, but I will wrap up here to let others have their say, and state that I stand here, as part of this government, and speak in support of this Throne Speech as a testament to my belief and that of my constituents, in a government that invests in people, infrastructure, employment and a strong collective future. I stand here proudly as a member of a government that protects its citizens, its economy and its environment in a manner that is supported by Manitobans, and I stand here to remind people that the more things change in the world around us, the more things will stay the same with this government's commitment to its citizens.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We will continue to work for Manitobans, investing in them, in our economy and in our collective future. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Order.

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions, and I think if you canvass the House, you would see that there is leave to temporarily set aside the Throne Speech debate to deal with Committee of the Whole

consideration, concurrence and third reading, and royal assent of Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act, with the understanding that this is not to count as an interruption of or affect the number of days of debate held on the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, is there leave to temporarily set aside the Throne Speech debate to deal with Committee of the Whole consideration, concurrence and third reading, and royal assent of Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act, with the understanding that this is not to count as an interruption of or affect the number of days of debate held on the Throne Speech? Is there agreement? *[Agreed]*

Okay, so we'll now move into Committee of the Whole. Would Deputy—would the—would the chair—would the Deputy Speaker please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 2—The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Rob Altemeyer): Will the committee please come to order. We will now be considering, Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 2 have an opening statement?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Chairman, I don't see the need for a long opening statement. This normally is the time in which we might move and debate amendments but there are no amendments, and so I think you can see by the way in which the House agreed to proceed in all stages to the completion of this bill, that we're anxious to get it passed and to comply with auditor's request. And therefore, my opening statement would be to that effect, and I hope that other members might see it likewise and we can proceed to the question.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Altemeyer): We thank the minister for those comments. Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement? Seeing none, we will proceed.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all of the

clauses have been considered in their proper order. Also, if there's agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose. Is this agreeable? *[Agreed]*

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clauses 5 through 7—pass; clauses 8 and 9—pass; clause 10—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Acting Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 2—The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), that the Bill No. 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et la Loi sur la Commission de régie de l'Assemblée législative, reported from Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Government House Leader, seconded by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, that Bill No. 2, The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Act, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Any members wish to speak?

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

* (16:00)

ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

His Honour Philip S. Lee, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Mr. Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in the following words:

Mr. Speaker: Your Honour:

At this sitting, the Legislative Assembly has passed a bill that I ask Your Honour to give assent to.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk):

Bill No. 2—The Legislative Assembly Amendment and Legislative Assembly Management Commission Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et la Loi sur la Commission de régie de l'Assemblée législative

In Her Majesty's name, His Honour assents to this bill.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

THRONE SPEECH (Sixth Day of Debate—Continued)

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated.

Okay, we will now revert to the Speech from the Throne, the Throne Speech.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Certainly, I'm pleased to put a few comments on the record regarding the Throne Speech. But, before I do that, His Honour was in here this afternoon, and it reminded me of the time when His Honour and Her Honour came to Morden to the Corn and Apple Festival and the opportunity that we had to meet with both of them. And I just want to thank them for coming out to southern Manitoba to see what's taking place in the rural part of the province and, of course, with that also thank the mayor and the town council in Morden for accepting and inviting us to the council chambers for a lunch and meet-and-greet time, which was an opportunity again to express some of the concerns that we have within our region, which is again the fastest-growing region in rural Manitoba. So that was

certainly something that I wanted to put on the record.

The other, I wanted to thank you as Speaker for the way you continue to preside over the Assembly here, and the staff, the interns, for the work that they continue to do for us as MLAs and certainly that is appreciated, and we do take the opportunity to ask them to assist us in many things and, as I say, we do appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, after having listened to the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) and the way she was, I guess, patting herself on the back and also the Premier and the ministers for the way they were running this province, it reminded me of the saying, and I've said it a number of times within this Assembly here in this Chamber, and that is that we make the worst decisions during the best of times, and I think that's really a concern that we on this side of the House continue to express.

We've had 10 really good years and, yes, we've had just unprecedented revenues coming from the federal government, and it was an opportunity for the province, for the government—the NDP to put some of these monies aside to save them for what we call the rainy days, and yet though, what have they done over this period of time over the last 10 years? They have run up the debt of the province. They have gone and they have spent more money, and this is something that the province of Manitoba, the constituents that we have, our children will have to pay back and it's paying back with interest. And the amount of interest that is being paid by this government to those who are lending the money or loaning the money to the province is certainly high, and there's a lot of things that we could do with that money, and I believe it's in the vicinity of \$810 million every year that we spend on interest payments alone. So these are huge numbers, and, Mr. Speaker, I think it's imperative that we, in opposition here, continue to draw the attention to the government of the day of the way they are spending the dollars.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to also be more specific and refer to the issues that we have within the region and the riding that I represent, the constituency of Pembina, which, of course, will now be changed and is changed now to the constituency of Morden-Winkler. It's a smaller constituency, but, again, it's because of the growth that we have seen in the province, and I know that it is the requirement that every 10 years we have a redistribution of

constituencies. So, consequently, that's how we have arrived at the smaller size, and I believe it is the smallest geographical constituency in rural Manitoba.

But, Mr. Speaker, that brings me to the issues that I want to talk about just briefly, and that is the infrastructure deficit that we are experiencing within our area. Yes, we've had unprecedented growth, and I know that the government of the day has applauded that. In fact, they referred back to it many a time. We see the industries continue to work, although some are struggling with the economic times, but by and large they have made adjustments. They are continuing to move ahead. They're continuing to hire people, and so I want to applaud the businesses that have kept the community going and have allowed this unprecedented growth to take place. They've done a great job of working in this economic climate, and yet, though, as a province with the unprecedented revenues that they have had, they have done just the opposite. They have not been spending money with priorities in mind of the growth areas within this province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight just three areas again. I've done this before, but I believe that it needs to be done time and time again because obviously the government of the day is not listening. Either that or they're just not paying attention to the issues that are out there.

* (16:10)

I do, on the other hand, want to just make a comment. I'm gonna start with education. I see that our Education Minister is here, but I do want to congratulate the government for looking at the growth that we have in our area and, in fact, promising some new facilities for the high school and also for the middle school. I talked to the superintendent at length this morning and while it is taking longer than what had originally been anticipated, and again, longer than what the press releases said in spring when they talked about capital budgets for Garden Valley School Division and for southern Manitoba, they are working and they are working hard to try and stay within the time frame that was given.

And it is difficult and I'll just refer to one area of challenge that we had—and again, that has been brought out by the superintendent. The students who were in the hallways are now finally in a classroom

setting, and that was the old division office that was renovated and we're now able to use as a classroom space. Now, it did take longer than had been expected, as I said, but I think the problems have been overcome and, consequently, these students now are not in the hallway any more and are able to be in a classroom setting where they should be.

But I also want to thank the staff, Gerald Farthing and his staff, for the work that they continue to do, the Public Schools Finance Board. I think that they are working closely with the Garden Valley School Division Board in trying to look at the needs within the community, and yet, though, I would just suggest to the minister that with the growth that we have experienced and with the growth that is being anticipated and I will refer to, and I've done this before, but Boundary Trails Health Centre that we have within our region, the wonderful health facility, they're right on target for this year of having 1,000 births take place. Now, if we have only 500 of those, only half, stay within the area, it still is going to present a problem four or five years down the road when these young children will be entering the school system, and so we can't sit back and just look at it and say, well, okay, we have promised some schools and we're going to be building these.

We need to look ahead because the 40-plus huts that we have today will still be in use at that time, and it was the intention that we were going to try and diminish those numbers so again, as I say, I want to thank the Public Schools Finance Board, Gerald Farthing and his staff, for the work that they continue to do, but we can't relax. We've got to continue to move ahead.

The other area that I need to mention and I think it will not be a surprise to anyone here, and that's the need for a new personal care home within our region as well. I've read a petition in this House here for every day last session and every day this session. That's why I say it's no surprise to anyone, the needs that we have, and of course, this was complicated by the fact that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) gave a directive that the 40 or so beds that were being utilized and taken in the Boundary Trails Health Centre for personal care reasons, that those beds should be emptied, and I agree with that. I think that we need to use our health facilities in a better way. The cost per day there is almost twice that of what it is in a personal care home.

So this is something that we continue to need to strive to do, but the underlying problem is that these

people who need to go to a personal care home have no personal care home to go to.

And so then I just fast forward and I think of all of us here and we're all aging at the same rate—some of us just started sooner than others—so, some day, more than likely, we will be needing personal care facilities ourselves, and I would hope that we would be forward thinking. We would be forward thinking in trying to look at and provide spaces that are needed so desperately within this province.

The, I believe it is the provincial auditor, the Auditor General, that came out with the number of 1,135 beds—I think was the number that was given—of beds that we need for personal care reasons, and so I have been lobbying time and time again for a new personal care home at Tabor and I know that I asked a question just the other day specifically to Tabor Home, and the minister was, I guess—I guess she was trying to indicate that it was because I happened to be gone during the time that she made the announcement. I'm not sure whether this was now the reason that she couldn't come out and announce the Tabor Home, but anyway, the point being is that she just announced another study. And I've said this time and time again: We have been studied to death. We need to move on and we need to get that personal care facility. We need to get the shovels in the ground. We need to be able to give the seniors, the people who have built this province, who have lived in the community all their lives, we need to be able to treat them in a fashion and in a manner that is respectable. And not in their last days, move them to a facility that's probably an hour and a half or two hours away so their family members and the people that they have known all their lives can't come and visit them. It's not acceptable. And so we need to be forward thinking, we need to move ahead and have the facilities ready so that the personal care—those people who need the home have a place to move to.

The other area that I want to touch on just briefly was, again, specific to infrastructure, and I know that the City of Winkler, the mayor, his council and I have been lobbying for, for years, is to get a provincial road, which is Highway No. 32, four-laned. This is a—the highway that goes through the easterly part of the city of Winkler, and there again it reminds me also of the studies that are done, but I know that the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) is saying they continue to study this.

They always say they're getting closer, and I would say that's true. You know, spring is coming

closer, too. Every day we get closer and, eventually, I know that it will be built, but we need to have it done now because of the growth that's out there, and to add to the growth that we have within our region.

The Highway 32 will be extending past the new high school that's gonna be built, and so the traffic will increase, there's no doubt about it, and we need to accommodate that increase in traffic, but as of yet, as I say, the studies are being done. They're doing more and more studies all the time. We've done these for the last many years. And when we were in government—and this was back in '99—we had indicated very clearly that that highway was on the priority list.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've addressed these three areas of concern, as I've done previously, the whole area of education, that we need to move ahead, we need to be able to get these facilities in place. Personal care homes, we need to be there for those people who need them. We need to be able to accommodate their needs and, of course, the infrastructure regarding and specific to Highway 32. There are other highways and provincial roads I could talk about, but I won't—I won't do that today because I think we need to be specific, and it's called priorities. It's called priorities.

And that's the other thing that we have been encouraging this government, that with the amount of money that they have, the money that they continue to get in, that they do priority spending. I know every time we get up and we ask for some dollars to be spent, they just say, well, all you want dollars spent. Well, obviously, we're talking about priority dollars, priority spending, and I would encourage the government to look seriously at the area that I represent because of the growth that we had there. As I've indicated before, it's the fastest-growing region in rural Manitoba, and I would ask that the—that the people with—and under this dome here and in the city, the bureaucrats, that they look beyond the Perimeter.

Now, it's not only that we've got the growth in the area of population, but we've also got business growth, tax growth. The revenues are coming back to the province and, again, the community does not mind sharing the dollars that they have with the province. All they are asking is that they get their fair share.

And with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I wanna thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak to the Throne Speech.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and a great joy for me to speak today, to add to the ongoing debate on the government's Throne Speech introduced last November 30th.

But first, allow me to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your able and fair leadership. I also wish to thank our dutiful Chamber officials, as well as our young pages for their—for the work they do here. Likewise, I would also like to thank my colleagues on this side of the House and across the way for their enthusiasm and dedication—for the enthusiasm and dedication they bring to their daily work in the province. And lastly, I would like to thank the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for his integrity and strong leadership, for his guiding role in the shaping of policies that invest in the health care, training and job creation, education, enhanced public safety, support and full appreciation for the arts, cultural and multicultural communities and many more, all redounding to the well-being of all Manitobans.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was honoured to be present at a citizenship ceremony where 30 new Canadians representing 30 countries were sworn in. Since January 1st, 2009, there have been 4,777 new Canadians who have taken their oath of citizenship in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the initiatives this government has made to attract and promote immigration to Manitoba which serves the needs of the province by adding to the economic growth and development of the province, adding to the social and cultural fabric of our province, and filling in the needs of servicing our province's labour sectors. By now we are familiar with the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, the best program so far in all of Canada.

Through this program my younger sister, a nurse with 18 years of experience, along with her husband and four children, moved to Vita, Manitoba, two years ago where she is hard at work being one of only four nurses who take rotating shifts in order to serve the Vita district health centre, which in turn additionally serves the communities of Piney, Sprague, Stuartburn, and Roseau River.

Our government will continue with the ambitious plan to increase international immigration every year until we reach the objective of 20,000

persons a year by 2016. New resources are being put in place to ensure that provincial nominee applicants will be processed in less than six months.

Other innovations this year will include new tools to assist provincial nominees and other immigrants to begin their settlement planning prior to arriving in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, new immigrants to our province usually make the difficult transition of uprooting their lives for better opportunities in Manitoba because they are faced with even more difficult challenges in the countries of their origin. Some immigrants coming to Manitoba are leaving behind dire circumstances, anything from rampant unemployment, servile working conditions and little pay, to facing gross human rights violations perpetrated by their own government leaders.

Mr. Speaker, today, December 10th, is International Human Rights Day, a day in which we commemorate the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by United Nations. Over the years a whole network of human rights mechanisms and institutions have been put in place to ensure the primacy of human rights and to confront human rights violations whenever they occur in the world. And, as Manitobans, it is important to know that we too make a difference through the Canadian national Museum for Human Rights of which our government has given substantial support.

Mr. Speaker, in this morning's editorial page the *Winnipeg Free Press* printed an article about political violence, a massacre in southern Philippines where over 57 people were ambushed and killed in an hour. Among those killed were the provincial governor candidate, his wife, sister, relatives and friends. Added to the list of massacred people were 30 journalists and broadcasters and two human rights lawyers.

Mr. Speaker, to be a human rights lawyer in the Philippines is akin to taking a vow of poverty. The sitting provincial governor and his son, the very people who should be supporting citizens and upholding justice, are instead among those held in the case. This kind of atrocity will never happen in Canada as we are a country where the rule of law is upheld. There will never be a situation such as what is happening in the Philippines right now, that over a thousand victims of extrajudicial killings or in forced disappearances of over 200 people since 2001 as has

happened, as what has been reported by human rights organizations there.

Here in Manitoba, even though as legislators we are far from perfect, and even though we also face economic and social challenges here, many people from all over the world who have immigrated here are attracted to the steady, democratic and just way of life that we are continually trying to build for all Manitobans. We, in this government, are continually endeavouring to do our best to work with others to ensure that this province is a place where people can reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to these—to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the November 30th Throne Speech that we are debating today features policies that will invest in the health, safety, well-being and economic development for all Manitobans. Indeed, these policies are investment that will strengthen our communities by addressing their issues of health, safety and economic development. Over the past few days, my colleagues in government have clearly identified the framework which builds on the priorities of Manitoba families. The Throne Speech also outlined the commitments of this government to help Manitobans face challenging times that we find ourselves in.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to share with the constituents of Wellington, which I proudly represent in this House, several affordable—several news that will for sure make them joyful, such as several affordable and energy-efficient infill housing projects being built on William and Bannatyne avenues. Very close to Wellington constituency is another green and affordable housing project on Balmoral Street.

I would like to share with my constituents Manitoba's intention to work with other provinces in the upcoming year to sue tobacco companies for their impact on the health-care system. As well, our government is committed to establishing a new tax credit to help women pay for the costs of fertility treatment.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents would also be pleased to know that of the many initiatives to help families enhance their quality of life include: promoting more active lifestyles by phasing in an adult fitness tax credit, modelled on the tax credit already provided for children; helping Manitobans enjoy their summers more by making capital improvements to provincial parks; implementing a consumer protection action plan to enhance

innovative measures already in place, such as restrictions on payday lenders; working with various organizations in the plan to help workers of an advanced age re-enter the work force; continuing consultations on the Province's disability strategy; and continuing investments in the Province's ALL Aboard poverty reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents will be pleased to know that, in addition to this government's commitment on helping the Winnipeg police acquire a helicopter, the Throne Speech also introduced measures to help make the province safer by including new legislative tools to stop gangs, such as giving the Province a stronger role in denying or revoking licences of businesses that are a front for gangs; creating a list of known gangs to simplify court proceedings; and preventing the introduction of gang armoured vehicles in Manitoba.

* (16:30)

As well, there is commitment to hire additional gang prosecutors, providing new prevention tools to help parents discourage teens from joining gangs in the first place, increasing protection for victims of domestic violence, improving maintenance enforcement, expanding Tracia's Trust to help stop sexual exploitation of children, and continuing leadership to confront the tragedy of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Mr. Speaker, our government will also continue to work with local governments in Manitoba to improve transparency and service delivery and support community development efforts.

A new partnership with the City of Winnipeg will use tax increment financing to support the development of affordable housing in Winnipeg's downtown. We will work with municipalities to develop legislation to support the creation of granny suites. This year our government will introduce a new five-year plan that adds 1,500 units to address the shortage of social housing in Manitoba. The plan will also create more jobs in Manitoba.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on the education front, my constituents will be pleased to know that tuition fees for most college and university programs in Manitoba remain below 1999 levels, reflecting an ongoing commitment to accessibility. In the coming year, our government will take additional steps to address the financial pressures faced by students and their families. Many have told us that more up-front help is needed. So, beginning this year, students who

live and work in Manitoba will qualify for a portion of the innovative tuition fee income tax rebate while they are still in school. Investments in post-secondary education are supported by a commitment to primary education. Our government has made significant efforts to work with school divisions to increase funding to schools for the betterment of our children and as a down payment on our future prosperity. Total funding is up 37 percent since 1999 and the provincial share of school funding has reached 75.1 percent. Expenditure per pupil is the highest in Canada and our class size ratio is the third lowest.

Capital investment has been a major component of our school program. Our government has invested more than \$568 million to build and upgrade public schools this decade, an increase of \$303 million over the previous decade. In that time, we have built 17 new schools, 12 replacement schools and completed over 55 addition and renovation projects.

Earlier this year our government announced a record \$310-million investment in school capital over the next four years. The program has been accelerated to help address the financial downturn. New projects include three middle schools in southern Manitoba, in Steinbach, La Broquerie and Winkler that are now in the design stage. A major addition to Island Lakes school opened in September. The coming year will see completion of new École Aurèle-Lemoine in St. Laurent and major renovations to Transcona Collegiate and Sargent Park schools.

This year funding will include \$41-million investments for structural upgrades to 82 schools. This upgrade includes funding for barrier-free upgrades to 15 Manitoba schools so that they can fully accommodate students with disabilities.

These projects alone will create 787 person years of employment.

As funding has increased in recent years, school divisions have been asked to work with the Province to keep education taxes from rising. We will ask the co-operation of divisions again this year to ensure that expenditures are managed carefully and property taxes remain affordable.

My constituents, and a good number of them are in their senior years, will be glad to know that this government will continue its efforts to ensure that

Manitoba develops into the most age-friendly province in Canada by taking into account the needs of seniors. We will work with organizations such as Age and Opportunity Manitoba and Chambers of Commerce to help make more employers aware of the talents and experience of older seniors.

A diverse community such as Wellington, with young families among my constituents, will be glad to know that in the Throne Speech are references to child care. Other initiatives will be undertaken to support recreation and lifestyle options for Manitoba families. Early years education has been identified by experts as one of the most effective ways to prevent gang involvement in later years. To help break the cycle of both crime and poverty, a model early childhood development project will be included in the newly renovated Lord Selkirk Park housing development. The centre will provide an enriched child development program with a proven track record in improving the futures of the children who attend it.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, last summer, I had the privilege of attending several conferences in the U.S., in the United States, as well as here in Canada, and I was so heartened to hear from several delegates when they found out that I am from Manitoba. They congratulated me for being a resident of a province where arts and culture are thriving, and I was told, and I was surprised, gladly surprised, that they know, although Manitoba is not so well known in other parts of the world, in U.S. and Canada, Manitoba is known to be the centre where visual arts, dance, theatre, films, and music are very much alive.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to note that next year, 2010, will be homecoming year in Manitoba. Special events will be taking place in communities across our province to welcome former residents and visitors, and I encourage my colleagues from the House to share the—to share the province, our province, to their friends, relatives, who are—who used to be residents of Manitoba, to come and visit Manitoba next year. There will be a year-long series of festivals happening in Winnipeg and in many parts of the province, which will be a sure delight for everyone to see.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): The honourable member for Morris.

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Point of order.

On House business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): On House business.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, there's been discussions, and I think, if you canvass the House, you would see that there is agreement to waive the time frame for the filing and House leader selection of private members' resolutions set out in rule 31(2) and 31(3) for this session so that these actions take place at a later time as agreed to by the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): [*inaudible*] the House to see if there is agreement to waive the time frame for the filing of House leader selection of private members' resolutions set out in rule 31(2) and 31(3) for this session so that these actions take place at a later time as agreed to by the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader.

Is it agreed? [*Agreed*]

* * *

* (16:40)

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to say a few words in regard to this Throne Speech that we've just heard, but before I get to that, I first want to congratulate our new Lieutenant-Government-Governor-Mr. Lee, on his appointment, and look forward to having him preside in that role for several years. I think that he brings much class to the position, and we certainly look forward to that. Also, before I start, I would also like to thank Mr. Speaker, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank him for his able presiding over the proceedings of the House, and also want to congratulate the—and thank the table officers and all the people make the Chamber operate, including our newest young pages who—I hope that this will be a time of learning for you, and you will take away from this time here with you some good and positive memories and not just some memories of some of the antics that go on in the House.

An Honourable Member: What about your colleagues? What about your colleagues?

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, I certainly want to congratulate all of my colleagues on this side of the House too, but—well, I want to congratulate—I mean, fair is fair, and I think we're all honourable members in the Chamber. So I want to congratulate the new Premier (Mr. Selinger) and congratulate the new Cabinet ministers on their new, on their new postings. I think that's fair.

You know, I think that we all sit in this Chamber, and whenever I'm in this Chamber, I marvel at this Chamber. We all sit in this Chamber because we have business to do in this province; and, whether that's in opposition or whether that's in government, we all have a role to play here. Now I know that the people on that side of the House are in government now and on this side of the House we're in opposition now, but all of us know that that doesn't stay that way forever. And I know that some of the people on the opposite side, on the government side, the ones that have been in opposition and are now in government, they understand this a lot better than the people that have never been in opposition.

But the tide will turn as it always does. There will be a day when we will be sitting on opposite sides, so I want everybody to remember that. We have a role to play. Right now this is our role, but it's not always going to be this way, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I do also want to, just before we go on, I want to thank all of the staff that have helped us, and I especially want to thank my constituency assistant, Wendy Capri, who has done just an outstanding job in the constituency. And, in fact, I get e-mails about her, calling her an angel, and she truly is a very hardworking individual. She listens to anybody that calls our office about anything, tries very hard to accommodate, and she's just been a wonderful assistant to have.

An Honourable Member: She is. A good point.

Mrs. Taillieu: Yeah. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our role, of course, in opposition is, you know, we have to look at legislation, and we have to look at debating the Throne Speech. The government brings forward a Throne Speech with their ideas about what should be the way the province is run, and our role is to present an alternate view of that and suggest better or different ways to do things in the province. And, when we do that, I mean, we do bring forward ideas and often those ideas are taken up by the opposition—by the other side of the House, but they adopt them

as their own ideas. So they're kind of stealing some of our ideas.

But what I found in this Throne Speech—but before I just—I just want to say something, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. On the day of the Throne Speech, I was walking down the hall, and a member from the government side was walking down the hall towards me. I'm not going to name that person but that person was walking towards me and said, well, what did you think of the Throne Speech? And before I could say anything, he said to me, pretty thin gruel, wasn't it? That's a member from the government side telling me that the Throne Speech, he thought, was pretty thin gruel.

And I really had to agree with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that this Throne Speech lacked vision. It is a very complacent Throne Speech, one that sets the bar very low. We saw some reannouncements—and I think this is typical of the NDP Throne Speeches—reannouncements and just a sense of mediocrity, and still this dependency on the handout from Ottawa. No vision to make Manitoba move forward and be a have province.

Just, when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) comes out and says, flat is the new up, I'm scratching my head at that. Flat is the new up. They have some terrible spinners on that side of the House. It just reminds me of if you can't be good at something, you—I'll—*[interjection]*—you can't be good at something—I'll give you an analogy which makes—may—better to understand this. When my brother was a teenager and had a garage band, he played very loud and he'd always say to me, well, you know, if you can't be really good, you just be loud. And that's what I hear from that side of the House. When they can't be very good, they just be loud, Mr. Speaker.

But, anyway, I do think that the Throne Speech is very, very lacking and that's why we can't support it. It's not just about what's in it. It's about what isn't in it. There's so many things lacking in the Throne Speech, and, very interestingly, I have to say, I was coming back to the Legislature this afternoon from Ste. Agathe where there was a sod-turning ceremony, and I hear on CJOB the announcer, the commentator, saying the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made a bizarre comment today in his state-of-the-union address.

So I turned the volume up because I wanted to hear what that was, and, apparently, the Premier has said something to Mr. Brennan about smiling even though there was whistles blowing, and I was in

shock to think that the Premier was making such a light statement about a very serious issue going on in Manitoba Hydro where a consultant who has worked, and was hired and worked for that company for several years had brought forward a report and brought out some serious concerns with the future of Manitoba Hydro. Then she's fired, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. And she's—there's a smear campaign going on against her, and that is just a terrible thing, and yet the Premier goes right out and makes light of what's going on, and I think that that is just not very premier-like, if I could put it that way.

We have a lot of issues when we talk about Manitoba Hydro. Wasteful spending on the west-side line, that is adding an enormous amount of debt to this province that does not have to happen. We know that you can run a hydro line through the boreal forest as you are doing with the road and still have a UNESCO world site designation. So it defies logic as to why we need to go that extended route which costs us more money. There's line loss, adds to greenhouse gas emissions and all of that, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

* (16:50)

We have the Elections Manitoba issue, and, you know, when the Premier and several other of the Cabinet ministers file false elections return to Elections Manitoba, which, when discovered, even though it wasn't made public, they are forced to pay back \$76,000, but that isn't made public. But the Minister of Finance then, who is now the Premier (Mr. Selinger), he knew about it, because he asked for a letter to exonerate himself. But did he do anything to repay Manitobans that \$76,000? No, he didn't, and we need to get to the bottom of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I also didn't see anything in the Throne Speech, so we're wondering about whether the NDP is planning to take the vote tax from Manitoba voters. They haven't said whether they are or they aren't, but we presume that that they are. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened here is the NDP are proposing to tax every single person that votes for them. They're going to charge them \$1.25 for that vote. So, at over four years, it's going to cost Manitobans five bucks to vote for the NDP. So I hope that they take this into the next election 'cause I'd really like to go to the door and say a vote for the NDP's going to cost you five bucks, but a vote for the Tories is free.

But I do want to say that we—there is a few things that we could support—the police helicopter, for example, which was originally proposed by our member. And we also support the fertility tax credit. Maybe it should go a little further and include adoptions, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I'm going to talk about the harmonized sales tax. I find this one very interesting because, when this was first talked about, Premier Selinger—or, I'm sorry, I withdraw that, the Minister of Finance who is now the Premier suggested that the—the deal wasn't sweet enough, but he—he'd have to look at it because if he didn't go that way, Manitobans would be left out. But the deal wasn't sweet enough.

Interestingly, in the leadership race, the member from Minto, who was a candidate until he decided to withdraw, he said, well, maybe not now, but maybe we'd look at it after the election. That's very interesting—so that's very telling. It's very telling about what the NDP will—so we kind of know what the real agenda will be. There's a real agenda here, with we don't want to go into an election, advertising that we wanted an HST, but we're going to do it after the election. But, Mr. Speaker, let it be very clear that we on this side of the House are opposed to the HST. What their agenda is not now but later; our agenda is not now, not ever. There are other ways—there are other ways to address tax relief.

One of those is the payroll tax, the tax on jobs. Any time a company wants to expand, they have to pay more money to the government, and it's just a tax on jobs that those companies could be using to grow their businesses, which adds to the tax base and which adds to jobs and which adds to the economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Another way is to raise the personal exemptions so that people have more money in their pockets.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just say that there are several reasons why we cannot support this Throne Speech. It's boring. There's no vision in it, but they're content with that. Manitoba is the murder capital of Canada, but they're content with that. Manitoba is the child poverty capital of Canada, but they are content with that. The NDP cries, tighten your belts everyone, and what do they do? They add Cabinet ministers to their Cabinet. They expand their Cabinet. They ask Manitobans to tighten your belts, but they add more Cabinet ministers and more bureaucracy. They ask Manitobans to be content with that. They raid the rainy day fund because of years of mismanagement—10 good years where you

could have saved money, saved money when the sun is shining and then you wouldn't have to raid when it's raining. You could have saved it up, but no, you kept spending it and raiding it the whole time.

And they ask us to be content with that. They have a total lack of vision for agriculture—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Order, please.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): Member for Inkster, is it a point of order?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Acting Speaker, I do rise on a point of order, and I guess what I'm looking for is, given the very nature of the day and the way in which our sessional rules indicate that the House would, in fact, be adjourning, and in previous years of experience that I have had, I have not seen a Throne Speech go by without having some sort of a, of a vote of confidence from the government.

In recognizing that in the next few minutes we will be getting to hit 5 o'clock and there would appear to be no agreement, which we find is most unfortunate in order to be able to accommodate the Throne Speech, the—what I'm asking for, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is for you to provide us direction as to what is going to be taking place the moment that 5 o'clock comes by, and I think that all of us would benefit by that advice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Saran): According to the rule, House will adjourn at 5 o'clock until the call of the Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, in terms of, then, process, the government would then have to call an emergency session in order for us to come back in order to conclude the debate, or how does that work?

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

On a point of order raised by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), the point of order was, at 5 p.m., when this House adjourns, what is the procedure for continuing with the Throne Speech.

Information for the House is that the government has the right and authority to recall the House for any

extraordinary business of the House, and—
[interjection]—and—pardon me?

An Honourable Member: It's not extraordinary.

Mr. Speaker: Well, that's, that's—everyone has their own opinion, but I'm dealing on a ruling right now. I'm—order, please. I'm dealing on a ruling right now.

And, for your information, I have been given a letter from the honourable First Minister, and I delivered a copy, or had a copy delivered to the House leaders, and when you go back to your caucuses there'll be letters for you there, and it will indicate to you that the House will be recalled tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

So I hope that answers your question. Okay.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The hour being—order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

The hour—the hour being past 5 p.m., before I adjourn the House, I just want to inform the House that when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) will have 10 minutes remaining.

And now, the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned, and I've already received the letter, so I inform the House, until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 10, 2009

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