

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

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Coverage of Insulin Pumps

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Insulin pumps cost over \$6,500.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Submitted on behalf of Terry Hartle, Andy Krul, Reuben Nero, Ian Soroka and many, many others.

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

Amending of The Architects Act

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Doug Small, Greg Lavallee, Chunhe Liu and many, many, many others.

Provincial Road 340

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

Signed by Sandra Blackmore, Muffty Keith, Robert Alolega and many, many others.

* (13:35)

Crocus Investment Fund

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:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Patricia Powell, D. Trochim and Janet Nikke and many, many others.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Official Time Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Trade): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that Bill 8, The Official Time Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides, starting in 2007 daylight savings time will run from the second Sunday in March to the first Sunday in November, and I can inform the House this act does not have a sunset clause.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Braydon Cullen, the son of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), Stephanie Remple of Westgate Collegiate, the guest of the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), and Cindy

Lamoureux, the daughter of the honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Also in the Speaker's Gallery is Marisa Thompson, Shanelle Grenier and Carleigh Wegner, the daughters of Michelle Thompson of the Clerk's Office, Monique Grenier of the Committees' Branch, and Judy Wegner of Members' Services, and Christopher Calesso, the son of Gina Calesso of the Members' Services.

Also visiting with us today in the public gallery are Kierin Kocourek, Yasmin Dunkley and Sumaya Ibrahim of Windsor School. These students are the guests of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Allan).

Also seated in the public gallery are Amber Teres and Kathleen Tyndall of Transcona Collegiate Institute. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

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

*(13:40)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Transportation Infrastructure Renewal Government's Priority

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are fed up with the potholes and the run down infrastructure in our province. That is a direct result of neglect by this Doer government. That neglect was made apparent again last week under this Doer government's Throne Speech because they failed to make any mention of transportation or infrastructure a priority.

After Canada's premiers had unanimously agreed to make this a top priority, Mr. Speaker, why, after that agreement, has Manitoba now started to drift away from this commitment made by this very Premier just a few months ago?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I believe the amount of money in the infrastructure budget is up \$20 million over the last couple of years from where we were. You would probably note that the twinning of the northeast Perimeter Highway is proceeding and is on schedule. You will probably note that, after years of neglect, the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway to the Saskatchewan border is on schedule. You will note that, after 11 years of Tory neglect, the funds are in place for building the Kenaston underpass. You will note that, if you drive

north of the city of Winnipeg and I know for many of you that is a difficult concept, if you drive north of the city of Winnipeg you will find the new safer intersections on Highway 9 heading up towards Selkirk and into the Interlake. We could go on and on and on, but you will note again the new paving between Neepawa and Minnedosa on Highway 16.

Mr. Murray: While this Premier was quick to stand on the national stage in August, Mr. Speaker, and claim that transportation and infrastructure was a top priority, he completely ignored that situation now that he is back at home. We hear all of these announcements, but he claimed and all the premiers agreed unanimously that it would be a top priority.

Now consider that Manitoba is facing a \$7 billion infrastructure deficit including \$3.4 billion in highways. Why is it that the Doer government is dropping the ball on an area that Canada's premiers unanimously agreed was a top priority? Why is he dropping the ball, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, Mondays and Wednesdays are spend days and Tuesdays and Thursdays are spending-reduction days perhaps. No coherence from the members opposite—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

*(13:45)

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you will note that one of the fundamental principles in the communiqué agreed to by all First Ministers, save the federal First Minister, is a commitment to be accountable to invest every cent in gasoline tax into infrastructure, transit and transportation, both in terms of the capital construction and the maintenance of those programs. We were the first province in Canada to release under the supervision of the Auditor General of the Province of Manitoba the gas tax accountability. We wanted to demonstrate that the second-lowest gas tax in Canada is being invested back in the users. The diesel is also the second lowest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, further, the provinces have recommended to the national government that both in form of the municipal tax transfer, which is in negotiations and hopefully completed to the cities and municipalities, and the other gas tax that is not allocated and going to Ottawa be reinvested in highways, roads, transportation such as the Port of Churchill, or transportation not only to the Port of

Vancouver but for inland ports in places like Winnipeg to stop the containment.

We think inland ports, for example, are a wonderful idea because of the congestion on the West Coast. It is cheaper for a transportation system and safer to have some of our transportation eggs in an inland port basket for the effectiveness of movement of goods and services here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. This is a belief we have that every cent in gasoline tax, federally and provincially, should all go back into the transportation infrastructure here in Canada.

2020 – Manitoba's Transport Vision Implementation

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting speech, but it is interesting that the Premier did not mention that Manitoba is, as I understand it, the only province in Canada that does not have a gas-sharing arrangement between the federal government and the Province and the City. Why is this Premier not able to do that?

The other thing that is interesting that we hear from this Premier is that they talk about the fact that they brought in gas tax accountability. It is unusual that a province and a government have to regulate themselves to spend. Rather than just doing the right thing, they have to make it legislation. I say shame on them for not just doing the right thing. Mr. Speaker, we know that improving transportation and infrastructure is about improving the economy. It is about reducing deaths and accidents. It is about creating a cleaner environment.

Mr. Speaker the Doer government recently received recommendations of the 2020 Transport Vision report this July. In that Web site it says, and I quote, "a major theme of the report drawn from the public consultation process includes the need for increased funding to maintain and expand existing infrastructure." That is what it says in that report. What action will this Premier take to start implementing that report?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the gas tax agreement between the federal government and municipalities is in very close negotiations to be completed. I would point out—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: I would point out that, in areas of allocation of gas tax or other revenue to municipalities here in Manitoba, the new Building Manitoba Fund allocated a 15 percent increase to transit funding which in the budget is equivalent to 2 cents a litre on fuel tax and 2 cents and 1 cent on fuel and on gasoline tax. The municipal tax transfer in Manitoba, which was just evaluated by Stats Canada to be the second most generous on a per capita basis in the country, is equivalent of 4.5 cents a litre on fuel tax sharing.

Mr. Speaker, we have recommendations to build and expand the floodway. We have recommendations to build and expand universities. We have recommendations to build and expand health care. For example, we announced expansion to hip and knees. Again today we have recommendations—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Yes, and we will proceed with the plan that is outlined subject to balanced budget legislation and budgets that will be brought in every session of the Legislature.

Transportation Infrastructure Renewal Government's Priority

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on the Transportation and Government Services Web site, the minister's message states, and I quote, "As you view these online pages, you will understand why I believe this department is truly at the heart of government." If transportation and infrastructure are truly at the heart of government, why was there only one word in last week's Throne Speech where infrastructure was mentioned?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I thank the member for the question. I would just ask him one day to take a ride in his constituency, and he would notice a new highway running right by his backyard to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government takes highways, highway safety and highway infrastructure very, very seriously. In fact, we know that highways and transportation is an economic generator and very important to our economy. We meet on an ongoing basis with the Heavy Construction Association, the transportation providers of the province. They know and they tell us all the time that we made a great difference compared to the dark days of the 1990s.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, this minister is showing his utter incompetence. The roads are crumbling around Manitoba. All he has to do is drive out of the city and down the streets of this city as well. People are breaking their axles on the highways. Potholes are expanding faster than the provincial debt.

If the 2020 report was so important to this minister and to this government, why was there no reference made to that report in last week's Throne Speech?

Mr. Lemieux: The 2020 vision consultation process was very, very important to us. We listened to the public. We consulted many, many communities. I might mention we consulted communities in northern Manitoba. Members opposite do not seem to know where that is. Twenty-five percent of our budget now is dedicated to northern Manitoba. When they were the government you were lucky if they spent 4 percent of their budget in northern Manitoba. Maybe they should take a look at a transportation map, a highway map and see where northern Manitoba is.

* (13:50)

Mr. Maguire: After nearly three years and half a million dollars later before he came up with the 2020 vision, I want to remind the minister that there is a section on commitment and accountability in that report. His own steering committee stated that transportation must be a higher public priority in Manitoba. This minister is clearly not listening to the advice of his own committee. Transportation needs to be a higher priority and yet this government refuses to address the crumbling infrastructure in this province.

When will this minister realize the importance of our roads and the meaningful commitment to their improvement for the safety of Manitobans?

Mr. Lemieux: I am very pleased to see that the members opposite are showing some interest in transportation since they ran down not only hospitals and schools in the 1990s, they also let bridges and roads fall apart and run down in the 1990s.

I would like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, with the Gas Accountability bill, we put every cent of motive fuel tax into transportation. We spend 38 percent more, actually, on transportation than we collect in motive fuel tax. In a perfect world, yes, there would not be any potholes or bridges needing to be

replaced. We are working very, very diligently in improving our transportation system. We will continue to work with the public and the stakeholder to ensure that we improve our highways in the future.

Natural Gas Rate-Shock Protection

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I would just like to indicate before my question that I will join hands with the Premier (Mr. Doer) if he would announce the extension of the Chief Peguis Trail in northeast Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, on the same day the government delivered the Throne Speech, the Public Utilities Board approved natural gas rate increases of 6.1 percent to 18 percent. The Minister responsible for Hydro offered rate shock protection to residents but failed to offer the same protection to businesses in Manitoba.

My question for the Minister responsible for Hydro is will he provide the same protection from rate shock for businesses in Manitoba, or is it his plan to drive business right out of the province?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I find it curious that a party that wanted to privatize Hydro and wanted to go to market rates for electricity now, when the market price for electricity goes up, says the government should subsidize for those prices. I find it very curious and strange that the members opposite could have exactly conflicting positions in regard to that. Very curious that members all of a sudden discovered the advantage of perhaps having a Crown corporation like Manitoba Hydro keeping hydro rates the lowest in North America, in fact, the lowest in the world. They wanted to privatize it, Mr. Speaker, and have the going world rates—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, but I believe the Minister responsible for Hydro was losing it because he obviously did not hear the question. Either he did not hear it or he chose not to answer it.

My question was very specific, Mr. Speaker. The private sector and business growth in Manitoba have been stagnant since the NDP party came into

government. The government has created very much an anti-business climate, pro-union, anti-business climate in this province.

Will the Minister responsible for Hydro, a very simple question: Will he offer the same rate-shock protection to businesses in Manitoba, businesses, Mr. Speaker, that are at the backbone of Manitoba's economy?

Mr. Chomiak: I will outline the facts to the member. Manitoba Hydro applied for the primary gas rate increase of 10 percent prior to the PUB decision, and they applied for an overall increase of 10 percent which would have amounted to a rate increase about 6.3 percent on residential and somewhere in the range of 9 percent to 10 percent on commercial. The PUB, an independent body that used to be supported as an independent body by members opposite, recommended, in fact instructed, that an increase be given of 6.3 percent on residential and small commercial, Mr. Speaker, an increase in the range of 12 percent to 18 percent be given to protect from a 44—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, now I have heard everything. When the minister for Hydro stands up and says that the Public Utilities Board has not been manipulated by his department, that it is not run by the socialists and the union friends of this government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would remind all honourable members that the clock is ticking. We are trying to get as many questions and answers in as possible. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

* (13:55)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, this government has failed to protect businesses from rate shock, Mr. Speaker. I also understand that non-profit organizations, places like Winnipeg Harvest, women's shelters, child care centres and others who deal with some of the most vulnerable in our society will not be protected from rate shock.

Can the minister confirm that or can he stand up today and say that all non-profit organizations that deliver services to some of the most disadvantaged in our community will be protected with the same rate shock protection as residential customers?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that the member totally contradicted herself in her third question from her second question, notwithstanding the fact that socialists are hiding in every single desk all around the province, we have committed to protect Manitobans from rate shock of 44 percent.

In Saskatchewan, they have applied for over 20 percent. It is in double digits across the country. Two years ago when the PUB recommended that hydro rates go down for corporations, members opposite did not say boo. They thought it was great. We honoured it. The PUB has made an order. We have indicated we will protect Manitobans from rate shock. That is what Manitobans want us to do. Members opposite are not only being contradictory, but if they were intellectually—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Livestock Industry Slaughter Capacity

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Agriculture issued a press release on biodiesel. Part of the government's action plan calls for the studying of using animal waste from slaughter facilities for biodiesel. I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Where are these animals going to be slaughtered?

The BSE crisis started two and half years ago. We are still waiting for construction to begin on a Rancher's Choice plant in Dauphin. How can farmers believe anything this government has to say when they have received nothing but broken promises from this government?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to economic development in rural Manitoba. We are committed to seeing the biodiesel industry grow in this country, in this province, because we believe that this is an opportunity for farmers. This is an opportunity for economic growth.

I cannot believe that the members opposite are speaking against economic development in rural Manitoba and speaking out against the biodiesel industry. It is just unbelievable. It is just unbelievable that, on one hand they say that they represent rural people, and, on the other hand when rural people have embraced the idea of biodiesel development in rural Manitoba the member opposite

speaks out against it. I am ashamed of him, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this minister is long in announcement and press releases, but short in action and follow-through. In May of this year, the minister announced a \$3-million plan designed to increase slaughter capacity in Manitoba. Where are these processing plants? The farming community has heard nothing but hollow words and many promises.

Why does this government refuse to move ahead aggressively in establishing processing facilities in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Wowchuk: I remember the day when a representative of the party opposite said that we did not need any more slaughter capacity in this province and that what we had was adequate. Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the industry, we have been working with the group at Rancher's Choice and we are working to see slaughter capacity increased in this province. It will increase because there is a commitment from producers, the commitment from this government that the slaughter capacity will increase and I ask the member to stay tuned. I ask him also to show his support for Rancher's Choice rather than always being so critical and saying that it will not happen.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this government has had a golden opportunity to provide a leadership role in establishing processing plants in Manitoba. They have done nothing but issue press releases. Press releases do not process cattle. Three new plants are being built in Alberta while one is being built and another expanded in Saskatchewan, not to mention Ontario. Where is Manitoba? The Minister of Agriculture was still dithering on this issue.

When will the Minister of Agriculture wake up and see what is going on around her and take action and build processing facilities now, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Wowchuk: The members opposite have said and I could find articles where they have said that government should not be building slaughter capacity. The industry has told us, Mr. Speaker, that government should not be building slaughter capacity. That was very clear. In other provinces, government is not building slaughter capacity.

We have put in place programs, Mr. Speaker. We are working with the industry, and I would encourage the member opposite to call some of the

people who are involved with Rancher's Choice and find out what this government is doing because, indeed, our government is working with the group that is proposing the plant at Dauphin. Our government has made a commitment to infrastructure—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Substance Abuse and Addictions Government-funded Injection Kits

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, each and every day the drug problem in Manitoba worsens. Gangs continue to make huge profits off of destroying the lives of our young people. Yesterday the NDP government finally accepted the recommendation that our party put forward eight months ago on controlling—*[interjection]* We are glad they finally listened to us on this issue.

Today I asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) if he will accept another one of our recommendations and ensure that taxpayer dollars are no longer being used to hand out free drug kits for the use of cocaine and methamphetamine. Will he guarantee us this government will not sponsor injection sites in the province, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years it has become very clear to anyone who studies the issue that harm reduction is the most important thing we can do in public health issues such as the transmission of diseases from one person to another. Whether it is on the street or in an institution, harm reduction works. Abstinence does not work when you are dealing with a street population, and there are all kinds of evidence that harm reduction reduces the transmission of HIV, of hepatitis B and C and other sexually transmitted and transmissible diseases. Get with the program. All across North America harm reduction is where it is at.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, this minister does not realize we are one of only a couple of cities that allow this to go on with taxpayers' money. There is nothing, nothing, nothing safe about using crack cocaine or methamphetamine.

Mr. Speaker, a Freedom of Information request today revealed that 750 drug kits a month are going out to young people in this province to facilitate them using cocaine and methamphetamine. On the same day that the government was handing out press releases trying to say they are tough on drugs, they were handing out drug kits that were being used to

destroy the lives of young people in our province. Will the Minister of Justice today ensure that all the resources being used to fight drugs are being used in that way and not to feed the addictions for young people in the province?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the member is flatly wrong and should not be making such scurrilous accusations in a public forum where there are children in the gallery. There are no kits going out for any injection of crystal meth. Every Health minister across this country, whether they are Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, has taken the view unanimously that harm reduction is critical if we are to deal with sexually transmitted diseases and with other diseases that are spread through dirty needles or other public practices which endanger the lives of everybody.

So the harm reduction strategy is across North America, it is in North Dakota and it is across this country. He should read the literature and realize where modern states have gone, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, he knows that the crack pipes and the drug needles are being handed out and it is feeding the addiction of young people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, according to an internal Department of Justice presentation a 24-year-old drug dealer in Winnipeg sells 400 ounces, or 11.3 kilograms, of cocaine or meth in Winnipeg per week. That drug dealer clears \$768,000 each month. The Doer government subsidizes and supports his business by handing out the drug kits that are being used for his customers.

Will this Minister of Justice put an end to this practice, guarantee there will not be government-sanctioned injection sites and make sure that all the resources are used to help kids get off of drugs and not used to help kids get on drugs?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear for the member. We have put in place a methamphetamine strategy in concert with B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and ourselves. We took action early. We have been involved in education all the way along. We have put out information for young people which makes it clear the incredible danger associated with this disease. To suggest that this government or any government is actively promoting the use of injectable drugs is an absolutely scurrilous suggestion. Every Health minister in this country knows that harm reduction is where it is at. That is

why harm reduction policies across North America save our lives, reduce disease and save ultimately the taxpayers' money.

Queer Closet Government Funding

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I refer to page 138 of Volume 2 of the 2004-2005 Public Accounts wherein the Department of Industry provided what appears to be a loan or a grant or some sort of financing to a business called Queer Closet for \$10,076. Can the Minister of Industry explain the nature of that transaction?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to let all the members of the House know that we have a young investor, entrepreneur program which loans or gives a loan guarantee for young entrepreneurs who are starting up businesses. This program provides small loan guarantees from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to young entrepreneurs. The program has had a success rate almost of 80 percent which is about double what is normal in economics.

What we tried to do is we worked with young entrepreneurs. We do not censor which businesses are done. The banks, credit unions and financial institutions work with the young entrepreneur. The young entrepreneur sets up the business plan. We do not censor what goes on, what is approved. What we do is we work with young entrepreneurs to build their skills.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, this retail business, it is a retail business that sells and rents a variety of merchandise including adult toys and pornographic films. I ask the Minister of Industry what due diligence did he do before providing \$10,076 to this business. Was he aware that this business sells adult toys and rents pornographic films?

* (14:10)

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, as any business plan in any retailer that is conducting any business, we do not decide what business they go in or what business they do not go in. Each entrepreneur does the following; they set up a business plan, they often work with the Canada-Manitoba small business, they come up with a business plan and they present it to a financial institution. The financial institution loans the scoop money, and what we do is we work with them to develop the business. We are not going to stop a business whether it is in any legal activity. So

what we do whether it is a woman, whether it is a certain ethnic group, we are not going to censor what they do as far as a legal financial transaction. What we are going to do is work with the entrepreneurs to grow the economic pot. This is something that we are working to enhance businesses across the province.

Mr. Hawranik: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the next step for this minister is to provide a loan to the next crack dealer. This business sold and rented pornographic material such as adult toys and pornographic films, and in providing funds to this kind of business what message is this NDP government sending to Manitobans? What was the Minister of Industry thinking to provide money to such a business dealing in adult toys and pornographic films? How does this make Manitoba more competitive?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, as per normal, the member opposite is wrong, wrong, wrong. First, the government did not provide the loan, we provide a loan guarantee.

Second, the financial business plan is approved by the bank. The bank or the credit union or financial institution works with the client along with other supports. They decide the business. We do not decide the business. What we do is they work with legal businesses to develop. This program has over about an 80 percent success rate, 80 percent with young entrepreneurs who are starting businesses. We do not decide the business they start, and we are not going to censor what businesses that are legally conducted can do in this province.

Mental Health Care Accessibility

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the causes of crime is inadequate diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses, and this happens every day in Manitoba. Individuals who are referred to the Program for Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) are unable to access the program. Indeed, during the last two years the waiting list for PACT grew so long that the NDP made the list disappear.

Why does the NDP continue to contribute to crime by failing to provide access to appropriate mental health care here in Manitoba?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to agree that mental health issues are terribly important to the population. They are important to the medical and to the social

professions. We have many programs which try to address this issue, but no one would deny across Canada that mental health services are a serious issue.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we put in the EPPIS program for first psychosis. It is why we put in the PACT program. It is why we recently announced a further additional program related to Selkirk. It is why we have added staff in every RHA in regard to mental health services to support the community-based approach to mental health services. It is why there are crisis teams in every region, but the member is correct that the issue of mental health is a concern in every jurisdiction. We have done considerably better under the previous minister. We will continue to do better and we will improve these services—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in Ontario they have 60 PACT teams to provide services appropriately for people with serious mental illnesses, and in Manitoba there is one. Clearly one PACT team is not enough. There needs to be four to six PACT teams to provide these services appropriately. When will this government put in place the four to six PACT teams that are vital for Manitobans to ensure that there is appropriate access to mental health treatment for those with serious mental illnesses?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, the member may recall that, in the wait times announcement which we made earlier this week, one of the four Manitoba additional priorities was mental health. We added the areas of sleep, of pain, of pediatric dentistry and mental health. We recognize that this an important priority. That is why we are allocating some of the \$155 million that the federal government made available over the next four years to strengthening our services in mental health. I invite the member to be a little patient. The details of that announcement will come shortly.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, for two years, day after day, week after week, month after month, people with serious mental illnesses have been unable to accept the appropriate PACT care treatment. The failure is a direct cause of increased homelessness, increased hospitalization, increased crime and, add to that, increased emergency care utilization. Why has this government failed to provide the services, and when will this government provide four to six PACT teams which are needed for Manitoba?

Mr. Sale: As I said to the member in my answer to his previous question one of the four additional priorities in Manitoba is mental health services, Mr. Speaker. That is why we have significantly increased our spending on mental health over the last five years. I do not give the exact number, but it is the range of 40 percent. It is why we added the EPPIS program, the PACT program, the additional mental health workers in every regional health authority. I invite the member to pay attention to the announcement that will be made shortly regarding the fourth priority under the Manitoba priorities for additional mental health services.

Biodiesel Industry Government Initiatives

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): As a member of the Biodiesel Advisory Council, I personally was greatly heartened yesterday to hear that the Government of Manitoba had announced an action plan to develop this environmentally friendly fuel. I was surprised that the member of Lakeside did not request the details of that program. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives to brief the members of the Assembly as to the details of the action plan announced yesterday.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to join with my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak), at a conference yesterday where people from across Manitoba gathered to talk about where they see the opportunities are at biodiesel. I was very pleased to announce that we are acting on the recommendations of the Biodiesel Advisory committee that gave us a 10-point action plan. Biodiesel will provide an opportunity for Manitoba farmers and Manitoba communities to create economic development in their areas as well as address our environmental issues on greenhouse gas.

Natural Valley Beef Slaughter Plant Expansion

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, Natural Valley has completed a cut facility in Saskatchewan for beef. They have also begun the construction of a slaughter facility at Neudorf. They have money committed to build a plant at Neepawa in Manitoba.

Will this Minister of Agriculture now be prepared to sit down to sign an agreement with this company for infrastructure support?

* (14:20)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I can tell this House that my department has met with Natural Valley Beef and gone through their program. Natural Valley Beef has raised with us some of the challenges that they are facing, particularly the challenges that they are facing with the Neudorf plant. This tells us very clearly that expanding the slaughter capacity is a very great challenge for anybody who takes it on, and that is why we have announced various programs that are available for people who want to increase slaughter capacity in this province. We have met with Natural Valley Beef and we will continue to work with them.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I rise today to inform the House that October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This year, almost 22 000 women in Canada will be diagnosed with this devastating disease and over 5000 people will die of it. But there is hope.

On Sunday, October 2, I was privileged to participate in the CIBC Run for the Cure, which is the largest single-day breast cancer fundraising event in Canada. In Winnipeg, 7304 Manitobans walked or ran the downtown course raising over \$800,000 for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. It was a moving and inspirational event. Many of the runners were breast cancer survivors themselves, and others were running for their mothers, daughters, wives and friends, people whose lives had been touched by breast cancer.

The run united over 170 000 Canadians in 40 different locations with one goal in mind: to create a future without breast cancer. I would like to ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the over 7000 Manitobans who took part in the Run for the Cure and encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to consider contributing to this worthy cause and participating in next year's run. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

St. James Rods

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with my colleague, the Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), to congratulate the members of the St. James Rods Football Club Inc. This non-profit organization has been a leader in the St. James community for 60 years and is the oldest football club in Manitoba. With over 300 players between the ages of 7 and 21, making up 10 teams, the Rods extend their positive influence into the lives of hundreds of St. James residents.

The club's commitment to excellence has gone far beyond the field and into the realm of community service. They have cleaned up garbage in the streets, taken graffiti off buildings and painted them at Bruce Park and painted hockey rink fences at community centres.

With support from my constituency office, the club was recipient to a Community Places grant for 2005-2006. This provincial grant program provides funding support for the acquisition, construction or upgrading of buildings and facilities. The money will go towards the construction of a new clubhouse for this growing organization. The sustainability of the club's facilities is dependent on such grants and I plan on continuing to support their efforts.

I would also like to highlight, Mr. Speaker, their attitude of action and creativity is exemplified by the club's decision to welcome two hearing-impaired players into their midget football team, receiver/placekicker Justin Butkans and defensive lineman Jonathan Anderson. With patience and persistence of head coach Rob Baillie and assistant coach Jeff Chappel, who took it upon himself to learn sign language, team members took on the challenge of playing through communication barriers. That shows dedication to youth and to the Rods motto: Respect, Opportunity, Determination and Sportsmanship. Clearly this is more than just a football club.

Mr. Speaker, youth can stray into gangs, drugs and crime, especially if they lack options for recreation. Sports clubs like the Rods offer our youth a crucial link to a sense of belonging, pride and community. I congratulate the St. James Rods for their efforts and accomplishments. Their ongoing commitment to quality youth sports programming and their unprecedented contributions—

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

Ms. Korzeniowski: —to the community are truly commendable. Thank you.

Transportation Infrastructure Renewal

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the crumbling infrastructure in Manitoba. The urgent concern for Manitobans is the deteriorating state of our transportation infrastructure. Manitoba now has a \$7 billion infrastructure deficit. This includes a \$3.4 billion deficit in highways alone.

The province was quick to stand on the national stage, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) was quick to stand on the national stage in August and claim that transportation infrastructure was a top priority. However, now that he is home, he has dropped the ball. Infrastructure was not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. Where is this government's commitment to infrastructure?

The deteriorating infrastructure in Manitoba is significantly impacting our ability to conduct business here in Manitoba. Agriculture producers are having trouble getting their products to market. All Manitobans are facing increasing repair and maintenance costs to their vehicles. These costs are also being borne by Manitoba's business community. Improved transportation infrastructure would reduce death and serious injuries, Mr. Speaker. An investment in infrastructure would result in a cleaner environment and would move us forward to a healthier, safer and more productive Manitoba.

Our transportation infrastructure is an embarrassment. For example, Mr. Speaker, Highway No. 6 was rated in the top 10 worst highways in Canada by the Canadian Automobile Association. There are too many roads in disrepair to mention them all. As a result of the poor road conditions a fix-our-highways campaign has been implemented. This group includes representatives from the tourism association of Canada, the Canadian Business Association, the Canadian Trucking Alliance, the Association of Consulting Engineers and the Canadian Construction Association.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this government has not made progress with the federal government in regard to the federal gas tax issue, and this government has not made any commitments on an investment over and above the gas tax collected in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this government is also collecting approximately a million dollars in driver licence fees and vehicle registration fees annually, and this money is not being used on—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Cullen: And this money is not being used on transportation infrastructure as many Manitobans believe it is. We simply ask where is this government's priority on infrastructure. Thank you.

Seven Oaks General Hospital

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring the House's attention to Seven Oaks General Hospital, an important institution in my constituency of The Maples, which has won the Canadian Association of Retired Persons' 50 Plus Award for Best Employer in Canada. This prestigious award recognizes workplaces that develop policies that actively support older workers, accommodating them with job-sharing programs, flexible hours and various retirement options.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement is very timely as this past October was Seniors' and Elders' month. All throughout this month we celebrated seniors in our communities who act as vital links between the past and future. Their vast wealth of experience is an asset to our communities and the wisdom with which they pass it on deserves recognition. For it is through their contributions that the living heritage of this province is passed on for future generations to enjoy.

Recognizing the contribution seniors make to our communities, Seven Oaks Hospital has made an extra effort to ensure that the members of its workforce who are 50-plus stay right where they are needed the most, on the job. By encouraging these workers to stay working by accommodating their needs, Seven Oaks has created a space in which older people can be productive workers contributing to the well-being of the hospital and its patients.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Seven Oaks Hospital for all its fine efforts in supporting its entire workforce. The recognition it has received testifies to the important work and service this hospital provides for The Maples and surrounding areas. Thank you.

Diabetes Strategy

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Diabetes is a serious disease. Today we have a major epidemic of diabetes in Manitoba. In six years the NDP have

failed to stop this epidemic, let alone reverse the trend of increasing diabetes in our province.

This month is diabetes month. The theme for this month is Get Serious. The message is directed straight at the failure of Manitoba's NDP government to take this problem with the seriousness it deserves. Time after time in this Chamber, in response to my questions, the previous NDP Minister of Health said that Manitoba had the best diabetes strategy, but when the present minister took over he had to admit that the strategy had never been implemented.

The present minister when questioned earlier this year in Estimates could only provide three-year-old statistics. Time and again this government has not taken the diabetes epidemic with the seriousness it deserves, and they have done too little to prevent the epidemic from continuing. It is time to get serious and implement a plan which arrests the epidemic of diabetes and dramatically reduces the number of new cases occurring in our province.

Mr. Speaker: That is five members' statements?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make two motions for some rule changes by leave. I understand there has been agreement to deal with the issue of First Readings and Petitions.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach),

THAT effective tomorrow and for the duration of the 2005 sittings until the House rises on December 8, the order of Routine Proceedings as set out in Rule 23(1) be changed so that the Introduction of Bills is called as the first item in the Daily Routine and that the distribution of Bills take place in the Chamber as soon as possible after Introduction of Bills, and after distribution in the Chamber, copies of bills will then be distributed to the media.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Member for Russell,

THAT effective tomorrow and for the duration of the 2005 sittings until the House rises on December 8, the order of Routine Proceedings as set out in Rule 23(1) be changed so that the Introduction

of Bills is called as the first item in the Daily Routine, and that distribution of Bills take place in the Chamber as soon as possible after Introduction of Bills, and after distribution in the Chamber, copies of bills will then be provided to the media.

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

* * *

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux),

THAT the current Rule 132(2) be repealed and replaced with the following, to go into effect immediately and to apply permanently:

Form of Petition

132(2) A petition must be in the form set out in Appendix A and must be signed by at least 15 petitioners. The names and addresses of 15 petitioners must be legible. If more than one page is required for the signature of petitions, the subject matter of the petition must be indicated on each page. The reverse side of petitions can be used for signatures, provided that the action of the Legislative Assembly is being asked to take or not take appears on the top of the reverse side of the page. The signature of the Member must also appear at the top of the original petition. Check marks, ditto marks or similar wording are acceptable for address designations.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Attorney General, seconded by the honourable Member for Inkster,

THAT the current rule 132(2) be repealed and replaced with the following, to go into effect immediately and to apply permanently:

Form of Petition

132(2)–

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: I have to read the motion in order to move it.

A petition must be in the form set out in Appendix A and must be signed by at least 15 petitioners. The names and addresses of 15 petitioners must be legible. If more than one page is required for the signature of petitions, the subject matter of the petition must be indicated on each page. The reverse side of petitions can be used for signatures, provided that the action the Legislative

Assembly is being asked to take or not take appears on the top of the reverse side of the page. The signature of the Member must also appear at the top of the original petition. Check marks, ditto marks, or similar wording are acceptable for address designations.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in a further amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Steinbach, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that warm reception that I received from all members of the House as I continue on with just a few minutes more of comments regarding this government's Throne Speech and vision or lack thereof. You know, we saw again, I know this is a sensitive issue for the members opposite. The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) always gets very concerned that we stand up, because we might talk about the lack of resources for police in his area or the lack of resources for police in other areas, so I know he is always very concerned.

An Honourable Member: I am okay.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, he says he is okay, so that is helpful for me. I can go then into the area of Selkirk, and certainly tell all the residents and the RCMP of his area that their member of the Legislature does not feel that they need any more resources, that they are okay. They do not need any more police officers. Everything is okay, and if there is anything more that they need in terms of security, they should go somewhere else. I will bring that message forward to Selkirk. I will bring that message forward to all of his residents so that they know that their member of the Legislature said, "We are okay here. Do not give us any more."

But I know when you go around to other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, that certainly is not what other representatives would say. Other representatives who care more about the safety and concern of their constituents than the Member for Selkirk does would say we need more RCMP officers. We need more RCMP officers on the streets and in our areas and to ensure that they are there. Not these fake or pseudo kind of officers that the government announces here and there and says that they are going to be there, but they are unfilled positions, but real police, because we believe that men and women in uniform and the RCMP and the municipal forces are some of the best that we have, really, in the world and we want them out there doing their job.

And what a job they have to do. You know, we heard today, again, more of the problems that we have with drugs in the community, not only in Winnipeg. I venture to say that if I went to members—

An Honourable Member: We shut down all those grow ops.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, you know, the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) says that there are no more grow ops out there, that they are all shut down, so I will wait certainly for a week or two to go by and then there will be another grow op. Then I will go back to the member and say to him, "Where did that grow op come from, because you told me just a couple of weeks ago that there were no more grow ops in the province of Manitoba?" So we know now that the member clearly is not only out of touch with his own constituents, but truly out of touch with the issues that are important to Manitobans, and drugs is a very, very important issue.

You know, I had the opportunity to visit the constituency of Rossmere not too long ago, and I have another opportunity coming up in a few weeks to go and speak to the good people of Rossmere who are very concerned about crime, about drugs in their community. I went there and—

An Honourable Member: Who is going to Steinbach?

Mr. Goertzen: I hear that the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) is coming to Steinbach, and I welcome him. I would welcome him to come to Steinbach. You know, he should have been in Steinbach a week and a half ago, when we had a meth information meeting on October 24. He should

have been there that day when there were 350 people come out to hear about the problem that we have with methamphetamine and drugs in the area.

I doubt that there will be 350 people out, maybe, in Rossmere. I think they have been kind of lulled to sleep by the Member for Rossmere, that there is not really an issue, that there really is not a problem of drugs and crime in their area, but I am going to go there and tell them what can really be done, and that there are solutions, and that it is not good enough to simply go and blame the federal government and blame some other area of jurisdiction, that there truly are things that the provincial government can do to rid the streets of gangs, to rid the streets of drugs, and those solutions must come from here, from the Legislature. It is not good enough for the members opposite to stand and point to other areas of jurisdiction, to the City, to the federal government. We know that there are roles that those other levels of government have to play, but there are real powers that the Province has that they can implement and they can do, whether it is more law enforcement for, well, for every area of the province except for Selkirk, obviously, now because their member says that they have enough. But law enforcement really everywhere else in the province truly is suffering. They are truly suffering, and they need more resources, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

So, when I go to Rossmere in a couple of weeks, and I speak to the residents of Rossmere, I will certainly be clear and let them know that in fact—*[interjection]* Well, you know, the member from Rossmere says, "I will be speaking to the old Tory gang." That gang is growing every day. There are many gangs that are growing in the province of Manitoba, but the old Tory gang in Rossmere grows every day along, Mr. Speaker. Every day there are more Tories in Rossmere who are saying, "Boy, we have got to go back and get a Conservative government. We have to go back and get real representation in the constituency of Rossmere." Every day there are more of them that are coming forward and saying, "We should not have made that mistake in 1999 when we voted NDP, and we are not going to make that mistake again."

So I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to go and speak to those members in Rossmere about the issues of crime and about the issues of justice that need to come to their particular area and how we can truly address these. We will not get rid of drugs off the

street by handing out drug kits and handing out paraphernalia on how drugs should be used. That is certainly not going to do it. We do not believe that we should be using taxpayers' money to fund an addiction, to fund an activity that is not only destructive but is also illegal. The taxpayers' money is going to that.

We heard earlier on about different places that taxpayers' money is going that certainly is questionable, and it would be concerning I think to many Manitobans when they read about it in tomorrow's newspapers. They will be asking about it and saying, "How is it that my money that I go out and work for can be funnelled into areas of drug addiction and to other questionable spending practices? How can this government allow that to happen when I am out there working every day hard for the dollars that I earn? How can they allow such a thing to happen?"

That is a question that is going to come, and I do not know what the answer is going to be from the members opposite. You know, I feel sorry for those members who are not in Cabinet on the other side because they are going to have to try to come up with some sort of an answer and a make-believe solution because their government, their members in Cabinet have failed them on these and other issues that are not representative of what Manitobans are expecting from a real government, they are expecting from a government that is going to do things responsibly.

So I know that it is going to be a difficult issue. I wonder how the member from Minto is going to justify some of these issues. You know, a newly elected member, he will have to go out to his constituents and talk about how he supports this questionable spending, these questionable practices and how money is going to feed the addiction of young people in our province, going to support gang activity, going to support gang activity.

Now, we learned about a presentation that was done, and there was a dealer in Manitoba making over \$750,000 a month. To be clear, Mr. Speaker, a month, not a year, of apparently tax-free money, but, I mean, \$750,000 a month selling drugs to young people, not just in the city of Winnipeg, I am sure, but, truly, really, throughout the entire province. Those are the real issues that the members opposite do not want to talk about and they do not want to discuss because they think that in fact it is going to be embarrassing to them.

I think it is embarrassing for them not to talk about it. I think that they are doing a great disservice to all Manitobans by not saying, "Okay, there is a problem out there. Yes, we have been part of the problem by not addressing the issues clearly. Now, how are we going to go and address the issues?" You know, it is not just simply sometimes the members opposite might think, well, it is an inner city issue, so let us not worry about it. It is kind of just a core area issue, and we do not have to worry about that. We have all those supporters and those voters. But it is real. It is a person issue. It is not a political issue, Mr. Speaker, and it has to be dealt with on that level and not looked at as votes.

I know that if I go, and I have and I will in the future, Mr. Speaker, go to places like Fort Garry—the constituents of Fort Garry write me and they call me because they are concerned. [*interjection*] Well, you know, the member from Fort Garry says that she is loved in her area. Well, I am sure that certainly within her own residence that is true, and I do not want to presume what happens much further beyond that, but, you know, there are representatives in other areas who would go out and speak about these issues, who would go out and say, "Let us have a forum about the drug problem in our area, and let us not take it as almost an embarrassment."

Perhaps the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has had a drug forum in her area about the problems of drugs, and if she has, then I do not want to cast aspersions on her. If she has not, though, and I suspect that she has not, I would challenge her to do that and to not be afraid of the issue and to not hide from it and to think that it is going to be a scar on the government.

I think quite the opposite, by not talking about the issue, by not saying there is a problem and young people throughout the province are getting drawn into this culture of drugs, that we could fear that we could lose a generation of young people to drugs like crystal meth and to cocaine. By not really putting forward that effort and saying, "You know what, we are not going to worry about what the reputation of the government is going to be. What we are going to worry about, about the lives of young people in our province who are really, really suffering and get the information out there."

So, if the Member for Fort Garry has done that, then I would say that that is fine. I look to other members in the southern part of Winnipeg. I look to the Member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), and the

Member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), who, I know, has talked at different times about this issue, but they need to get out into those communities and not worry about just sending out propaganda about the government and what great things might be happening on one side of the scale. But, you know, there are always these important issues that have to be brought forward to attention. You cannot put your head in the sand. You cannot put your head in the sand and pretend that they are not out there, and that is what we saw with this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

You know there was lots of discussion about certain things that the government thought were all roses, but there were a lot of other issues that are important to Manitobans that will hurt young people that were not addressed. I would challenge this government to bring forward a Throne Speech that would address the issues. They may not all reflect positively upon the government, but I believe in the long run if they address those issues, it will reflect positively on all of us as legislators. Mr. Speaker, not just New Democrats or Conservatives or Liberals, but we would all look better if we would take on those serious issues that are here in Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): I rise today to speak on the Throne Speech, 2005, with great pride to support this. This is perhaps a repeat of my previous statements in this House on our values as New Democrats. It is just over two years that I have been elected as a member from Radisson, and it is some of the hardest work I have done in my life, but, Mr. Speaker, I enjoy it so much that the hard work really pays. I enjoy working with this government. I enjoy talking to my constituents because they are all very, very pleased with the history of this government's six-year governance and future that we are building. I must say I see the rise in the quality of life for seniors, adults, children, women minorities, Aboriginal brothers and sisters from northern Manitoba and all people from this province of Manitoba.

Let me again express my views as a father, grandfather and a citizen of this great nation, Canada. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, when I hear from opposition to ask us to leave our ideologies and follow their formula to swallow poison pills which will undo what we have done for over the years. It will undo health care improvements by firing 1000 nurses again as advised by Connie Curran, an American health care consultant, who took

\$4 million to advise Manitobans how to fix health care by firing nurses, by driving doctors away from the province. What was done for this \$4 million? I cannot really have an answer. Firing of nurses and reducing costs by closing hospitals can be done by my grandchild, who is only 10 years old. If you ask her how to save money by closing, anybody can do that, but that consultant literally created a havoc that now we are paying for.

Going to schools, increasing the number of students in our medical schools and hiring nurses and doctors. It will take 10 years to catch up to what was done by this swallowing of this poison pill that they are recommending to do for us.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Once again, a great consultant supporter, Dr. Linda West, campaigned during my last election on the Tory platform to fix health care. No, Mr. Speaker. "No," said the people of Radisson to Dr. Linda West and to the Tory ideology to build our societies on a two- or, perhaps, three-tier system.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, our Premier (Mr. Doer) and the ministers of Health, Honourable Dave Chomiak in the past and now Minister Sale, are not only visionary for Manitoba's future health care, they are really compassionate persons who have done, worked hard and are still working hard to make health care work in this province. In my constituency, there is Transcona health access facilities, which will provide much-needed help to residents on health care access and other services available to them right in the constituency.

Today at noon, Mr. Speaker, Minister Sale made an announcement at Concordia Hospital on the new initiative on hip and knee surgery. Once again, a service to seniors and others who would feel the difference soon by seeing the number of subsidies as high as 3000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard many times the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) asking about, talking about the future of our children and grandchildren. Yes, that is one of the reasons why I chose to enter politics. Yes, I am concerned about the future of our children and grandchildren. The difference is what is the approach. The difference is how we are going to save our children and grandchildren's future, by doing what?

I must say that ideology separates us from the Tories in terms of how we want to do this. Do we want a society where we build boundaries of people living in luxury and others to die in hunger? Do we want to build a society that will have a two-tier or three-tier level of quality of life? Do we want to go back to old, dark days when those who cannot afford should be thrown in the gutter? Do we want to go back and save money by destroying what we have built? No, Mr. Speaker, no. The answer is no. In God's eyes we are all made equal. This may sound socialist, but if you really follow God's disciples, if you are God's children, we are all the same. If that ideology is called socialism, so be it. We are proud to be socialist.

I think we are also addressing us as our brothers and sisters. That makes the difference. When we are brothers and sisters, we are part of the family, and if we are part of the family, we have to really share and make sure that nobody suffers. That difference is the ideology between both them and us.

The Leader of the Opposition has called these socially responsible projects wastes of money. They should rather give their money to their corporate friends, give a break by selling MTS and taking money from the pockets of all of us, as we are now paying. That is what is called the privatization of Crown jewels that the Tories have done in the past and they would love to do in the future.

We have debated this so many times. Now, they would love to risk the future of our children and our grandchildren by their lean-and-mean agenda, if we let them govern. If they were given a choice to govern, yes, Mr. Speaker, they would sell our Crown jewel, our Hydro. We enjoy the best Hydro rates in North America and perhaps in the world. They would sell Hydro and consumers would pay market rates of 20 to 30 percent, and God knows how high in the future.

Now, that is what is called saving the future of our children and grandchildren? No. If they would be allowed to govern, they would sell Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, which gives us the best auto insurance rates in Canada. We will have to pay, again, 30 to 40 percent higher now, if they were given the opportunity. That is destroying our children and grandchildren's future.

If they would be allowed to govern, they would take sports, music and art out of schools so that the children of rich families can send their kids to learn in private schools, and those who cannot afford will

be put to suffer and create two class systems among the youngest of our society. Now, that is destroying our children and grandchildren's future.

If they are left to govern, they would follow their ideology, rule like Mr. Harper in Canada and Mr. Bush in the United States, who will say, "Well, Kyoto is not good as it may close factories which pollute our environment, but they also create jobs." So they think it is okay to have factories emit dangerous waste in the air, kill a few people, destroy ecology. But that is okay, Mr. Speaker. It is okay to let workers die. After all, what are these workers? They are nothing but tools to create wealth. That is the difference between them and us.

So it is okay to let them die? No. No, we will not let a society be built on such ideologies which give breaks to corporations and promote corruption at the cost of our future and our children's future and our grandchildren's future. No, Mr. Speaker, we will not allow them to destroy what we have built.

Mr. Speaker, \$3 billion in clean energy development over the next 10 years is called vision. A commitment to 1000 megawatt wind energy created by using free-flowing wind in nature is called vision. To cut 135 000 tonnes of vehicle emissions by new ethanol production facilities in Manitoba is called vision. Creation and construction of the Winnipeg Floodway and the leadership of this great Minister Ashton, creating 1000 jobs and protecting hundreds of thousands of homes from the future flood is called vision. Building university colleges up north with now over 2250 students registered in over 40 programs is called vision. Investing \$333 million in the school capital program over the last six years is called vision.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep on going for hours, but I would rather let the members opposite open their eyes and, more so, open their closed minds and just see ahead. Let them see the vibrant downtown. Let them see the futuristic Human Rights Museum where, with pride, I say Mahatma Gandhi's statue will be installed for the world to witness the true value of humanity right here in the city of Winnipeg and Canada.

Let them open their narrow vision and realize Manitoba's economy is growing. Manitoba's economy is growing with a seven-point action plan for economic growth which was developed in partnership with the Premier's Economic Advisory Council. Income taxes have been steadily reduced since '99, with a further rate cut scheduled to take

effect on January 1. Total reduction of middle-income tax will be 19 percent over five years, an overall saving of \$249 million. Corporate tax rates have been reduced to 15 percent this year, from 17 percent in '99. These tax rates will fall to 14.5 percent on January 1 of the next year and then 14 percent in 2007, representing an 18 percent cut since '99 and the first reduction in more than 50 years. The small business taxes will be reduced to 4.5 percent in 2006 and to 4 percent in 2007, a 50 percent cut in the small business tax rates since '99.

We had 7427 immigrants last year, a 14 percent increase over the previous year, a continued commitment to the provincial target of 10 000 immigrants per year in Manitoba, who will be absorbed into our economy is truly the vision. Let them realize that we have more doctors moving to Manitoba. We have now more nurses being trained. Thousands of immigrations are moving over the province, a province which is enjoying the economic growth with vibrant multicultural communities and prospering.

Mr. Speaker, I invite some of my friends in the opposition to visit the new state-of-the-art Hindu temple which has been built on St. Anne's Road to see the excitement in that community of this new temple. Let them also come and see the sod-turning ceremony we had. My colleague from Transcona and myself, we witnessed that recreation park in Transcona that is going to be built, which will be, literally, one of the best things from the healthy living for the people throughout the city of Winnipeg.

* (15:00)

I am excited about reporting the roof on the Prendergast community senior centre, which was again the vision and the hard work of the government and compassionate work to make sure that the roof is built onto that school system that houses our seniors and a lot of children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are really proud to speak of the difference between this government, this party's ideology, and others. I would like to quote from a report, a federal government report. The heading says: New Democrats Most Fiscally Responsible, Federal Government Report, February 23, 2005, and I quote: "New Democratic Party governments have the best fiscal track record among all parties, balancing the books more than twice as often as Liberal governments," according to a federal

government report released yesterday. The NDP has shown that it is possible to invest in things Canadians say they value—that they value, I repeatedly say—while demonstrating fiscal discipline. NDP Leader Jack Layton said, "Our approach to the budget this spring delivered important investments in housing, the environment, foreign aid, education and training while keeping the books balanced."

So, when we are accused of saying that we have a spending habit, yes, we have a spending habit to build. We invest to build. We do not give away money to corporations that take it and eventually develop a two-tier society, a two-tier system.

The report also shows that the NDP government has balanced the books 46 percent of the time. The Manitoba NDP government has caused surpluses every year it has been in office, and Saskatchewan's NDP government posted 11 consecutive balanced budgets after ending a decade of Conservative mismanagement and corruption. This speech is from a report not fabricated by us. It is the authentic report.

So I would say in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are builders and doers. Let the members from the opposite benches come, join us and say, yes, to the great Throne Speech that was presented to be passed.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It is my pleasure to rise to put some comments on the record in regard to the Throne Speech, the Throne Speech of '05 brought forward by the government of the day, and I want to outline a number of reasons why I will not be voting in favour of this Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that this will become very evident as we move forward, certainly evident from the list of amendments that our leader, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), brought forward in this House, seconded by the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the opportunity of being all over my constituency and around Manitoba this summer since the legislative session ended in June, and I am going to speak this afternoon here in this House about some of the devastation that is taking place in rural Manitoba. I want to speak as Transportation critic on the crumbling infrastructure that we have in the province of Manitoba, and, of course, rural development has been very much

neglected by this government outside the city of Winnipeg.

I want to talk about three areas of crisis that I see in Manitoba today. One of them is in agriculture. The other one is in health, and certainly there is one in the debt and offloading on the future youth of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very concerned, as my constituents are, about these issues and the opportunities for our youth and business in Manitoba in the future.

First of all, though, I would like to say that I look forward to working with the administration of the House and the interns who are working with the various parties and, certainly, the three who are working with our side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to working with them as well, and, certainly, the pages of the House, it is a great experience to have them here as well.

I have to say that I am very upset with the circumstances around the government's lack of priority in the area of how they have given lip service, I guess, to the infrastructure situation in rural Manitoba and the devastation that was caused by the heavy rainfall, some 22 inches, that took place from the first of June till the middle of July, around much of Manitoba.

It started off on June 1 in the area that I represent and the area of the member from Russell as well as the member from Minnedosa. It seemed to be where the height of the rain hit on June 1, but it went on through the rest of Manitoba after that and certainly in southern Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government has given lip service to disaster financial assistance for those particular residents that were certainly impacted, and I am not speaking so much of the farm community but the homes that were devastated by overland flooding.

Now I know there were many communities around Manitoba that were affected by this. Virtually every community in my constituency had a handful of basements that were flooded from overland water in the summer's heavy deluge of rain, but the community of Deloraine was devastated totally by this excess of run-off from the six to seven inches of rain that they received over two particular different periods of time; over a foot of rain in a very short period of time that came out of the Turtle Mountains and flooded their community, having gone overtop of the embankments that have been there for years to protect the community.

I know that the farmers and the community's citizens, and particularly Mayor Brian Franklin and his council and their administration, did everything they possibly could to try and save their whole community from flooding and are to be commended for their efforts. These people worked night and day literally to make sure that the community was kept as dry as it possibly could, even though the basements in the southern three blocks of the community at least, many of them were completely filled with water right to the floor joists, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In some cases, the basements have had to be completely rebuilt in these homes, the home moved off, the new basement built, and moved back in. That is certainly the situation with the Williams family, and we know of others as well.

Mr. Speaker, I reiterated a concern that I will reiterate now, but I raised it first when the elected members, the Premier (Mr. Doer) and Minister Alcock, the national Treasury Board president, were out in Arthur-Virden, in Deloraine, in July after the flooding. Of course, the Emergency Measures operation was set up at that time to deal with some of these issues, to take claims and that sort of thing in which residents responded very quickly to getting their claims filled out. The circumstance at that time and I remember the Premier's words specifically were, "We will be there for you." To many of the citizens, he said, "We know you need help on this issue."

Well, I believe the last time that I spoke was only a few short weeks ago with the Emergency Measures people in Manitoba, that there were only 30 of the claims that had been settled, and there had been some 158 applications for disaster financial assistance due to that flooding in the town of Deloraine alone. I know there were some 4000 across the province of Manitoba, but I want to say that the impact on this community was the most devastating of any, I believe, across the province.

Mr. Speaker, funds have moved very slowly. People are waiting to get funds so that they can go ahead with the rebuilding of their homes, and as winter approaches, there are many who have indicated to me that they will not be able to move forward with that work unless they see some kind of a payment in the very near future.

This is exacerbated I think in the rural areas by this government's reliance on, and I want to talk about agriculture for a moment. This has been exacerbated in the rural area and the farming

community by the fact that upwards of 25 for sure and, in some local circumstances, 40 percent of the farmland was washed out in those areas. Now I know there were other areas that never got any crop seeded, but our area had one of the better springs that it had up until the first of June, and was able to actually seed all the crop, and, in many circumstances, corner to corner in that rural area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so all of the inputs, fertilizer, chemical and fuel that were going to be required to get a crop off to an excellent start, were in the ground and the crop was growing when, on June 1, upwards of 40 percent of it in some areas was completely washed away. Farmers banded together to try to calculate what the losses would be in their own farming operations. Many of them, and I know in particular, the Griffith family in the Waskada area went to work and put forth a municipal-wide call to have everyone come in and point out what their losses were in fertilizer and chemical, and I know that the Keystone Ag Producers accumulated some of that information and has presented it to the government as well.

*(15:10)

But, Mr. Speaker, the government has not provided the kinds of support that this region certainly needs, and I know from experience that from Portage la Prairie east in Manitoba and up through the Interlake, there is virtually no crop to harvest in many of these areas. The area that I represent has had patches of crop to harvest, but nothing that will bring most of that area over crop insurance levels, and so I expect to see one of the largest payments in Manitoba Crop Insurance's history on top of last year's, which was the biggest on record, in the \$190-million range.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) continues to say that the CAIS program, Canadian Ag Income Stabilization program, and crop insurance are going to be the only two mechanisms used to help save these individuals. Of course, there have been promises of slaughter plants for the BSE issue that have not come about. There have been promises of funds for feasibility studies that have not come about or they are being told they are not eligible for. There were promises for feasibility studies for ethanol plants around the province and now we find out that the government all along really only planned on having one ethanol plant in Manitoba. We are thankful that it is the expansion of an existing plant in Minnedosa. I know how hard the member from Minnedosa worked to make sure that

that plant is coming about. I also know that the government is certainly not helping the community of Minnedosa in relation to the offloading of millions of dollars that they are asking the town to put into the plant themselves when, in fact, actually asking the city or the town to put in over twice what both the federal and provincial governments are doing together. I think that is appalling.

Mr. Speaker, the circumstance around the flooded acreage is one that many farmers will not recover from this year. I have had phone calls from young farmers in their twenties who are walking away from pretty well-established farms. I have seen circumstances where farmers in their sixties and fifties, and some in their late forties, have basically said, "We are going to put it up for sale." In normal circumstances, a neighbour or someone would purchase this land, but I find that they are telling me that they are not able to sell this as quickly as they feel they should have otherwise been able to because nobody wants to risk the equity that they have any further in Manitoba, particularly because of the fact that they are the highest taxed, but they are also facing some of the highest fuel increases in Canada. With the high cost of fuel and fertilizer and other input costs, this has been a huge concern to the farming community.

Mr. Speaker, this on top of a drought in '03, a frost in August of '04 and, of course, the flooding in '05, on top of the closure of the U.S. border to live cattle going south for two years as a result of the BSE issue and, of course, the closure, which affected most of our region, of the PMU industry, the horse industry and the closure of many of those barns in southwest Manitoba as well, as well as across the province, and so these have been devastating impacts on local businesses and small communities. That is why our government, and I was proud to be there with our leader when we moved across Manitoba in July and made press conferences, held them in many communities, Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Deloraine particularly, to indicate that we had a five-point plan to help the struggling agricultural industry. I think chief among those was a movement to an increased dollar level on the unseeded acreage, and this government has offloaded the premiums of that program that was so implemented by Harry Enns in 1999, when I was still farming. I remember receiving the cheques before the election that fall, and there were no premiums to be applied to that. This government has chosen to do that and then offload any secondary year hurt and double that premium to

farmers, and that is, in this kind of a circumstance, completely unacceptable, and they were not even willing to waive that for a year.

The other program that we talked about, I will not go into them all, but the Jobs Economic Recovery Initiative that was put forward in 1997 worked so well in the Red River Valley at keeping not only farms but small businesses alive has been completely neglected by this government and they will not look at it as well. Of course, having been there in 1999 with the minister when we were on these all-party trips to Ottawa, I guess I should not expect anything more from this government. They were ineffectual then and they are ineffectual now.

I want to move into the area of health care. As I said earlier, the circumstances around health services in rural Manitoba are becoming a catastrophic situation. Of course, for some time, we have seen that persons needing care in Brandon, which is, we know, a regional centre of western Manitoba, has long been a circumstance of a shortage of doctors that has caused many individuals to have to come to Winnipeg for services.

Now we are being faced as well, and I believe they are still short some 11 doctors as we speak today in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I know that the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority, the last number I heard was they were 17 short for a total of 28 doctors short in southwest Manitoba. I believe that is certainly unprecedented. It is unacceptable to the continuation of the rural lifestyle that the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and others give lip service to so often and have no means of backup for these individuals other than to say you can take an ambulance. If you are sent to the city, being Winnipeg, through no cause of your own, but if you have to come to Winnipeg because of the shortage of doctors in Brandon, if you do not get back home from that ambulance within 24 hours, you have to pay for the ambulance fees as well. This is only due because there are services not available in those rural communities or particularly where the government has indicated that they would have it.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government started out building a \$13-million power plant so the hospital could actually be built. We have heard a lot about the \$58 million that this government has indicated they built a hospital in Brandon, and that is the case and was needed. The Conservative government committed to it a number

of times and, of course, because of the shortfalls in transfer payments from the federal government, not like this government that has been overflowed with money from transfer payments from Ottawa, with cutbacks and hard decisions that had to be made, the people realized that, but there was a \$13-million commitment to the beginning of a power plant. Now, this government probably would have built the hospital without the power plant and not been able to even turn the lights on, but they got it, fortunately, because of the Conservative commitment to Brandon. They were able to make sure there was a power plant there and build it in the first place. It allows these guys to take a little bit of credit across the floor when, really, now they cannot even fund the doctors to keep the people from having to come by ambulance to Winnipeg. Of course, they have put 160 new ambulances around the province, and that is because they will wear them out in the next few years anyway and have to do that again if they cannot find some doctors to continue in the city of Brandon.

But let me back up even one more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to say what it is like if you are living in Lyleton or Waskada or Tilston, and put on the record again, as I have done before, that this government does not mind that two-hour trip from Brandon to Winnipeg. Put them in an ambulance and send them in here and send them back. But if you are in Lyleton or Tilston or Waskada or Melita and you have to take an hour-and-a-half to two-hour ride, to get to Brandon, you are looking at an all-day trip in an ambulance just for the circumstances that you may not be able to get in your local area, or you cannot get in your local area.

I would raise again the question that I raised in the House here about a young—I cannot remember his first name right now, I believe it was Justin Roper, a young fellow, 14 years old that broke his leg just above the ankle, both bones, in the Director's Cup hockey tournament that was held in Hartney and Souris this spring. He had to wait five days before he could even see a doctor to get that ankle looked at. This is a situation where he could not even be guaranteed that the specialist would be in Brandon, or in Winnipeg, pardon me. Brandon would have been one thing. He did end up seeing one there but only after five days, and he was not even able to get it in Winnipeg.

* (15:20)

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is moving on. There are so many issues to deal with in this area, but I have to say that we have lost emergency services in both Deloraine and Boissevain hospitals this fall as well. This from a government that has been committing all along to having a cancer care centre in the community of Deloraine. This is on top of the fact that the community is raising funds themselves to try and do everything they can to get that cancer care centre kept there and the services that they need locally. The community is doing everything it possibly can. The government is doing nothing in regard to making sure that there is a priority to have doctors in our rural area, or else they would take some of the students who are trying to apply to medicine in Manitoba and allow them to be trained and come back to practise in rural Manitoba, and there is very, very little of that, in spite of the fact that there has been some increase now that the budget will allow the opportunity to have more facilities there.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the debt of Manitoba is staggering: \$20.5 billion for the first time ever, increased debt of over \$3.274 billion since this government came in and, because I am involved in transportation, this government has got \$3.4 billion, as pointed out by our leader in the opening of Question Period today and myself, this \$7-billion shortfall in infrastructure overall, \$3.4 billion of it in transportation alone and roads. This government has no imagination in regards to how to find and secure funding for the kinds of infrastructure that we are needing. People are dying on our roads every day. Our streets are crumbling, and yet this government has no way of, other than to say that they will spend a few more dollars each year, which they have lapsed, and they have no new ideas.

They have listened to the 2020 report that came out but have done nothing with it, as I have pointed out today as well, Mr. Speaker. There are so many areas of shortfall in the government priorities in regard to the budgeting of the budget in Manitoba that it will be extremely interesting to see what they say in the budget in the spring, as they try to put a positive spin on the fact that we have one of the lowest gross domestic products and job creation programs in all of Canada. The Chartered Accountants of Manitoba have indicated that they have only created 10 000 private-sector jobs versus some 26 000 public jobs in this province.

There are so many issues, and I am going to end my comments today there, Mr. Speaker, by just saying that this government has not dealt with the crisis in agriculture, they have not dealt with the crisis in health care and they have not dealt with the crisis of debt as they continue to offload the future debt of this province, I would say not only the \$3.274 billion in budget, but also the \$3.4 billion in road infrastructure and sewer and water. That \$7 billion does not even show up in the budget and this government is offloading that on the future Manitobans, the youth of this province and, because we are the highest taxed in Canada, it is no wonder that as they become trained, they leave this province.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this Throne Speech and what I believe is an excellent Throne Speech, although the members opposite keep talking about how terrible and how much doom and gloom there is in this Throne Speech. This budget builds on our record and takes steps toward improving the quality of life of Manitobans. It improves on health care. It builds on Manitoba's record and our clean energy platform. As well, it builds on growth in rural Manitoba.

But I want to just talk about a few of the comments that the member opposite made. The member opposite talked about our commitment to Brandon and how it was because they had some problem with balancing the budget that they could not deliver the hospital to Brandon. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you we delivered to Brandon, but I want to also tell you about the members opposite when they were in government on their commitment to Swan River. The hospital in Swan River was closed because of mould that had to be addressed, and the temporary hospital was built, but I was shocked when we came into office to find out that members opposite intended to leave a temporary hospital in Swan River because they did not include it in the budget. So they may talk about how they had a commitment to Brandon but could not deliver, but they made many promises, and one of the promises that they made for the Swan River constituency was that they were going to keep a temporary hospital. They had absolutely no plans of delivering a permanent facility, but I am very proud that our government opened that facility in Swan River, and we have the services that would never have been delivered by members opposite.

I want to also talk about the member opposite talking about ambulances. I am surprised. He seems to be against rural Manitobans having better ambulance service. Mr. Speaker, 160 new ambulances that members opposite do not seem to support. The member opposite is also critical of the policy of people having to pay for movement from the rural area to urban centres when they need treatment. Well, I wonder where the members opposite were when Darren Praznik brought that policy in. Darren Praznik brought in the policy that rural people would pay for the inter-hospital transportation. We kept that policy. We put better ambulances on the road. You know, it is very easy to tell the members, the government, what we should do, but I tell the members opposite they should look at their record, they should look at their record because they did put the policy in place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also mention briefly the member opposite talks about debt. Well, you know, the members opposite, the auditor recommended that we go to a summary budget. Members opposite would not go to a summary budget, but when we came into office, they said, "Oh, you should move to summary budget." So we moved to summary budget which, it is required under summary budget that you report Hydro debt, hospital debt, school debt. It is all in there as summary budget requires. But all of a sudden, there is a new debt. Even though they bought Centra Gas, kept it off the books, we brought it into the books—

An Honourable Member: It was there.

Ms. Wowchuk: No, it was not in the books. They hid that debt and when we came in—you know what, Mr. Acting Speaker, this is about honest reporting, and that is what we are doing. The auditor said report by summary budget, and we are reporting more honestly than the members opposite would ever know about reporting. I can tell you that even a predecessor, of the Conservatives, Mr. Duff Roblin, said that Hydro debt should be reported as it is, and members opposite do not seem to agree with him either.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to, just before I get into a few more comments, I do want to recognize the staff that serves us in this Chamber, recognize the pages who are here to help us through the day, and the interns that are with each of the caucuses and to all of the people who are here, particularly in the short term for this session, for this season. I hope that this is a rewarding experience for you and that

sometimes some of the bantering that goes back and forth across the way, I hope you do not take all of that too seriously, but you go away from this Chamber with a very rewarding experience.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of the comments that the members opposite just made, that my critic, the member from the Interlake made, in their comments about the doom and gloom that they have painted for rural Manitoba. I want to say that it has been a very difficult year. There is no doubt this has been a difficult year for Manitoba producers, particularly those in the grain sector who have not been able to put their crop in. It has been a better year for the cattle producers now that the border has been opened for animals over 30 months, but that experience has taught us that we have to look for more solutions at home. We have to find a way to do more with our product. We have talked about how we want to move from farm to fork using more of Manitoba products here in this province, more value added, and we are moving in that direction.

* (15:30)

I heard the member opposite criticize us because we have put in place 10 economic development officers to work with rural Manitobans in the area of value added, and he does not support that. He says in his speech that they have hired and put these officers in place but they are not available. I would encourage the member opposite, who thinks these positions are not available, to go to our GO offices. There are people who are there. They are working with Manitobans. The member opposite should get in touch with reality and see what is really happening out in rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: The sky is falling.

Ms. Wowchuk: That is right. The members opposite would like to paint a picture that the sky is falling.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have also—I want to talk a couple of programs. They talk about our crop insurance, and he says, "Wow, they have record payout in crop insurance." Indeed we do, but he says, "It is their own money." Well, the member opposite obviously does not understand insurance.

Insurance is a partnership, and in this case it is a partnership between the producer, the federal government and the provincial government. I have not heard producers say that they want free insurance. Producers have always said they wanted a partnership and they wanted protection. Just as it is a partnership when you purchase your house insurance

between you and the insurance company to give yourself protection, our producers are the most supportive of crop insurance of any producers across Canada. They recognize it as a good program, and they appreciate the changes that we have made, particularly to excess moisture insurance. I know the members opposite would like to try to take credit for excess moisture insurance.

The members opposite did have, could have had, a chance to make excess moisture insurance a permanent program. In fact, the farm organizations went to the previous government and said, "Give us excess moisture insurance." They chose to go ad hoc. It was this government that put in place excess moisture insurance as a permanent program that the producers could count on—[interjection] I hear the member opposite nattering away about the amount of money in the program. Mr. Speaker, our program fits in with the national program and, in fact, we have more changes and more programs than are offered in many, many other provinces.

The members opposite were calling for ad hoc programs and certainly we talked to the federal government, whether they could put additional money in, and we are still raising this issue of support for farmers through this difficult year. We have not been able to get the federal government to recognize that the low commodity prices are as a result of high subsidies in other countries. It is a trade issue and the federal government should be much more supportive to our producers than they are. We will continue to work in that area.

I heard criticism of members opposite of CAIS. Well, I want to tell members opposite to remember that in this Chamber it was my critic who continued to say, "Why do you not sign CAIS? Why do you not sign CAIS so farmers have a program that they need?" Mr. Speaker, there are challenges with CAIS. There have been changes that have been made. There are changes that will have to be made. There are reviews going on on the program to see how it can be improved to meet the needs of the producers.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the comments that the members opposite are making with regard to the programs that we have, certainly there are times when you have to make changes. People were asking us, members opposite were asking us, to make changes to excess moisture insurance during the middle of a crop year. Well, I am sorry, that is not how you run programs. You work with the industry, you consult with the industry and then you come up

with changes. You do not, in the middle of a program, say, "Oh, we are making changes because we are in a difficult situation." It is a matter of planning and having the finances in place. As we have consulted with the industry on previous programs, we will continue to consult with them.

With regard to taxes, I did not hear the member opposite complaining about the decrease in education taxes at all. Now we have taken off 60 percent. All of a sudden they are saying, "Oh, you should be taking it all off." Well, I want to talk a little bit about history here as well. Mr. Speaker, 11 years, 11 years of Tory government, what did the farmers get? Farmers got an increase in their portioning on farmland. All of a sudden, in opposition, when we are reducing the education tax on farmland, what do the members opposite do? "Oh, take it all off, take it all off." My goodness, where were you when you were in government in reducing those taxes on farmland?

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about drainage, and what did he say? "Oh, the drainage has to be addressed in this province. We need substantial dollars." But I remember, again, when they were in government what did they do to the drainage budget? The member from Portage la Prairie should remember this because his colleague, the member from Emerson himself, said that their government reduced the drainage budget. It was through their administration that the drainages in this province really fell behind, and it is impossible to catch up on 11 years of neglect all at once.

Our government has been making steps. We have increased the amount of money going to drainage, and we will continue to make the improvements to drainage because—

An Honourable Member: The air in here has changed.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, if you look at the drainages and the places that we have done improvements, there has been a lot of work that has been done in drainage. Is there need for more work? Of course, there is always a need for more. But, as a government, we will continue to increase our budget on drainage. We will continue to increase our budget on highways. We will continue to commit the funds that come from gasoline taxes. We will continue to go into all of those areas.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know the members opposite continue to talk about that this budget has

nothing good for farmers. Well, I just want to remind the members opposite that they should read the response from Keystone Agricultural Producers. "The provincial government announced some key agriculture initiatives in its Throne Speech today," said KAP. "While it is not the final solution to the education financing question, KAP is pleased that the Province has announced an additional 10 percent rebate on the education tax that is paid on farmland in 2006, bringing the total rebate to 60 percent."

Mr. Speaker, KAP also said that they are "extremely pleased that Manitoba has announced it will proceed with the Alternate Land Use Services Pilot Project and become the first province in Canada to recognize the essential role that farmers play in preserving and enhancing the environment." They also go on to say that "Manitoba's Clean Energy Strategy, which includes on-farm opportunities for wind generation and community-based ethanol and biodiesel development is a welcome announcement. KAP is optimistic about these initiatives that will not only benefit the environment, but also have a positive financial benefit for farmers and Manitoba rural communities."

As well, they go on to say, Mr. Speaker: "The 'farm it in Manitoba; finish it in Manitoba' mandate of the provincial government is certainly one that is appreciated by Manitoba farmers who see an urgent need to keep more agriculture value within the province, in rural communities and inside the farmgate." So the members opposite who stand up and say that there is nothing in this Throne Speech for farmers, there is no recognition of the farmers, should talk to KAP. I know some of the members opposite are very familiar with KAP, a few of them might even have membership cards to KAP in their pockets. So I would encourage them to talk to their executive and listen to some of the comments that the farm organization is saying about this Throne Speech.

* (15:40)

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to speak a bit about the announcement that we made yesterday. My colleague the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) and myself had the opportunity to speak to a group of people about biodiesel. It is quite exciting to have the announcement of the Minnedosa Husky plant expanding. I heard the member opposite say this government had no part of that. Well, the expansion

would not have happened without this government's mandate to increase ethanol use in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the St. Leon wind farm is another opportunity. I understand, not only are farmers making money because of the St. Leon wind farm, but Manitobans are looking at this site, and many people are visiting this site because they see it as a new and innovative way to create energy. I want to commend the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology and his predecessors who worked very hard on the Hydro deal and the sale of hydro to Ontario, which is a huge opportunity to produce clean energy, and I can assure you that there will be more opportunities that will come in this area.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak briefly about the biodiesel announcement. We were at a conference yesterday where producers, farmers, economic development people from across the province were at a meeting and were talking about production of biodiesel, and we are extremely pleased with the announcement that this government made with regard to the expansion of biodiesel production, the tax incentive that was there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that, with just those few comments, I am very supportive, I am very proud of the steps that our government has taken as we prepare for emergencies. We all hope that we do not have serious emergencies with regard to avian flu and other such issues, but we will continue to work in those. I am very proud that we have now hired a Chief Veterinarian officer who will be working along with the Chief Medical Officer to co-ordinate and put in place plans for Manitobans should we have to address serious pandemic concerns. I am very pleased with the work that they are doing.

I am very proud of what we are doing with energy, Mr. Speaker, and I am so pleased that we are able to deliver better health care service. We are able to reduce wait lists. When you look at the wait lists that we have for cancer treatment, if you look at the wait lists that we have for hip and knee replacements, if you look at the wait lists, we announced more money today to shorten those lists.

I am very proud of the work that our government is doing, and I am proud to be part of a government that we will continue to see work towards economic development in rural Manitoba. We will address the challenges of slaughter capacity. That has not been an easy file, but we will. I say to the member

opposite, stay tuned. The producers are working very hard on this file. Our money is there, and we will continue to work with them. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: More, more.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I have not started yet. Certainly, I am pleased that I, too, can respond to the Throne Speech. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the pages for the work that they are doing and will do, but also for the interns for the work that they do for us. I know that, coming out of university, it certainly is a learning experience for them, and, as some of them have indicated, it is a rather steep learning curve. So, yes, and by the way, one of the interns, this is a few years ago, who helped me and actually wrote my first speech, is sitting right beside me here, who is an MLA today. So you never know what could happen—*[interjection]*

No, no. He does not write my speeches for me today; that was many years ago. So, anyway, it is good to have those people within the building here assisting us and we do wish them well.

Mr. Speaker, I need to refer back to the seconder, I think it was, on the Throne Speech, the member from Minto. At the end of it he said that, and he gave a quotation here I thought was very fitting. He said he was quoting from Timothy. He said, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race and I have kept the faith." Good comment. I do not want to tell him just a little further, as legislators on both sides of the House, that with that also comes integrity and truthfulness. We need to put that to practice as well as we continue to debate and as we continue to deal with the issues that face us as a province.

Starting off with that and the member—*[interjection]* I will not go back to the comment that was made there, but, anyway, what I do want to, though, indicate is that this government since they have taken office have the increase in revenues where we now have an \$8.5-billion revenue base within the province of Manitoba. It is exponential growth that we have experienced within the last few years and that is good. I applaud that.

Being a businessman myself, I believe it is important that we continue to grow and to expand. The problem that I have as we have unprecedented growth is that the expenditures have been going beyond the growth that we have, and that is a problem which I know the members opposite do not

agree with. But the point is there that as a province we have an all-time record of debt. That is now being given to our children and to our grandchildren. So that is something that when you run a business, and face it, the province of Manitoba has the biggest business. We are running the biggest business within the province of Manitoba. There is none that compete with that as far as revenue is concerned.

We are to be good stewards of the dollars that are being expended out here. So some of the comments that I am going to be making are and I know that the members opposite will indicate and say, "Yes, so you want us to cut back on expenditures, but you want to spend money." That is very interesting that the minister of highways would say that, but there is such a thing that, as you create a budget and as you deal with the budget, you have priority spending. We all need to do that, and that is where the problem is as far as the government is concerned today.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I do need to move on, but I certainly would like to indicate that the Throne Speech, that Manitobans need to have a clear vision of where this government is going, and I must indicate to you that I did not see a clear direction. A lot of the things that were said in the Throne Speech were said last year, were said the year before. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) just gave her speech about all of the things that they have announced, but I think the scepticism that is out here is that we have announced, and we have re-announced, and we have re-announced that we are going to get a processing plant within the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Oh, you mention the hospital. Well, we made the announcement and we built it. Yes, Boundary Trails was built by the Conservative government. Yes, but back to the Minister of Agriculture. I want to clearly indicate that she has announcements and re-announcements on the same project. That is why with the biodiesel that was just announced now, I think it is a wonderful idea, but I am a little bit sceptical as to whether I will ever see it in my lifetime because we will have one announcement today. We will have another announcement tomorrow. So will this actually happen? So that is little comfort for those out there who are involved in the agri-business and in fact do need to make a living and do need to make a profit so that they can stay in business.

Now I know that the Minister of Agriculture always talked about the fact that as soon as you start talking about agriculture, then right away: Oh, the sky is falling, the sky is falling. Well, the reality of the situation is that we are in dire straits as an agricultural community. There is no doubt about it, and if the minister, if the members opposite, do not believe that, they should go to rural Manitoba.

* (15:50)

She indicates that you can survive off of crop insurance and you can survive off the CAIS program. I submit to you that that cannot take place under those programs. You cannot farm government programs. This year what you see is unprecedented problems. You have got, first of all, the weather you need to contend with. Then you have commodity-input prices at the extent you have never seen before. They have gone up and up and up. And then, couple that together with low commodity prices, and so the three parts do not work out. *[interjection]*

The Minister for Energy and Science (Mr. Chomiak) indicates that, well, do they control the weather, and I will tell you that in talking to those involved in agribusiness, their biggest frustration is not the weather because they realize that we do not control the weather. But there are some things that are controllable and that need to be worked on. I want to indicate to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that the CAIS program, although it is designed to help, does have many flaws in it. *[interjection]*

The minister of highways asked, "Is it not being revamped?" The comment on that one, it is not a predictable program. There needs to be something that those who are using it can go to the bank and make it bankable, if that is what they are supposed to use.

Now, the other comment that I have made, and this, again, is not a reflection on the government of the day, but the federal government, they did a survey across Canada. The survey came out about three months ago, which clearly indicated that of the developed countries in the world, in Canada the amount of money that the average income earner spends on food is the lowest in the developed countries at 9 percent.

Okay, so we pride ourselves on the fact that those out there who are producing the product are doing this at the cheapest rate. Now, on the other hand, though, with the input costs that are out there,

and, I mean, again, these are costs that the farmer has to bear and cannot pass onto the end user. Consequently, if that is what we are wanting to do, is to have the cheapest food policy in the country, somehow we are going to have to backfill that unless we have a different plan for those involved in agriculture.

Now, I have to tell you, just following on that, I met with a businessman on Saturday who lives in one of the communities that I represent. He has a store that he has been in business with for the last 30 years, and he is having a close-out sale. His comment was, "It is because of agriculture that I am shutting down." He said, "I was hoping that I would be able to retire, but I will be selling out. By the end of December, I will have sold out, and I need to go find another job." And he is in his mid-sixties.

So I am not only decrying the problems that agriculture is facing, but I am simply indicating that this has a ripple effect in the communities, and eventually this will hit the urban areas such as the city of Winnipeg, because agriculture still is the mainstay of the province.

Now, I know comments have been made that maybe we should redesign this whole thing called agriculture. Maybe we need to let it go back to its natural state. If that is the decision, then so be it, but I think that we should give our producers the opportunity to also help make some of those decisions.

I must move on, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of things that I need to talk about. I need to talk a little bit about priorities, as I said before. We have dollars coming into the province, and I represent an area, the constituency of Pembina, that is one of the fastest growing areas in rural Manitoba. Now, that is not as a result of what I have done there, although I would like to think I have had a little part in it, but we have had tremendous growth. Again, coming to education, we have about, right now, between 600 and 700 students in huts. I know that we are building a new school and it will be filled the moment that they open it up, but we will still have at that point in time several hundred students in huts. So the growth is taking place.

It is not only growth in education, it is growth in industry, so, consequently, there are tax dollars that are flowing to general revenue. My issue is we need to have dollars coming back to the area as well, not

disproportionate to other areas, but what I am saying is we need a fair share so that, in fact, we can continue to build the schools that we need.

We have an area where many people are retiring and moving into the area. Consequently, there are needs for personal care homes and there are long, long waiting lists. I know that I have talked to the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) about this, but Tabor Home is a home that needs to be replaced. Now, I know that those are capital dollars. All I am saying is that priority spending does have to take place.

Take the city of Winkler. As I indicated before, they have tremendous growth. So, again, Highway 32, which is a provincial highway, is something that needs to be four-laned. I know that the highways minister is here. I know he had a meeting with the council from the city of Winkler just last week—

An Honourable Member: Fine gentlemen.

Mr. Dyck: They are fine gentlemen, but they came back very, very disappointed because they had been given the year of 2012 where they might be looked at. For an area that is growing, that has unprecedented growth within the province of Manitoba, it is a provincial highway. It is a provincial highway; it is the Province's responsibility. I believe it is anywhere from four to six kilometres in length that they are looking at but, basically, there was not even a shadow of a glimmer of hope that it would be looked at.

Again, three years ago they did a survey, and there are between 16 000 and 18 000 vehicles going down a single-lane highway every day. Just the other day, I came through there and there were accidents there. *[interjection]* Oh, the minister of highways is indicating that they did something on Main Street. We put that in place. We put that in place.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Dyck: Yes, we did. It was in the books, and we put it in place, and then the minister—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Dyck: Yes, yes, oh yes. Oh yes. The designs and everything were done when we—

An Honourable Member: Was it in the capital program?

Mr. Dyck: The designs were completed under our administration.

An Honourable Member: You designed it. We built it.

Mr. Dyck: Okay, okay, all right.

So, anyway, what I want to indicate is that we are not looking for a disproportionate amount of infrastructure dollars within the area, but a growth area does need to have some recognition by the provincial government on the things taking place. I know that the minister of highways is aware of that, but, again, there was little comfort to know that maybe in the year 2012 it might, might be looked at. Again, the growth is taking place, so we need to address that issue.

In the area of justice, just a few comments that I need to make, and I want to recognize the MLA for Steinbach, who came out to my area and talked about crystal meth. He has been on that bandwagon for quite a while, but I believe that the government of the day needs to heed the information that he has and take the advice that he is giving because, again, when you give examples of young children, of young adults who are being hooked on this chemical and what it does to them, that we need to be proactive rather than reactive.

What I sense, again is there is always another press release coming out indicating, "Well, this is what we are going to do" or "This is what we are planning to do," but are you actually doing it? So that is a real concern for the area that I represent. Yet the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) did an excellent job of explaining to the audience the impact that these chemicals have on our youth, what ultimately happens as they are involved within the communities. So very important that we continue to address that. I am hoping that the government, although they have press releases, will actually do something about it.

The other area that I omitted to address under agriculture is the whole area of the JERI program, and I think the Minister of Agriculture alluded to the fact that the opposition here, that the critic for Agriculture, was very negative about the fact that there was not enough drainage taking place and so on. I would submit to the Minister of Agriculture that here was an opportunity that was lost. We could have used the JERI program, and under that you can access 90 percent of the funds from the federal government and 10 percent of the funds would have come from the Province. It would have done wonders within our area, I know, not only our area, north, wherever, any agricultural area. Any

municipality that, in fact, declared themselves a disaster would have been able to access those funds.

So this was an opportunity that was lost. It would have done several things: Obviously, it would have given good drainage to the land that is being farmed. Secondly, it would have also employed, and you would have had, again, the ripple effect of the dollars within the community. So I believe this was a missed opportunity. I know that, in the news release that we put out and the press conference that we had, this was a part of the information that we gave out. So I really feel badly about the fact that we missed on that opportunity to be able to give this to those involved in agriculture and, again, we would have seen the ripple effect taking place within the community.

* (16:00)

Now, I need to make a few comments regarding the job creation that the government has been talking about. They claim that they have had exceptional growth within that sector and yet, though, I like the one news release that came out. It said, "It is the NDP job creation strategy to hire everyone." Then it goes on to say, and this comes from the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba, while the Chartered Accountants of Manitoba study acknowledged that Manitoba experienced a 0.9 percent increase in employment rate in 2004, it noted that 25 700 of the 36 000 jobs created in the province since 1999 were public-sector positions. I have nothing against public-sector positions, but if that is how we are pretending to grow an economy, then I would suggest to the government of the day that, definitely, they are on the wrong track. That is not the right direction to take. So, again, while they go out there and indicate that this is the way to go, I would disagree with that.

Then there was another comment in one of the daily papers that said, "A truly dismal record for private-sector job gains." Again, this is not something that we should be proud of. And it is the same, again, on the same area, indicators. In the last five years, 36 000 net jobs have been created in Manitoba. However, 75 percent of those jobs were created in the public sector. So this government should be out there producing and creating an atmosphere where, in fact, jobs can be created. As the former member for Interlake indicated, he gave the example, he gave the analogy, of when you are creating jobs internally, you are just continuing to churn the waters internally. However, when you have

something that is new and then as an agriculture minister, he gave the example of a cow having a calf. Now, that was something that was not there before. That was new. That is what happens when you create a new job—[interjection]

Mr. Dyck: The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is mocking this analogy. Well, okay, she says she is citing a number of examples here, press release upon press release. What actually has taken place?

An Honourable Member: Nothing.

Mr. Dyck: Nothing. We were going to have a processing plant two and a half years ago. What is out there? Where is it? Where is it? You know, we are great on press releases, but actually what is taking place?

Mr. Speaker, I see that my light is flashing here, so I want to indicate that I will not be able to support the Throne Speech for the reasons that I have given, and just to end off, the bottom line is that we are the highest taxed province in all of Canada and so, in order to be able to keep the people in Manitoba, to keep them within the province, we need to create an environment where they do want to stay.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I want to thank you for this opportunity.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, an honour to once again rise to speak on the Speech from the Throne. First and foremost, I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the people of my constituency for, not once but twice now, having the faith in me and electing me and sending me to speak on their behalf in this Chamber. It is truly an honour, and I humbly thank them for bestowing that upon me.

I would also like to, as have other speakers, welcome the new pages and also our interns. These are young people who have excelled in school and have worked very hard to achieve the honour of being with us. So I would like to extend my congratulations to them as well.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long, hard summer for people in rural Manitoba. I think that goes without saying. The weather has been very, very difficult for us, not just this year, but in the last three years with the drought in 2003, which was further compounded by the onset of the BSE crisis, followed by the wet year last year and the early frost, and then this year there was virtually no summer at all it seemed. It

rained incessantly. It was so bad that even the berries in the forest did not come out. I walked around my small farm at Poplarfield, and there were no saskatoons whatsoever, no chokecherries. It was to the point where even the bears in our province were starving to death and coming out of the woods and being a threat to our people.

I notice the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) saying, "Did I shoot them all?" Well, there were some bears shot this year. I really do not think it was a laughing matter because there was a fatality in the Lac du Bonnet area as a result of this catastrophe. So members opposite may laugh, but it certainly was not an amusing scenario, not for the bears, not for the farmers and the people of rural Manitoba.

Our government has addressed this, has recognized this. Certainly, high water levels have been the number one issue. I happen to represent the constituency that has all of Lake Winnipeg in it, and this has been a body of water that has been under much debate in the last year. It exceeded its maximum range of regulation by upwards of 18 inches—incredibly high. This was something that we were working on right from January of last year, Mr. Speaker. I know that, in recognition of the potential for high water levels, the control gates at Jenpeg were wide open as of January. We were trying to address this potential catastrophe, with limited success, but when push came to shove and we were faced with a serious potential for flooding in the fall, this government, once again, stepped up to the plate with a \$8-million program to establish dikes around a number of communities in the south basin: Gimli, Winnipeg Beach, in my constituency, the community of Riverton. So, unlike previous governments, excluding the government of Ed Schreyer, of course, who also had a diking program back in the early 1970s, I highly compliment this government for addressing this problem.

I know a lot of people said, "Well, this is not necessary. We have lived around the lake for a hundred years, and this has never been a problem to any great extent." But I would remind them that that is what George Bush was saying in relation to the city of New Orleans prior to the Hurricane Katrina that hit this summer. There, you realize, it is a prime example that money spent in anticipation of a catastrophe is saved tenfold in comparison to doing nothing and then paying for damages after the fact.

That is part of our mentality, as well, in expanding the floodway, Mr. Speaker. It is something that, I guess, members opposite look enviously upon given that the decade or so that they were in office this was just one of a number of things that never came across their agenda.

Going into my own riding, we are also addressing water problems. I look at the Fisher River, which has been a problem for the communities of Peguis and Fisher River for a number of years. Finally, this government acknowledged that it was a problem, and we just this summer signed a deal with the federal government to cost-share on a 50-50 basis a number of incentives to deal with the problem there. We have done a lidar aerial survey of the Fisher River watershed, which was done in the Red River region prior to the decision on the floodway. Certainly, I am proud and happy that my government chose to take similar actions to address the problems on the Fisher River.

* (16:10)

I would segue into our water strategy on that note, Mr. Speaker. It is something that was neglected by previous governments. The Deputy Premier (Ms. Wowchuk) made reference to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) acknowledging in this House that drastic cuts were made to the drainage budget, and I will give them some credit in that they did put in place the water policies early on in their mandate. It is just unfortunate that they never really focussed on them and never really carried through on them in the decade that they had the opportunity to do so.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, when we came into office the situation was so bad already that a court in the Hildebrand case had actually ruled against the provincial government and essentially threw The Water Rights Act out of the window. So that was the situation when we came into office. The Province no longer even had jurisdiction over water rights of this province due to their negligence and ignorance over the needs. So that is where we started from and we have made considerable progress since then.

The vehicle that we have chosen to do it, in large part, is the Conservation Districts program, something put in place, again, by that visionary, the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer, back in the early 1970s. Up until the time we came into office, there were nine conservation districts, Mr. Speaker. There are now twice as many in the six years that we have been in office. We have doubled the number of

conservation districts, and I am proud to say that the 18th one that was finally put in place is the East Interlake Conservation District that was signed into being this summer. I thank the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Ashton) for coming out to Arborg for that momentous occasion.

We have done a number of other things. In addition to that, we have amended The Planning Act, Mr. Speaker. We have put in place The Water Protection Act. We have created a whole new Department of Water Stewardship in recognition of the seriousness of this problem and the challenge that our people face, a new department that deals specifically with this problem. So I think I can say with confidence that this government certainly has stepped up to the plate.

We have recognized the crisis on Lake Winnipeg and have constituted the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board chaired by former Mayor Barlow of Gimli. We are going to try and reduce the nutrient load back to pre-1970 levels, something that is long overdue, so we are going to step up to the plate in that regard.

We have rebuilt the Fairford control structure north of Ashern, and, hopefully, that will make managing Lake Manitoba easier as well, which is also a considerable challenge especially in terms of the Aboriginal peoples who have to live downstream of that structure, something that we are working on most diligently.

I would like to speak briefly about some of our energy objectives, and I think truly this will be a legacy of this government, the initiatives that we have taken in establishing clean energy. Of course, it was NDP governments that built dams in the past, and we are going to continue to build dams. Wuskwatim is on track, and with the half-a-billion dollar deal with the province of Ontario that we signed the first day of the session, I think that Conawapa is going to become a reality in the very near future as well.

I am very proud of what this government has done in terms of biofuels, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of days ago an announcement of the expansion of the ethanol industry to 130 million litres a year, thanks to this government that put in place the mandate of 10 percent usage in 85 percent of the fuel that will be consumed across this province. Because of that, this has become a reality. I was quite taken aback by the remarks made by members opposite about the biodiesel industry because this is something that is a reality now.

I was a member of the Manitoba Biodiesel Advisory Council, as was a constituent of mine, Mr. Paul Bobbee, and we are producing biodiesel in this province now. We have had a pilot project up on his farm in the Arborg area, and very soon now construction will begin on a production facility. So this is a reality, and I can certainly relate to members being envious of this accomplishment. I do not know if there were any discussions of biofuels while they were in office but, certainly, we have picked up the ball on this front and carried it forward. The minister just yesterday, as a matter of fact, made an announcement about biodiesel and how we are going to be doing a number of things to implement this in the days to come.

The Power Smart program saves 250 megawatts a year. We are looking at a home heating strategy. We have got the St. Leon wind farm now a reality. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, accomplished under this administration.

In terms of infrastructure, I am happy to be a member of the Interlake in this regard. The Premier (Mr. Doer) often makes reference to the endangered species the building crane in the city of Winnipeg here. Well, I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker, what an endangered species in the Interlake in the 10 years that the Conservatives were in power was the highway paving machine. It was something that was not seen at all in my constituency throughout the Filmon years. Not one highway that I think of was paved during their time in office.

As a matter of fact, there have actually been, I think, more sightings of Bigfoot, the Sasquatch, in the Interlake over the last five or so years than there were sightings of paving machines in the years that the Tories were in office. I think the epitome, the absolute epitome, of the work that we have accomplished would be Highway 68. We are in the process of finishing off this project across from No. 8 to Highway No. 6, and I compliment the construction company, Nelson River, for doing a wonderful job on this highway and a very speedy job as well, I might add. This is a sign of significant progress on the infrastructure front, something that was considerably lacking in times when Filmon and company were in power.

I would like to make reference to an assisted-living complex that is under construction in the town of Arborg right now. I want to thank the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) for paying particular attention to this proposal. There

was a lot of learning to be accomplished on all sides. It was not as smooth a process as we would have liked, I think, but, at the end of the day, everybody came to term and the building is under construction. Very soon now, the people of this community will have 32 beds to put people in care and so that is a building in the ground. That is shovels in the ground and buildings under construction.

I might make reference also to the Riverton Clinic that was constructed by this government, a primary health care facility. It will work quite nicely with our usage of advanced practice nurses, something that our government has also put in place to try and address the shortage of trained health care staff. So with the advanced practice nurses, the new complex in Riverton, that community's needs are being met at a very high level by this government.

On the justice front, I might add that for a number of years now, we have been in negotiation with the Aboriginal communities of Peguis and Fisher River. I compliment our Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) in that, very soon now, we will have Aboriginal detachments working out of both of these communities to address justice issues.

Last but not least, on the infrastructure front, I would make reference to the Northern Affairs communities of Pine Dock and Matheson Island. I believe waste disposal grounds and also sewer and water treatment facilities have been put in place in those communities to address some of their needs.

* (16:20)

On the agriculture front, of course, it goes without saying that we have stepped up to the plate. Last year, \$198 million paid out in crop insurance, \$25 million with the excess moisture insurance program, something that members opposite continue to claim was something that they had orchestrated. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that that is simply not true. They responded year by year with ad hoc programs. The farming people of this province always had to come to the Conservative government with their hat in their hand, on their knees, begging for money, "Save us, help us out."

This government treats farmers with more respect. One of the first things that we did when we came into office was we constituted the excess moisture program so that farmers do not have to guess every year whether or not they are going to be in crisis, whether or not they will be coming to government on bended knee. They know this

program is in place thanks to the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

That program, this year, is paying off even more in the sense that, I believe, \$58 million has been allocated to address this and close to \$300 million in crop insurance payments, with an additional \$15 million taken out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, to put into the CAIS pot so that it adds another tool. There are criticisms across the board about CAIS. But it is a federal program and, you know, we have spoken with Ottawa as much as we can. They have made some changes. But that is the tool we have to work with and that is where we will put our money and we did this year.

I give credit to the Minister of Agriculture for revamping the Department of Agriculture. It was probably close to 30 years since the department experienced a reorganization. We have since expanded the department to include rural initiatives as well, and just recently the new GO centres were put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I see my light is flashing already. I cannot believe I am out of time already. I have several other things I would like to speak about: the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force that, again, I was a member of and all the positive feedback on the topic of health, new ambulances, new facilities, challenges that we face, I admit, in communities like Eriksdale and Arborg. But, hopefully, we can make progress on those fronts. I know we have a very capable minister that is well aware of the challenges.

So, on that note, I thank you for the opportunity of speaking this afternoon. I commend the government for a seventh consecutive, consistent and very effective Throne Speech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I stand with pleasure to speak to the amendment to the Throne Speech—

An Honourable Member: Speaking to the subamendment.

Mrs. Mitchelson: —the subamendment to the Throne Speech. I would just like to thank my honourable friend from Burrows for the correction. I know that he and I have had a long-standing relationship in this House, and most times a productive or constructive relationship, so I thank him again for assisting me.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate at the outset that it is always a pleasure to come back into a new session. I must say that it was more of a pleasure when we were in government and were bringing in our Throne Speech and our vision for the direction that we would take the province over the year. But we have had the unfortunate opportunity to be in opposition for the last six years in the province. This is now the seventh time we have listened to the articulation of the vision for the province, for the future by this socialist government. Each year, we see more and more of that socialism creeping out from this Premier (Mr. Doer) and this government.

You know, I know members opposite would say, well, and I know some of them are a little more left-leaning maybe than their Premier is, and I know that their Premier, during the 1999 election campaign, wore his Tory blue suit on a regular basis and pretended very much like he was a friend of the business community and a friend of all those that had the initiative to build this province through hard work, through commitment, through building their own small businesses and, sometimes, large businesses. He pretended very much that he was a friend of that business community, and he succeeded in fooling many people because we have seen year after year after year the kinds of activities that previous socialist governments have implemented, the philosophy that the heavy hand of government knows better than hardworking Manitobans how to spend their money.

Socialists believe in digging into people's pockets and saying, "Give me your hard-earned money. Give it to me. Give it to big government because we know what is best for you. We know best where your money should go." Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, have not been fooled. They have not been fooled at all. They know and they understand, just like all families do need to understand, that you have to live within your means. You cannot open a charge card and charge and charge and charge and never pay off the debts because you end up bankrupt. We all know that, in our own households, yes, credit is very easy to get. It is very easy to spend, but it is hard to pay back when the interest accumulates, when the debt accumulates and, all of a sudden, you have no room to move.

We have seen, over the years of this NDP government, the debt of the province of Manitoba increasing on a yearly basis, increasing on a daily basis to the point where we, as a province and as one million people in this province, have a debt that is

\$20 billion and growing. Mr. Speaker, how on earth can we expect our children and our grandchildren to have to pay off the debt that this government has accrued. And, you know, they stand up and they talk about how they are running a balanced budget and they do not have a deficit year after year, but the reality is that the debt of the province of Manitoba is growing to a point where the young people that are sitting up in the gallery today are going to have to suffer and continue to pay more to fuel the spending addiction that this government has got itself into.

Mr. Speaker, I know, and I know many that are sitting in this Legislature know, that you have to learn to live within your means. You have to learn to live within your means and this government just does not get it. This Premier, who has tried to fool Manitobans into thinking that he is a blue-suit Conservative is finding out, and Manitobans are figuring out, that that is not the case. I want to indicate that the longer you are in government, sometimes the more arrogant you become, the lazier you become.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we were there for 11 years. I was there for 11 years of good government, and I know that there comes a point in time in the electoral cycle that people say, "Enough is enough" or "We want a change." We went through that in 1999 and I was a part of that. I started off my political career in opposition, ended up spending 11 years in government where I felt I had the ability to make an impact, a positive impact, in some areas. There was more that I would have liked to have done, but the electorate decided that it was time for a change in government and that was what we saw in 1999.

* (16:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, I know that that cycle will go around. What goes around comes around in politics. There is not any government that is government for life, and we are at the point in this government's mandate where they have to stand up and take responsibility for some of the decisions that they have made and for the commitments that they have made that they have not been able to follow through on.

Manitobans are now starting to look at this government and say, "What did we get for the votes that we provided for them?" Mr. Speaker, I know what Manitobans are getting today. Manitobans are getting today a debt that is growing out of proportion and an economy that is just not moving. We are not

seeing the creation of private-sector jobs. Most of the jobs that have been created in the province are public-sector jobs, and taxpayers cannot continue to sustain a growing bureaucracy when we do not have on the other side the private sector creating the jobs that will make Manitoba healthy. It is those entrepreneurs that put the effort and the energy into starting a business, taking the risk, creating jobs that in turn fuel the tax space of this province so that we can provide the much needed programming on the social services side of government. We need to have the resources to provide adequate health care in a timely basis.

Mr. Speaker, there are some on the other side that are heckling a little and saying we are talking about socialist services. No. I want to make it very clear that socialist services and the top-down heavy hand of government that says we know better how you should live your life is not what I am talking about. I am talking about the much needed services that people want and deserve in this province, the first, of course, being health care.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think probably in the city of Winnipeg, I have the largest senior population of any constituency. [*interjection*] Yes, I did get a lot of votes from my senior citizens' blocks, and I did because I listened to them, and I attempted to meet their needs and help them in a time of need. But it is getting more and more difficult for me to be able to help them because the wait lists are so long. They are living in the community where they feel afraid to be in their own homes. They are not getting the access to the health care system in a timely basis when they need it. We have senior citizens in our community who need this government to move and to act to shorten the wait lists and get on with providing the kinds of health care services that they need.

Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful school division in the River East Transcona School Division, although they are struggling a little these days because of the forced amalgamation that this government placed on River East School Division. It is costing more money, not less, as a result of that forced amalgamation. Many of the taxpayers and the property-school taxpayers in River East constituency are saying enough is enough. I make sure I point out to them why they are paying more school taxes on their property taxes. It is a direct result of the heavy hand of this socialist government that forced amalgamation down their throats, and I do on a regular basis let them know why their education property taxes are going up.

Mr. Speaker, we did in 1999 make a commitment to remove education tax off property tax. Education taxes funded on property are not a fair way of supporting our education system. I have a daughter who is an elementary schoolteacher in the city of Winnipeg, and I have nothing but respect for the work that teachers do in our school system. I know, from time to time, that there are significant challenges and challenges that we may not have even thought of or anticipated when we were going to school, but life is much more complex today, and it is very difficult for our teachers to ensure that they have the opportunity and the ability to deal with the wide array of issues that they have to face in the classroom today. So I have nothing but respect for our educators who work hard on a day-to-day basis to try to ensure that our children learn. We need to fund their education system properly, and we need to fund it in a way that is fair to all Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage this government to move expeditiously and at least articulate a plan for removal of education tax from our property tax bills. Again, when I talk about the number of seniors in my community, I have to indicate that some of them are having to sell their homes because they can no longer afford the taxes. They have worked all their lives, their houses are paid off, they have no mortgage, but the high taxes are driving them out of their houses. This government, after six years in office, has to start to take some responsibility for where we are at today. It is fine for them to go back to the past and blame everyone, but Manitobans in my constituency are getting tired of the blame game. They want a government to listen to their concerns, to deal with the issues and to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, they do not want a government to come with top-down control and tell them, tap them on the back, and say, "It is okay, dear. Just let me dig a little deeper into your pockets. I will take a bit more of your money. I will tax you a little more. I will raise your driver's licence fee. I will put all kinds of fees and taxes in place because, you know what? Give the money to me. Give the money to us as big government, and we will decide how to spend your money." Well, that does not wash for long, and people are starting to recognize and to realize what they really have in this government. They are not going to take this for much longer. They are going to realize and recognize that the time has come for a change and they will, in fact, at some point in the not-too-distant future decide that it is time for a

change in this government. So that will come and we know that it is not that far away.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that I could not support the vision in this Throne Speech. There is not a vision. There is not a direction. There is not hope for Manitobans to see a prosperous future that would see them have more money in their pockets at the end of the day because of right decisions because we are not going to see that. You know, I just go back to the time that I first ran, and I know that my colleague from Elmwood was around at the time, he will remember very well the issue of Manitoba Public Insurance and the deceit that the NDP government, under Howard Pawley at the time, sort of held over or presented Manitobans with when they, before an election, kept Autopac rates very low, and then right after they got elected, ramped them up to a point that was unconscionable. There was a public revolt. The member from Elmwood often teases me about the horses and the hay wagon that were out on the front of the Legislative grounds in those days when Manitobans came and protested and spoke and said they were not going to take it any longer, "Enough is enough."

*(16:40)

The member from Elmwood thinks I still have those horses and that cart in my garage waiting, and I keep saying to him, "Yes, they are waiting," because the day will come around again when Manitobans are fed up with the kind of government that they are receiving from this NDP. They will say, again, "enough is enough" and they will vote this government out. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Just by coincidence, I am speaking after the Member for River East, and she paid me a compliment, saying I always made constructive comments. It was very interesting to be her critic for six years. In retrospect, I could say that sometimes it drove me crazy. But I think my criticism was usually constructive, so I thank her for that compliment.

I would like to welcome the new pages to the Legislative Assembly, I hope that you enjoy your stay here, and also congratulate and welcome the university students who were chosen as Legislative Internship Program students, because we have always had excellent students, and I think the Conservative caucus always has as well. Some of them have the privilege of being hired as staff

afterwards. We have many of those working for government in caucus, and they do an excellent job as well.

I would also like to pay tribute to John Loewen. I do not think anybody in the Tory caucus will pay tribute to the former MLA for Fort Whyte, so I will. I believe that he was a person of conscience, that he spoke up on issues he believed strongly in, even if his caucus and party disagreed with him. I appreciate his concern for residents of the North End, which began before his election as a MLA and continues to the present time. He promised to raise \$1 million from the private sector for the North End Wellness Centre, and I will be phoning him to ask him what progress he is making because it is a major undertaking. The provincial government was first to make a commitment of \$1 million towards a new North End Wellness Centre. Then the federal government, just before an election, committed \$1 million. John Loewen committed to raising a million dollars from the private sector, and there will be community fundraising as well. We hope that some progress is being made.

You know, it is rather interesting that, when you have a project at the seat of a federal Cabinet minister, they get a lot of money. For example, the wellness centre beside Seven Oaks Hospital, they got millions of dollars to build that, which benefits higher-income people in north Winnipeg the most, those who can afford the membership fee. But when it comes to raising money in a low-income neighbourhood like the North End for a wellness centre, which has similar goals in terms of keeping people healthy and active and providing recreation, it has been very, very difficult to raise money. We hope that the federal government would support the North End Wellness Centre to the same extent that they supported the Wellness Centre beside Seven Oaks Hospital. We will be talking to them and encouraging them to have a similar level of commitment to the North End Wellness Centre that they did to the Seven Oaks Wellness Centre.

Now, I would like to expand on my member's statement of October 28 because I know it is of great interest to members of the Conservative caucus. So I would like to read from the news release where I first learned of the fact that New Democrats and New Democratic governments are the most fiscally responsible in Canada. This is based on a federal government report which says, "New Democratic Party governments have the best fiscal track record

among all parties, balancing the books more than twice as often as Liberal governments," according to a federal government report released today, which was September 23, 2005. The report shows that NDP governments have balanced the books 46 percent of the time. Manitoba's NDP government has posted surpluses every year it has been in office and Saskatchewan's NDP government posted 11 consecutive balanced budgets after ending a decade of Conservative mismanagement and corruption. If memory serves me right, the Grant Devine government racked up a total debt of about \$10 billion which the NDP inherited. Well, we have had a balanced budget in Saskatchewan every year for 11 years, and some of those Conservatives went to jail, as the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) points out.

Despite Paul Martin's frequent pronouncements on fiscal responsibility, Liberals have the worse fiscal record overall. Liberal federal, provincial and territorial governments have posted year-over-year budget deficits an astonishing 79 percent of the time. Conservative governments have only a slightly better record than the Liberals, logging deficits 65 percent of the years in which they have been in power. The report issued on September 23 by the Liberal government's Department of Finance looks at federal, provincial and territorial accounts over the past 22 years. The reference is the Fiscal Reference Tables, September 2005.

I think the fact that we are the most fiscally responsible party in Canada points to the fact that we have a balanced government in Manitoba. We have balanced budgets and we have increased spending on health, education and social programs as well as reducing taxes, reducing pension liabilities and the operating debt.

I am going to keep my remarks short this afternoon, but I would like to highlight some of the things in the Speech from the Throne, such as preparing for emergencies. We will be introducing legislation this session to heighten our ability to respond to disasters of whatever nature. I think this is what the public expects because people in the health field have been predicting a worldwide pandemic, and certainly we need to be ready for that. We need to have a plan and we need to have legislation in place to deal with it, and we will.

Next I would like to talk briefly about how we are building on Manitoba's clean energy advantage. You know, in Manitoba we have sort of a Green

Party, but I do not think we really need a Green Party in Manitoba because I think the New Democratic Party is the green party of Manitoba. We are making progress on a large number of fronts.

For example, the recent half-a-billion dollar agreement to sell power to Ontario shows that our province's efforts to develop our hydro-electric capacity are paying off, and this is only the beginning. So far only half of the province's hydro-electric potential has been developed, and we certainly hope and plan to develop much more of this clean and renewable energy source. We are actually probably one of the provinces in all of Canada that has the cleanest source of energy because it comes from hydro. Many of the other provinces are very dependent on coal or on nuclear power which have environmental consequences which are much greater than hydro.

While Manitobans enjoy the lowest electricity rates in North America, we cannot escape the looming spike of natural gas prices, but our government will be cushioning the impact for consumers with its Manitoba Home Heating Strategy which will help homeowners save energy in a variety of ways. Our government also plans to change existing legislation so that the Public Utilities Board can give Manitoba Hydro the ability to defer gas price increases.

So we are doing a number of things. Power Smart will be introducing new programs of conservation, so that people can reduce their gas consumption which means that their gas consumption will go down and their gas bills will go down. We are also passing legislation that will affect the Public Utilities Board in order to defer gas price increases.

I think consumers will be very happy with that because in other provinces, gas prices are going way up, and in Manitoba they will not go up nearly as much. I think that is good news. *[interjection]* Well, the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) should be aware that I do not make promises I cannot keep and neither does our government. I am not going to say something about gas prices which is not going to be true. We are going to limit or defer gas price increases. That is what we are committing to. I am glad the Member for Pembina has got it straight and understands that.

We continue to build on Manitoba's clean energy advantage on other fronts. The wind farm that is now generating emission-free electricity in St. Leon is

just the first of many. I look forward to going to St. Leon. I think it is probably in the constituency of Carman, if I am correct. *[interjection]* But there is going to be some in Pembina as well? There must be a lot of wind down there. I wonder if it is just coincidental that they are Conservative ridings with all that hot air in the summer, maybe some hot air in the winter. Anyway, we are going to capitalize on it. We are going to transform that wind into energy and it is benefiting farmers. They are very happy their land is going to be leased as another source of income to diversify the income of farmers.

* (16:50)

An Honourable Member: Can you get some more?

Mr. Martindale: Well, you will have to talk to Manitoba Hydro. I do not know where those new wind farms are going, but I hope that the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) benefits from wind farms, and the Member for Pembina. We want to spread this around because we want to help rural Manitoba as much as possible, and we are committed to doing that on many, many fronts.

We continue to build on Manitoba's clean energy advantage, oh, not just by generating emission-free electricity in St. Leon, but we are expanding ethanol production in Minnedosa. We are going to mandate the use of a 10 percent blend of ethanol in gasoline to reduce vehicle emissions. We are also encouraging the construction of biodiesel production facilities in our rural communities. The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) spoke about biodiesel today, and I know that that is something that will also benefit rural Manitoba. Taken all together, our clean energy developments in hydro-electricity, wind farms and biofuel production will be \$3 billion for the Manitoba economy, and that is a lot of money, \$3 billion. That is a significant investment, and most of that is going into rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba.

We are delivering better health care sooner. It is our government's intent to deliver new programs which will benefit all Manitobans. Like the other provinces, we are party to a national health accord, benchmarks for wait times in five treatment areas: cancer care, heart treatment, diagnostic imaging, sight restoration and joint replacement. Our government is also acting on its own Wait Times Reduction Strategy, which goes several steps further, covering wait times for children's dental services, mental health programs, pain management and treatment for sleep disorders. I am pleased to see we

are adding benchmarked measurements to sleep disorders, because that is a waiting list that I am personally familiar with.

This strategy calls for hiring more medical professionals, investing in equipment, improving primary care and modernizing management practices. That is also going to benefit the constituents of Burrows because NorWest Health Centre is going to become an access centre. It will be called the Inkster Access Centre and we are certainly looking forward to that positive development happening in the Burrows constituency. But it is not going to just benefit constituents in Burrows. It will also benefit constituents in the Inkster constituency and the Wellington constituency, because it is part of the Inkster-Keewatin health area. So it will benefit a lot of people in north Winnipeg and also south of the tracks.

Since 1999, Manitobans have seen some dramatic improvements in wait times. The average wait time for radiation treatment most cancers has been reduced from six weeks to about one week, and the wait list for cardiac surgery has been cut in half.

To meet our goals, we need more doctors. Our government has already increased the number of physicians practising in this province by 235 since 1999. This includes the record 96 new doctors that we secured last year, but we are intent on raising the number further by adding 23 spaces to the University of Manitoba Medical School, introducing special programs for foreign-trained doctors and extending loans to medical students who will set up practice in Manitoba. Next year, as the Throne Speech announced, we will be creating a recruitment co-ordination office and a Web page to help communities across the province recruit doctors. I think the plans to accredit more foreign-trained doctors are especially important because we have a number of foreign-trained doctors in Manitoba who cannot practise and we are going to see that more of those people can be accredited to use their skills for the benefit of society.

The demand for diagnostic tests grows as we invest more in diagnostic equipment. Since 1999, we have tripled the number of MRIs dedicated to patient care, installed 16 new CT units and purchased 20 new ultrasounds. Manitobans want not just better care sooner but also care closer to home. Our government is responding by bringing chemotherapy programs to a number of rural communities and newer expanded dialysis units to northern hospitals.

We have also opened new primary health centres, which provide a range of health-related services under one roof in several rural areas.

As the Throne Speech notes, we are also improving emergency medical services in rural and northern Manitoba by replacing all the province's 160 ambulances with state-of-the-art vehicles. These will all be linked by phone to the new emergency services command centre in Brandon, and I was pleased to be at the news conference at the Keystone Centre in Brandon last year during the agricultural exhibition in Brandon. *[interjection]*

Yes, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, and that is where the announcement was made, That new call centre is in Brandon, and, with the ambulance, it shows once again our commitment to rural Manitoba. It does not end at wind farms.

Combatting crime. Crime is certainly a concern of my constituents in Burrows, and I do get phone calls about issues like prostitution and drug dealers. But I am very pleased that our government introduced legislation called The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, which has been very effective at combatting particularly drug dealing and prostitution. I do not have the statistic in front of me, but I think we are up to about 122 houses that have been closed with the use of The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. It has been used in the Burrows constituency. It is very effective because, if a house or an address is causing a nuisance in the neighbourhood because of activities like sniffing or a booze can or prostitution or drug dealing, people can report this to the public safety unit. The police will investigate, and they have the power to shut down either a suite or an entire house. We are using it very effectively to put pressure on people to move harmful activities out of our neighbourhoods and keep them on the run, so to speak. I have certainly made use of this act and the investigative powers that it gives to report on addresses in my constituency and they have been shut down.

By the way, I was going to tell the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) that what he was quoting from the Bible was not a proverb. It was actually from one of the prophets, and I am sorry that I forgot to look it up. It has become a proverb in the English language, and that is, "Without a vision, the people perish." But it is actually from one of the prophets, and I will look up the exact source of that

quote and give it to the Member for River Heights because he needs to be corrected a little bit and given the exact source of his quote. But I appreciate hearing that from the Member for River Heights.

It is a quote that I have used in the past in sermons. I do not know how appropriate it is at the Legislative Assembly, but certainly it is a text that I have used in the past in sermons.

An Honourable Member: What is your favourite quote?

Mr. Martindale: What is my favourite quote? Probably Amos: "Let justice flow down like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." That is probably my favourite Scripture passage. However, that is not what I am here for today. I am here to reply to the Speech from the Throne, and my colleagues across the way got me sidetracked.

Combatting crime, as I was talking about. Although there is much we want to do to make our communities safer, indications are that the strategies we have developed are working. There has been, for instance, a decrease in violent crime rates over the last two years. Our strategy of involving police, community members and all levels of government in ridding neighbourhoods of fortified buildings, drug dens, sniff houses and brothels has brought results. Over 120 such places have been shut down, so there is the statistic I was looking for. That was the result of The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. We have shut down 120 places that were causing problems and being a nuisance in the neighbourhood. As a result, this approach will be extended and used to close down more gang houses.

We continue to be a national leader in combating domestic violence. Our Domestic Violence and Stalking Prevention, Protection and Compensation Amendment Act comes into force this year, enabling more victims of domestic violence to become eligible for protection orders. Our government will be proposing ground-breaking legislation to make protection orders granted by courts in other provinces enforceable in Manitoba.

Another successful strategy that we will be expanding is our domestic violence front end project, which dramatically reduced the backlog of domestic violence cases before the courts. The same procedures are now going to be applied to all cases

where offenders are awaiting trial in custody, not just domestic violence cases, ensuring speedier justice.

The after-school programs we have launched through our Lighthouses initiative have been bringing teens off the street, engaging them in educational, recreational activities and offering alternatives to criminal gang involvement. These programs have shown great promise, and we will be expanding them. One of them is in Burrows. It is in the King Edward constituency, and I congratulate

our Attorney General for bringing in the Lighthouses Program. There is much, much more—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will have 10 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

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