

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
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ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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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.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 8, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 208—The Elections Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 208, The Elections Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, this bill makes it an offence during an election to vandalize or steal an election sign which doesn't belong to you. The bill provides, among other things, for a minimum of a 24-hour period in jail for somebody who's convicted of an offence under this act.

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

PETITIONS

Grace General Hospital ER

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government has not ensured that the Grace Hospital emergency room is staffed with a full complement of ER doctors. The ER has been short several doctors for more than two years.

Because of this shortage, only one ER doctor is working on many shifts, forcing long patient waits for emergency care.

Residents of the community fear that the Grace Hospital ER will be forced to close if this ER doctor shortage is not fixed immediately.

The provincial government has not come forward with a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider developing a clear, immediate plan to address the ER doctor shortage.

To request the Minister of Health to consider taking all necessary steps to ensure the Grace Hospital emergency room does not close.

Signed by Debbie Klassen, D. Klassen, Aubrey Windor and many, many more.

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

Provincial Trunk Highway 10

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Provincial Trunk Highway 10 separates two schools and residential districts in Forrest, Manitoba, forcing students and residents to cross under very dangerous circumstances.

Strategies brought forward to help minimize the danger pose either significant threats to the safety of our children or are not economically feasible.

Provincial Highway 10 serves as a route for an ever-increasing volume of traffic, including heavy trucks, farm vehicles, working commuters, campers and the transport of dangerous goods.

Traffic levels are expected to escalate further due to the projected industry expansions.

We petition the Manitoba Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) to act on this situation by considering the construction of a four-lane highway that would pass by the village of Forrest.

This petition signed by Laureen Whitford, Linda Gregorash, Daniel Wong and many others.

Headingley Foods

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by Theresa Einarson, Pauline Wilks, Wendy Bullard and many, many other Manitobans.

Rapid Transit System

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

For decades, indecision and lack of support by NDP and Conservative governments in Manitoba has meant Winnipeg has been denied a much-needed rapid transit system.

While a rapid transit system has particular benefits for students, for seniors and for those on low incomes, all Winnipeggers benefit from building a quicker, more environmentally friendly rapid transit system.

Rapid transit is one of the major components of building a livable and sustainable 21st century city that decreases dependence on importing gas from other provinces and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Rapid transit is a critical component in moving Winnipeg toward smart growth policies that focus on quality of life.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his NDP government to consider ensuring that Winnipeg has a rapid transit system as soon as possible.

Signed by Jennifer Lukorich, Paul Hesse, Yarko Petrystryn and many, many others.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to read my petition when the Premier (Mr. Doer) is here?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamoureux: Well, he should be here.

* (10:10)

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind honourable members that mention of members whether they're present or absent is against our rules, and I would caution all members to be very, very careful. When we're on Petitions, that's the time to read the petitions.

The honourable Member for Inkster, do you wish to do your petition?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, my apologies, Mr. Speaker,

Provincial Nominee Program

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:

Immigration is critically important to the future of our province, and the 1998 federal Provincial

Nominee Program is the best immigration program Manitoba has ever had.

The government needs to recognize that unnecessary backlogs in processing PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

The government needs to recognize the unfairness in its current policy on who qualifies to be an applicant, more specifically, by not allowing professionals such as health-care workers to be able to apply for a PNP certificate in the same way a computer technician would be able to.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Premier (Mr. Doer) and his government to consider improving and strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program in order to recognize and acknowledge how important immigration is to our province.

This is signed by Daisy Poe, W. de la Cruz, Beth Panganiban and many, many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation and the 2006 Annual Report of the Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corporation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba's Economy Competitive Tax Rates

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier. It's not about park reservation systems.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen other provinces across the country take action to create a competitive economic environment. In B.C., in particular, they've brought taxes down and the result is that their year-over-year job growth last year, from May of '06 to May of '07, full-time new jobs: 63,200 in British Columbia. In Alberta, 54,800 new full-time jobs over the 12-month period leading up to May of this year. Even Saskatchewan, 3,700 new full-time jobs. What was the number here in Manitoba for that same 12 month period? Minus 300 full-time jobs in Manitoba. This is the result of years of high tax-and-spend policies. In B.C., where they reduce taxes, jobs go up. In Manitoba, taxes stay high, jobs go down.

I wonder if the Premier is going to heed the warning and do something about Manitoba's uncompetitive tax rates.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, I find it passing strange that the member opposite, a couple of days after we promised to eliminate the small-business tax, having gone from 8 to 3 percent, the member opposite actually just took a photocopying machine and copied our business tax reductions. Well, he copied the policy on the small-business tax elimination four days after we announced it. He copied the announcement on the corporate tax which was 17 percent when we came into office. He had the exact same promise over the next four years as we did. He incorporated the increase in the threshold on the payroll tax in this fiscal year, the '07 fiscal year, as we had and then he projected it on the same kind of increase as the threshold for the next four years.

The capital tax elimination, which was never touched by the Conservatives, he also copied in the election campaign. I believe he even copied the proposal on the manufacturing credit that we brought in over the last three years and, to some degree, has had a positive impact, in spite of the Canadian dollar, on the manufacturing jobs in Manitoba. The manufacturing jobs in Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the increase in manufacturing jobs is up 6 percent. The national average is below, I think, minus 1 or 2 percent. Again, those numbers were confirmed again today, and his facts are wrong on the year-over-year numbers.

Government's Policies

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier, speaking of passing strange, is now taking issue with Stats Canada numbers which just came out this morning. The contradictions in the Premier's position, who today seems to be saying he's in favour of tax reductions, through the campaign was against tax reductions saying it was reckless to cut taxes. He sounds more and more like John Kerry, who was in favour of the war before he was against it. He's against tax cuts before he's in favour of them, but the fact is that we've lost 300 full-time jobs in Manitoba over the last year and it's because of his government's economic policies or lack of economic strategy.

Now the other number that we've learned, Mr. Speaker, is that Stats Canada has now released numbers that show that Manitoba went from having the lowest unemployment rate in the country when he took office to having the fourth lowest, the worst unemployment rate in western Canada.

When is the Premier going to heed the warnings? When is he going to acknowledge that we can no longer rest on our laurels, ignore the red flags the way he did with Crocus? When is he going to heed the warnings and do something to make Manitoba competitive?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the job increase month to month was close to 3,000. The labour force enrolment rate now is over 70 percent. I would point out it was in the low 60s in the previous administration's term. I also would point out the year-over-year numbers are not minus 300, as the member alleges, they're quite positive. Most months they're double and triple what they were in the 1990s.

I was just at the car dealers' association this morning. Again, notwithstanding the shot from the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), they're feeling very positive about a 6 percent increase in sales again, over the national average, which is minus 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about John Kerry. I would welcome the issue of the war in Iraq. Our caucus supported Prime Minister Chrétien's decision not to go in Iraq. Many members of the Conservative Party asked us to support George W. Bush in supporting the war in Iraq, and I'm glad we didn't.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind all honourable members that when the Speaker is standing all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier wants to talk about federal issues then why don't we talk about his willingness or unwillingness to stand up to the federal leader, Jack Layton, who he brought in as a celebrated hero at his last AGM; the same Jack Layton that watered down amendments to the Criminal Code, that delayed and stonewalled amendments to the Criminal Code to get tough on crime.

He talks about a vision and election promises. He goes around promising an even bigger icebreaker for Selkirk because the last one he promised wasn't big enough. Mr. Speaker, I don't know, maybe he's going to announce the world's biggest emergency room for cows with SARS, or I don't know what's next, but the issue here is that the number of jobs lost in Manitoba, full-time jobs, is 300. It's not my number, it's Stats Canada. Stats Canada: 300 full-time jobs lost in Manitoba. The fourth lowest unemployment rate in the country when we used to have the lowest.

When is the Premier going to start responding directly to questions about Manitoba's sagging economic performance which puts in jeopardy jobs and opportunities for people in the future for our province?

* (10:20)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Canadian average was 10,000 jobs over the last month, and I believe we were 2,700 of those 10,000 jobs. I particularly think it's interesting in the manufacturing sector. Again, with the dollar going up, and I want to give credit to our entrepreneurs and our manufacturers and our employees. I think they're doing a great job in spite of the challenges. We think they're doing a wonderful job.

Mr. Speaker, you know, you can take these stats; we believe they're very positive. The member opposite will say the sky is falling, but, you know, everywhere I go, in my own area, there's housing starts taking place; there's renovations taking place. When populations are growing, when there's more people working, people's house values went up.

The best testimony to economic data from neighbours and friends is in the 1990s. Your house values didn't go up one nickel in 10 years, and now people are getting more than what they ask for. Their house values are going up. They're feeling positive about the economy. That is, in turn, creating more jobs. It's creating more sales of cars. I met the car dealers this morning. I know the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) didn't want me to go there. He wanted me to pay attention to his never-ending petitions, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to drop by McDonald's one day to hear him.

We are pleased that 2,700 jobs went up this last month. The taxes are going down, the employment is going up, and people know it. People know what's going on because they see it in their own

neighbourhood. They see the house values going up. Read the *Homes* section in some of the local newspapers. Every week asking price 235, sale price 260. You never saw that under the Tories, I can guarantee you, Mr. Speaker.

Job Creation Government's Record

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's economy is clearly not performing well. Let's make this clear. Stats Canada says Manitoba lost 300 full-time jobs from May '06 to May '07. No denial of that. During that same period of time, Saskatchewan gained 3,700 full-time jobs. Alberta gained nearly 55,000 full-time jobs. British Columbia gained more than 63,000 full-time jobs. Same period of time, Manitoba lost 300 full-time jobs, and this is what this minister in his news release today says and claims to be an impressive start to 2007.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: With such pathetic growth numbers in Manitoba, why does he refuse to create an economy in Manitoba capable of creating full-time, long-term jobs in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada, the numbers that came out today show that the Manitoba economy is smoking. It's absolutely smoking.

The participation rate in the labour force is at 70 percent. It's a historic high. Seventy percent of those people able to work are participating in the labour force. In May, the labour force grew. According to Statistics Canada, the labour force grew by 5,700 persons, the largest increase in Canada. In May, 2,700 more jobs were created; in May, the second largest increase in Canada. Mr. Speaker, 1,600 of those jobs were in the private sector; 3,200 full-time jobs in May. That's Stats Canada.

When will the member apologize for misinformation in the House?

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, clearly there's smoke in this economy, but there's no fire in this economy, none whatsoever.

The record of this NDP government is clear. In 1999 Manitoba had the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Today Manitoba has the highest unemployment rate in western Canada. All other western Canadian provinces have economies that are creating long-term, full-time meaningful jobs.

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why has he refused to create an economy that keeps up with the rest of western Canada? Why can't he keep up with even Saskatchewan?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, so far in '07, since January of '07, we have created 7,800 jobs. Now the members opposite, when they were in government, they said it's the private sector's responsibility. They take no responsibility for anything when they're in government. We say it's a partnership; we say the private sector, we say the non-profit sector, we say the government. Everybody has to work together to make a stronger economy, and that's what's happening in Manitoba right now.

Now the member refers to Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has had a very good economy under the NDP government which, by the way, is in its fourth term in Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, while our employment has grown by 7,800 jobs, they've actually lost 1,700 jobs in Saskatchewan. So the members opposite should get their facts right and acknowledge that the economy's hot in Manitoba.

Mr. Hawranik: In 1999, Manitoba had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Within eight short years Manitoba now has the highest unemployment rate in western Canada. Now, with the loss of 300 full-time jobs over the last year, what will the Minister of Finance say to the more than 10,000 graduates who are graduating this year from Manitoba's colleges and universities who will be looking for full-time jobs to stay in Manitoba?

So I ask the Minister of Finance: Why is he forcing our graduates to leave Manitoba to find full-time jobs outside of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in the first question I said our economy was smoking; the second question it is hot. It's smoking hot in Manitoba right now. There are more jobs in this province than in '99; 50,000 more jobs in this province since 1999. There are more people living here because of our program. There are more young people living here, there are more young people participating in the economy and the wages are growing faster than the Canadian average. As a matter of fact, out of 31 indicators on the economy, Manitoba, in three-quarters of those indicators, is above the Canadian average. We're smoking hot. The only thing that's going the wrong way is the intelligence, the perceptions and the awareness of the members opposite. They're out to lunch and it's only 10:30.

Child Welfare System Availability of Reviews

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Manitobans were shocked to learn of the details of the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair, and the fact that she was essentially lost in the child welfare system here in Manitoba. In fact, many of the details have not yet been revealed to Manitobans. They're subject of a publication ban as a result of a bail hearing and yet, Manitobans are looking for justice not just in the court system but to ensure that our child welfare system is operating in a way that protects all children.

Can the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chomiak) indicate whether or not information that has come forward from preliminary hearings has been forwarded to officials in Child and Family Services to ensure they can be acted upon in a timely manner?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, this was a matter of some discussion in the Legislature in earlier months and, I think, it's all well known to members that there were external reviews. In fact, certainly there was more than one into the circumstances of that.

I think more importantly though is our commitment to a public inquiry. It's very important, I think, for all Manitobans, recognizing that we all have a role in protection of our children, to understand how a child could have been dead for month after month after month in this province. We really need that kind of inquiry done in a full and transparent way, and that's what we've committed to.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, while members of this party, Manitobans, I think, sadly look forward to the inquiry to see exactly what happened in this tragic case, they also want to ensure that today the system is strong and is ensuring that those children who are in care are getting the protection that we all believe that they deserve. There is information that's been brought forward in the court system and Justice officials would have that information regarding certain allegations that involve the defendants in that case.

I want to ask the Minister of Justice whether he's ensuring that information that is under the subject of a publication ban, but is, in fact, in the hands of Justice officials, is being provided to the minister of child and family services to ensure that real time

action is taking place to strengthen the Child and Family Services system.

* (10:30)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, we've just been through a number of weeks where inaccurate, false information about justice, about crime, about the Criminal Code was put on paper and regularly espoused by the Member for Steinbach and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen)—*[interjection]*—inaccurate, wrong and dealing with the Criminal Code and jurisdictional issues over which the Province has no jurisdiction.

The members know very well that it is not the position of the Minister of Justice who administers justice in the province of Manitoba. It would be, in fact, improper for the Minister of Justice to interfere in this system, to interfere with the rules and regulations as set out in the Criminal Code of Canada under the jurisdiction of the federal government of Canada whose head is one Honourable Stephen Harper.

Mr. Goertzen: That may be among the most shameful answers that I've ever heard given in this Legislature to a very serious answer.

What I am asking, Mr. Speaker, is not for the Minister of Justice to break a publication ban, but I'm wondering whether or not this information that has come forward in a preliminary hearing has been provided to the child and family services minister so that it could form part of these reports.

Did the information that came forward and is part of the preliminary hearing, the bail hearing, was it given to officials in Child and Family Services so they could ensure that it would form part of the reviews, or was that left out of the reviews and children are still at risk in the system?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I regret, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite may have been unaware that as a result of independent reviews that went into the details surrounding the tragic circumstances of Phoenix Sinclair that there were many recommendations, in fact, over 200 recommendations made to strengthen the child welfare system in Manitoba.

This government, Mr. Speaker, has endorsed those recommendations and unbeknownst, I guess, to the member opposite, a \$42-million investment and

changes for children, which is the new initiative to not only strengthen fostering, not only strengthen the information technology, not only provide additional resources to the front line but to move to a more preventative model of child welfare. That action is under way. That is what the priority is for this government, to learn from any outside reviews and that we are taking lessons from.

Trans-Canada Highway Twinning Project Time to Completion

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House was saddened by a fatality on the Trans-Canada Highway west of Virden. This death occurred on June 1, when a driver veered into the oncoming westbound lane just as the single-lane section begins.

Despite any human error that might have taken place in this accident, the likelihood of a motor vehicle accident could have been substantially reduced had there been a four-lane highway in place, promised and yet not delivered.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation assure the House today that the twinning project at the Saskatchewan border will be completed according to his Premier's, not his own, latest promise.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, weather permitting, we've always said that this highway would be completed by the fall of '07, and it's going to be.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a copy of a statement made by this minister on May 2, 2005, that states: "It is anticipated that the new lanes will be open to traffic by the end of '06."

When this government failed to originally complete the project on schedule, motorists were forced to endure an extensive delay while the NDP dithered. As opposition, we warned them repeatedly that the more time it took to complete the highway twinning, the greater likelihood of more fatalities. Poor planning and mismanagement added an entire year to the project end date. The results have been more deaths.

Mr. Speaker, this minister's already shown we can't take him for his word. What guarantee does he now offer that the project will be completed this fall?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, a question coming from a bunch that did absolutely nothing with regard to infrastructure and transportation is unbelievable.

You know, we had monsoon rains that took place in that summer, and the construction industry do the best they can and they did as much as they could, but regrettably we were taken aback with regard to the amount of rain we received and also the construction industry did as much they could to catch up.

Now what's also outrageous, every time we've raised the dollars with regard to a budget with regard to infrastructure, the members opposite vote against it. It wasn't that long ago that a budget came forward with huge amounts of money, \$2 billion over the next five years, \$4 billion over 10, they voted against it. Every single time we've raised dollars with regard to transportation, they vote against it.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, in spite of repeated warnings, the sad fact is that several fatalities are the burden of this Minister of Transportation because of his inaction and mismanagement. On this particular case, there are 10 kilometres of twinned highway paved last July west of where this accident took place that the minister chose not to open last summer. This would have completely avoided this fatality. Meanwhile, the Premier (Mr. Doer) had the gall to stand before the Heavy Construction Association last winter and tell them he delayed the highway just so it could be completed when Saskatchewan finishes their section. I doubt interprovincial co-operation will be of much comfort to those who lost loved ones on this stretch of highway.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: How can we trust his promises to have this project completed this fall?

Mr. Lemieux: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's quite despicable to be making use of a tragic situation where drivers have died and people have lost their lives. We feel terrible about this, about individuals who have lost their lives on any stretch of highway, whether it be in northern Manitoba, which they seem not to care about whatsoever, or anywhere in the province. They repeatedly promised that they would do something about twinning of No. 1 and did nothing. In fact, the \$800 million in reckless promises that they made during the election promise with regard to tax cuts would put in jeopardy the

\$400 million that we promised every year to put into transportation.

So shame on them with regard to any comments they want to make with regard to transportation. We're a building government. We're going to do it. Mr. Speaker, No. 1 highway is going to be done to Saskatchewan; it's going to be done this fall.

East Side Lake Winnipeg Economic Development

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, on May 14, 2007, a well-respected NDP former Cabinet minister made his case to the public through the *Winnipeg Free Press* that the new bipole transmission lines should be constructed on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Elijah Harper put forward a very articulate and concise position in favour of the east side line based on line losses, construction costs and, more importantly, economic development for east side residents.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Will he do what the *Free Press* itself asks and listen to Mr. Elijah Harper, former Minister of Northern Affairs, who is standing up for the Aboriginal people on the east side?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal of respect for the former member of the House and his views. We also have a great deal of respect for the other First Nations communities on the east side who have made it very clear to us that they value the boreal forest there and are very keen on proceeding with having the UNESCO World Heritage designation for the boreal forest on the east side. We think that getting a UNESCO World Heritage designation for the boreal forest will put Manitoba on the map for ecotourism and generate an abundance of economic opportunities for the First Nations on the east side.

For all of those reasons, we humbly disagree with the former member of the House.

Mrs. Rowat: It's very disappointing for the people who live along the east side. That's a poor answer.

Mr. Speaker, in the article by Mr. Harper and Professor Bryan Schwartz that stated: "The underdevelopment from which Eastside residents suffer has a profound cost in human potential, health and life." The choice to ignore an opportunity to improve this underdevelopment has no moral difference to

allowing these poor conditions to exist in the first place.

I ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Lathlin): Will he go to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) and explain to him the importance of the east side development for the First Nation residents in this area before this opportunity for development is lost?

* (10:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): In the election campaign and including the east side of Lake Winnipeg, the debate about this issue was engaged by all different political parties and it was engaged in the communities themselves. You know, with due deference to people writing articles, the people in a democracy, in my view, override editorial positions and columnists and other people that have their own opinion.

On the east side of Lake Winnipeg, people voted for the Member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson). They voted for him in full knowledge of the party position that we had taken. We were in favour of preserving the east side of Lake Winnipeg. We stated that we've had 82 public meetings that informed our opinion. Members opposite were against that position, and I don't know what—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Rowat: On the issue of the east side development, the NDP have continually considered the options of the rich American environmentalists to be more important than the opinions of the people who have lived and advocated for the east side of Lake Winnipeg for their entire lives.

I ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs: Why is he standing by while his government chooses to side with people like Robert Kennedy Jr., who have no idea of the difficulties of the life on the east side, over people like Elijah Harper and east side residents who know what it's like to live in a world, to quote Mr. Harper and Mr. Schwartz: afflicted by unacceptable level of impoverished and poor health?

Mr. Doer: I've heard a lot of great tributes to the Member for Rupertsland, but I've never heard him called a rich American lobbyist. The Member for Rupertsland actually sits in this Chamber. He's probably on the east side right now actively involved in the issues, Mr. Speaker.

I have been to Poplar River; I've been to Berens River; I've been to Oxford House; I've been to every

community on the east side, Mr. Speaker. I'll take my advice from people on the east side, but the people on the east side had a chance to express their views.

I want to ask members opposite: Do they take the position of an editorial writer or a columnist, or do they support the people that voted on our vision in the last election campaign? Secondly, how do they defend their moral position when they went to Brandon and said they were going to move some of the highway budget from the east side of Lake Winnipeg over to southwestern Manitoba? That's a moral bankrupt position of the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Charleswood has the floor.

Emergency Rooms Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): ERs fail patients when doctors can't see them in a timely way. On May 5, Dr. Cathy Moser, a mother, brought her 21-year-old son Benjamin to the Health Sciences Centre ER. He was doubled over in pain, experiencing the most severe pain that he has ever felt in his life. Benjamin was forced to wait seven hours before he saw a doctor. The recommended emergency triage guidelines say that this patient should have been seen by a doctor in one hour.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why Benjamin was forced to wait seven hours, well beyond what was safe for his condition?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Certainly when any member of our family, our mothers, our fathers, our children, our grandparents, find themselves in an ER in a situation of pain or in a situation of fear and extreme sickness, we want to have the quickest care possible. I believe every member of this House believes that to be so, and that's why we are committed to work every single day with health care as our No. 1 priority, to ensure that we have the front-line workers, in our doctors, in our nurses, in all of our health-care staff, to make sure when parents and children present themselves at the ER, we can do the very best that we can. We have work to do Mr. Speaker. We admit that and we're committed to do it.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this minister needs to try a little bit harder. Her health-care system is rated dead last in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, mother and son both felt helplessness and despair. Benjamin was scared he was going to die, and he might have because while he was forced to wait, sitting in a chair because they refused to give him a bed to lie in, his appendix was rupturing and pus was pouring out of it into his abdomen. He was rushed to surgery once he got beyond the seven-hour ER wait.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: What is happening in our ERs? Why are patients not being seen in a more timely fashion? Why are they being put at such risk?

Ms. Oswald: Again, when our families go to the ER, and they are attended to by our front-line doctors who look after hundreds and thousands of patients every year, we know that we want that care to be the best, and we regret any long wait that a parent, a child, a grandparent, a mother, a father has to endure at an ER.

That's why we've made a commitment to have health care as our No. 1 priority. That's why we've committed to hire a hundred more doctors. That's why we've committed to ensure that we train 700 more nurses, and that's why, during the election campaign, we were very dismayed to learn that the members opposite didn't offer to train one more nurse and didn't offer to hire one more doctor. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty shameful when a Minister of Health treats an issue like this in a partisan manner like that.

Unsafe, long waits are also happening at the Grace Hospital. Many waits are 10 to 12 hours long. After July 1, that could become even worse if the doctor shortage there is not fixed. What has happened to Benjamin can happen to other patients. Benjamin has since faced complications because of that delay in care. He was hospitalized for two weeks and now he is on home care for two months.

How many patients are going to be put into this same position as Benjamin because this NDP government and this Minister of Health have made such a mess of our ERs?

Ms. Oswald: I'm sure every member of this House, regardless of political stripe, wishes the speedy recovery of every person that has the unfortunate

circumstances to have to go to an ER. I know that to be true. Furthermore, I know to be true that health care remains our No. 1 priority.

We've not abandoned the medical school, cutting medical school seats, and then asked questions about why we're short doctors. We haven't made a plan to fire a thousand nurses, Mr. Speaker, and then asked questions when staffing is short. We're committed to go forward. We're committed to ensure that as many patients as possible are cared for in an excellent way by our doctors and our nurses. That's our commitment, and we wonder about the commitment of members opposite who claim to care but show with cuts and slashing that they don't really.

Elections Ethics During Campaigns

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, over the last week, we've heard allegations of an NDP candidate being intimidated and bullied by people very close to the Premier. Today, I'm raising the issue surrounding the ethics of election campaigns and specifically the very frequent destruction, vandalism and theft of election signs which has occurred in the last couple of elections. These are not trivial incidents. One Liberal candidate in 2003 had hundreds of signs stolen.

It's time, Mr. Premier, that others in this Chamber paid more attention to following the code of ethics to which we have all signed on to. Even the recently elected MLA for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) has called for the truth to come out.

When will the Premier's stonewalling end? When will the Premier join us in cleaning up Manitoba's electoral process?

* (10:50)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, I think an independent body called Democracy Watch has ruled that Manitoba's changes in election laws and transparency in election laws, banning union and corporate donations, some of the measures that were voted against by members opposite, the implementation of the Monnin inquiry report that we all implemented, I would point out that many measures at the committee, I believe it was last June, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) proposed some constructive ways of dealing with limiting Crown corporations in advertising and we accepted those amendments. The former Member for Carman recommended that the polling stations be more available, less electors. We accepted that. There were

recommendations from parties to increase the number of days in advance voting and polling which we did.

Any good ideas, we'll incorporate in changes to election law, but I would point out, I thought it was passing strange that we'd have a day's sentence for somebody dealing allegedly with an election sign and nothing to deal with car thefts under the Young Offenders Act or the Youth Justice Act. A little question of priority here. I think we should change the Youth Justice Act as a first priority in this Legislature.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the Premier whether he would tell this Chamber if he would ever condone bullying and intimidation, all he did was make excuses about his party's electoral procedures and the way that they didn't work well.

Today I bring forward issues appropriately about ethics in elections, and the Premier goes after himself for not bringing in changes which he could have done for the last eight years. I suggest, Mr. Premier, that you have something to answer for.

When, Mr. Premier, will you come out and say that intimidation and bullying are wrong? When will you stop the stonewalling? When will you say clearly that we're going to clean up the electoral process in this province?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before recognizing the honourable First Minister, I remind all honourable members that the questions and answers are through the Chair, not across to an individual member.

Mr. Doer: Political parties have a responsibility to ensure that there are candidates in every riding. In 1999, there was not a full slate of candidates for the Liberal Party. I suggested that denied Liberal voters the opportunity to vote in their riding.

Our executive takes very clearly the responsibilities to make sure that the candidates all reflect the values of our party. It's not the leader; it's the executive. I know in the Liberal Party the leader has unilateral rights to nominate or not nominate candidates. In our party it's a group of peers, and I want to make that very clear, Mr. Speaker. They're the ones that have done an excellent job of ensuring that we have candidates in every riding.

I don't understand or I certainly have said to the first question the member asked, if there are some good ideas in changing the election laws I welcome them from all members. I just gave three or four

examples where we changed the laws based on advice from members.

We will call forward the election committee. The Chief Electoral Officer will be there. If there is anything that needs to be changed to improve transparency, accountability and consequences in the elections law, we will do that.

So I just mentioned three examples where members brought forward—the Leader of the Opposition, the former Member for Carman—there are great ideas that come forward. Any good idea that comes forward in the committee, we'll change the elections laws. They should always be changed, they should always be updated, they should always be improved. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying, yes, we'll change laws if you have a good idea.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, surely politicians, candidates, parties should not only be ethical but should be leaders in showing others what needs to be done.

I'm confused by the Premier's answer because he seems to suggest that intimidation and bullying is okay because that's what you need to get 57 candidates. Well, I can assure the Premier that we didn't need to use intimidation and bullying to get 57 candidates in this recent election in Manitoba for the Liberal Party.

Let me come back to the bill that we've introduced today. Will the Premier today announce his support for a mandatory minimum of 24 hours in jail for an individual caught stealing or defaming or vandalizing election signs?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, there are a multitude of issues affecting Manitobans: poverty, crime, auto theft, houses invaded, et cetera, that we are working on with the federal government with a series of programs this year. I think it shows very clearly where the priorities are of the Liberal Party that they want to go forward with legislation to protect election signs.

Yes, let's protect election signs. What about the people? What about auto theft? What about the public? It shows clearly why members opposite are out in the wilderness publicly and will stay in the wilderness because they do not reflect the priorities of Manitoba. Let them protect all the signs they want. We'll protect the public and move forward the public agenda, not backwards, for priorities of all Manitobans.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

International Peace Garden's 75th Anniversary

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the International Peace Garden, located in the Turtle Mountain area of Arthur-Virden constituency, south of Boissevain on the border between Canada and our neighbours, the United States.

The dedication of the International Peace Garden took place on July 14, 1932. A boundary marker built of stones gathered from both the American and Canadian sides was placed bearing a simple plaque that pledges continued peace among our two nations.

In this past 75 years, the gardens have not only been a symbolic reminder of peace but also a place of education, particularly for youth. The gardens see thousands of youth pass through it to attend sport, music, drama and other educational camps every year. The gardens have become a place for citizens of both bordering countries to meet, as well as a venue for other international tourists.

The Peace Garden is also a place of poignant remembrance. Twisted metal girders from the World Trade Towers were placed in the gardens as a memorial to the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

This year's anniversary celebrations taking place on July 14 will bring a myriad of entertainers and shows to the gardens, including speakers and presenters, an antique car show and hot air balloon rides. The festivities will close with a gala concert featuring the groups Fantasy Fiddlers and InPulse.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Lastly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak to the importance of maintaining such an important and historical site such as the Peace Garden. We have heard in the news of the need for repairs to various venues and infrastructure within the gardens. It will take a concerted effort and co-operation from both sides of the border, with dedicated funding from various levels of government, to continue to maintain the gardens.

I wish to thank the current chief executive officer, Doug Hevenor, who has worked tirelessly to

bring attention to the need for repairs to the Peace Garden.

In closing, I wish to state that it is certainly important that we continue to support this venue and, above all, maintain its message of everlasting peace between our two nations. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the important work of the River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery. Last month I had the privilege of joining this community at their Family Night event. Family Night allows the nursery to celebrate the children, families and workers that make the River Avenue Nursery such a success.

The high turnout at the festivities was evidence of the important role that the day nursery plays in the lives of so many Fort Rouge families. Both the children and parents enjoyed an evening of entertainment and socializing. It was exciting to see families take such pride in the educational and creative community that they've worked so hard to foster.

For years, the nursery has built a reputation of being a progressive, high-quality centre providing flexible hours of care for working parents. The flexibility has been important in allowing parents to maintain their full-time jobs with the assurance that their children are enjoying one of the many activities that the nursery provides.

I am very pleased that this government's recent child care announcements have recognized River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery and have provided them with the funds that they need to remain healthy and growing for the next generation of Fort Rouge families. These funds are a part of the \$5.2 million in revitalization grants pledged to 167 child-care centres and nursery schools across the province. Four hundred thousand of this money has been devoted to the construction of a new child-care facility for the River Avenue Nursery, an exciting prospect for our community. Thank you.

* (11:00)

Spirited Energy Campaign

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): It's been nearly a year since the launch of the Spirited Energy campaign, and clearly this tax-funded campaign has failed to address the real image issues facing the

province. Our image is suffering as a province under the weight of statistics showing that we are the capital of Canada for crime and that our job creation numbers lag far behind the rest of Canada. No amount of flashy banners or temporary tattoos can cover that up.

On the issue of crime, we rank No. 1 in auto thefts, No. 1 in robberies, No. 1 in murders with guns. Talk about branding, Madam Deputy Speaker. We have been branded the murder capital of Canada. Seventy-eight percent of people in this city have stated that there are areas of the city that they are afraid to set foot in. That's not spirited energy they are feeling; it's fear.

On the issue of job creation, Madam Deputy Speaker, I've recently received a letter from a constituent who has left this province to pursue an education and was then looking to return home to rural Manitoba. This is an intelligent person with a degree in business and economics, but due to a poor job market the only employment he could find was working as a bartender or a telemarketer. This bright young individual has had his province fail him in his efforts to remain in Manitoba in a job in his field. I can tell you that he is not feeling the spirited energy the NDP brag about.

Madam Deputy Speaker, between our negative crime image and our poor job creation image, we have been branded all right. One year and \$2.4 million have been wasted on a campaign to whitewash these NDP failures instead of addressing the roots of our problem.

If the best the NDP can come up with to address these issues is Spirited Energy, Manitobans want their money back, Madam Deputy Speaker.

War Brides

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, yesterday, Thursday, June 7, a very special woman, Mrs. Jean Adriana Calder, celebrated her 81st birthday. She, like many other war brides, immigrated to Canada. She eventually made her home in Flin Flon after the war. Many of the Flin Flon war brides were British; however, there were also three Dutch war brides who settled there, including Jean Calder. Jean married Canadian serviceman Clarence William Calder in her home city, Tilburg, North Brabant, in 1946 before moving to Canada.

Another very special woman and one of Flin Flon's Dutch war brides is Corry Kooosje

McKay. Shortly after the war, she married Canadian serviceman Rod McKay in her home city of Amsterdam. Their first child, Gertie, was born in Amsterdam in 1946. Cory celebrated her 82nd birthday last month on May 25.

The other special woman, and the third Dutch war bride in Flin Flon, unfortunately passed away in May of 1990. Her name was Ellie Haelte Trudeau. She was married to Canadian serviceman Wilfred Trudeau. Ellie was born in Apeldoorn. Her immediate family, mainly from Hattem, Gelderland, followed her to Flin Flon. This included her parents, aunt and uncle, sister Christine Heideveld and brothers Jan and Rennie Renze Akkerman.

These three Dutch war brides and dozens of other war brides played a significant role in the post-war evolution and growth of Flin Flon, Manitoba. They made valuable cultural contributions to the community. They, along with others, were part of a group of war brides that had the courage and confidence to start a new life in an unfamiliar country. This came with the challenges of learning a new language and often raising a family to be Canadian while still maintaining their cultural ties.

I would like to salute the bravery of these women for leaving all that they knew in their home countries, often enduring home sickness. They have made many significant contributions to our communities throughout their lives and deserve to be recognized and honoured for their achievements.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Martial LaFleche

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Madam Deputy Speaker, Martial LaFleche, "Bouncer" to all those who knew him well, passed away on March 23, 2007, after a long battle with cancer. His life revolved around Berthe, his loving wife of 52 years, his seven children, his 24 grandchildren, his faith and his lifelong passion, heavy construction.

He lived his entire life in the St. Charles area. His family were pioneers and the day of his death marked the first time since 1885 that there have been no direct descendents of Jude LaFleche living in Lot 74, Roblin Boulevard, in Headingley.

I wish to say a few words in French because of the family's Francophone background.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Il était extrêmement fier de son héritage canadien-français et de sa foi catholique. Il s'est assuré, en dépit de sacrifices financiers, que tous ses enfants reçoivent une éducation chrétienne et francophone. Sans éducation formelle il s'est instruit par la lecture toute sa vie. Ce qui l'intéressait surtout était l'histoire, et il est devenu l'historien familial et paroissial.

Translation

He was extremely proud of his French Canadian heritage and of his Catholic faith. In spite of the financial sacrifices involved, he ensured that all of his children received a francophone and Christian education. Without any formal education, he educated himself by reading all his life. What interested him most was history, and he became the historian of the family and the parish.

English

I will provide a translation.

Martial was a deeply religious man. Like his family before him, he was an active participant in the parish of St. Charles. He was a founding member of the Father Allen Hall Council of the Knights of Columbus. He was a member of the choir, cleared the snow with his loader, and organized many a pancake breakfast. He was always there when an Oblate sister or the parish priest needed a helping hand.

After working for F.A. Mager Construction in the 1950s, he spent almost 40 years at Taillieu Construction. He was an innovator. He operated the first Gradall in western Canada and the first CAT-977 loader.

He was instrumental in bringing Taillieu Construction to the sewer and water sector. He was considered a legend as a machine operator and as a foreman. Bouncer showed untold dozens of young men how to put in an honest day's work. There was a tremendous amount of mutual respect between him, his co-workers and business partners. Bouncer will be sadly missed by a host of family and friends.

Adieu, mon ami.

Translation

Farewell, my friend.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Portage la Prairie, on a point of order?

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you to remind all honourable members that the Chamber is not a place for consumption of foodstuffs. Also, too, we have a House rule that limits the use of personal communication devices active in the Chamber until after Question Period. I observed earlier in the session today, a senior member on the government's side of the House contravening both of those House rules.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised, I want to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members that food is not allowed in this Chamber and that during Question Period all electronic devices are to be off. So I thank the honourable member for drawing that to my attention, and I'm using this opportunity to remind all honourable members.

We'll go to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
ADJOURNED DEBATE
(Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition's (Mr. McFadyen) amendment, and the subamendment brought forward by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). That's what we will be debating at this moment is the subamendment, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Inkster, who has 26 minutes remaining.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting in Question Period today where the Premier (Mr. Doer) said you talk about a good idea and they're quite anxious to act on them. You know, I was reflecting on some of the legislation. When we talked about The Elections Act, and, as one of the examples, I had suggested to the government that what we should be doing is reducing the number of signatures that is required from 100 down to 25. It's something what other jurisdictions do and so forth. It also helps facilitate political parties getting their candidates and so on, anyone that wants to be able to run.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the ideas in which the government said absolutely not to, no, because they

realize that it's more difficult for other political parties to go out and garner the signatures at times. It proves to be more of a challenge at times for parties, whether you're the Green Party or any other political party, to acquire those types of signatures.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, in his answers, tries to give the impression that he is a friend of democracy. That's what I started to talk about yesterday. I'm going to continue on about democracy because I really, truly believe that this government has not been a friend to democracy. I want to explain why I believe that. I indicated yesterday that was the issue. It was the legislation that he says made Manitoba more democratic that ultimately got me back involved with the provincial Liberal Party and ultimately led to me running in 2003 because I believed that it was an attempt by the government to cripple, if not destroy, the Manitoba Liberal Party by bringing in that legislation.

* (11:10)

There was no annual funding guarantee or anything of that nature. In Québec, they gave the annual funding, and Ottawa, federally, they gave the annual funding. They recognized the importance that parties need to have an operating fund, so they provided that, but not here in Manitoba. In Manitoba, all the Premier (Mr. Doer) wanted to do was give the impression, and he learned this in the years of opposition. Impression and perception are more important than reality. That's a mode of operation for this Premier. So he brings in legislation to try to give the impression that corporations and unions do not have a role playing in provincial elections, especially when it comes to funding, because it's through that funding that kind of corrupts the system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to think that MLAs should not buy everything hook, line and sinker or follow like a lemming, that there is a time to stand up for what is right, to stand on integrity and defend the importance of democratic and accountability inside this province of Manitoba. We should not be taking it for granted, and what I want to do is I want to talk about that. If the intent was to try to level the playing field by saying no corporate or union donations, well, that's applaudable, but you have to compensate it in some fashion. Other jurisdictions have recognized that, and they've done so, but not this government. So, if the Premier wants an idea as to what he should be doing, that's an idea that he should be acting on. But I know this Premier, because we've raised this issue with the Speaker, and

he has chosen not to do that. I find that that is unacceptable.

To have a healthy democracy, you need healthy political parties. Even if you're the governing party, Mr. Speaker, you need to recognize that Manitobans, as a whole, benefit if you have healthy political parties, and if you are going to change the system, the system should be changed so that it's better, not so that it gets worse.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen a government that has used tax dollars like no other government in terms of a lead-up to an election in the way in which they put their spin and spend and spend of tax dollars. There is no government that I believe that you can compare to on a per capita basis.

When you take a look at campaigns, you know, every election, in Inkster, there's a flood of people that come in from the outside, and a lot of these people are part of the union elite, not the average labour person or union person. It's the labour elite that come in. It's a flood and they know how to target. They don't talk about, well, does that obligate them in any fashion to the union movement because, quite frankly, they have not been a friend of the average union worker. What about anti-strike legislation such as final offer selection, Mr. Speaker, the anti-picket legislation that Québec has?

There are things that a true New Democratic Party, not today's NDP but a true New Democratic Party, should be acting on in terms of social issues, but, Mr. Speaker, it's perception. This government and this Premier have been able to give the perception that they're worker friendly. Well, they're able to do that because they escape true accountability. They do that through the number of sitting days. They do that through Question Periods and the limits that they put in, in terms of Question Period, and I'll talk a little bit more about that if I have some time.

I want to go strike right at the core of democracy, intimidation, and bullying, and, yes, I was at McDonald's last night. It was Thursday. So Thursday nights, typically, you will see me there. *[interjection]* You know something, to the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth (Mr. Bjornson), if you really stay tuned with your constituents, and you make yourself available, you will find that there are many ideas that they will share with you, and you will find that that is one of the reasons why I'm able to espouse on the number of ideas and talk about the ideas that I do talk about, because I like to listen and

act upon what my constituents are saying. We're going to get a better sampling of that next week, I must say, Mr. Speaker.

But I digress. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino) and I have something in common. The Member for Wellington and I, and I quote from the Member for Wellington in her speech. I quote from *Hansard*: "But this I say, the whole truth will eventually come out and those on the side of truth, justice, decency and integrity will prevail."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I applaud those comments. I join with the Member for Wellington on those comments and I trust and I hope that she will do the right thing, as I believe that she will. I must say that anything that I say from this point is not a reflection on the Member for Wellington.

Mr. Speaker, I hope and I trust that we will continue to be able to work together on the important issues of truth and integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk to you about democracy. I'd like to quote a letter that I tabled earlier in the year. This is about a nomination and I quote from the letter. This is a letter that I had previously tabled. This comes from Mr. Kaur Sidhu and it was addressed to the Premier: "This is an example of political intimidation and bullying." Where is the democratic process of the NDP party that empowers grass-roots membership to pick a candidate at a nomination meeting?

Further on in the letter: This is another example of intimidation and bullying plus non-democratically favouring a candidate over the other. Where are the democratic and ethical values of our party?

This is from a nomination that was taking place in The Maples.

Mr. Speaker, last week, I believe it was late last week, I received—someone had dropped off a letter at my home. The letter in part stated this. It made reference to some individuals that we all know, people like Darlene Dziewit, Wayne Copeland, Eugene Kostyra. Let me give you a specific quote from the letter: Obviously, they were expecting me and after a short time there is silence and Darlene opened a brown envelope on the table. In it was a letter of resignation suggesting that I was in poor health. I was not made aware that there would be a meeting and I was not able to bring anyone to this meeting.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on, in terms of the letter: I was forced to resign because of bullying, coercion and intimidation by the NDP. My health condition was never in question as to prevent me from fulfilling my duties as a candidate.

Very serious allegations. After reading these types of allegations I went and I met with the individual and as far as I'm concerned they are just that, allegations. Like the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino), all I want is the truth.

Well, you know, I was in the Legislative Library just prior to Question Period, and I pulled an article from the *Free Press* on May 4. Wayne Copeland is in it, and it's stating: The party secretary, Wayne Copeland, confirmed Thursday that Ramos had withdrawn, saying it was for health reasons.

Well, then, Mr. Speaker, if we find out that later there is another story, and I believe I have it somewhere at my desk here, in which there was an article, again in the *Free Press*, and I read again. I quote from the article: The NDP alleges the two put together a scheme where Ramos would have resigned from the race too late for the NDP to replace her. Without an NDP candidate, Chan would get the NDP vote and his chance of winning would go up. Copeland said the party learned in the second week of the campaign that Ramos had signed a letter of resignation, the only copy of which was held by Chan, giving him the power to determine when her resignation would be coming official. At that point Copeland said the party felt there was no choice but to have Ramos resign and replace her.

* (11:20)

Mr. Speaker, I think that there is enough that is out there. Initially, we were told by the NDP it was because of health reasons. Now the NDP are saying it's because of a letter that was out there. After reading the article, I asked Angie if she had signed such a letter. She said no. I got a call from Joe Chan and he indicated, no, that he didn't. Well, Mr. Speaker, again, it's not taking sides. Whether it's Wayne Copeland saying one thing, whether it's Angie saying another thing, I agree with the Member for Wellington (Ms. Marcelino). I'm not going to take a side. I want the truth.

Does the Member for Wellington really want the truth? If the Member for Wellington really wants the truth as I do, then the Premier (Mr. Doer) should do the right thing. The right thing was suggested to the Premier yesterday by the Leader of the Manitoba

Liberal Party, and that was to make a commitment that the public will know the truth, that there should be a report on the issue, Mr. Speaker. The public deserves that.

I join the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and the Member for Wellington in the need to know the truth. That's why I raise the issue, Mr. Speaker. I believe that ultimately there's enough that's there, especially if you look at what's been said, if you look at what's happened in The Maples nomination. It's the same words. When I read from one person—and I don't know but I suspect that Angie Ramos doesn't know Kaur Sidhu. I suspect that they don't. I know that they were both New Democrats to the best of my knowledge. But the words that Angie used: I was forced to resign because of bullying, coercion and intimidation. The words that Kaur Sidhu used: This is another example of intimidation and bullying.

Do you not see a common theme that's there, Mr. Speaker? [*interjection*] Well, some members choose to make light of it. What they're making light of are democratic principles. They might believe that there's nothing wrong with that. We have a 63-year-old lady that legitimately won the nomination that raises some concerns. I don't care what political party it is, but when you get someone that's making those types of allegations, I believe that there is a need to research and find out the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the government will override the importance of the issue and will concede that there is no need to find the truth. I think that would be wrong. I believe that the truth—Manitobans would best be served if, in fact, as the Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party said yesterday, there was some sort of a public report on the whole incident. I look forward to hearing from members opposite to address the issue. I'm interested. I'm open to any sort of explanations. I'd love for a standing committee. Have Mr. Copeland and Mr. Kostyra and others come before a standing committee and address it head-on or allow for some form of a discussion that would allow members of this Chamber—because do they not agree—you know, if you are the status of women's minister or responsible for seniors in the province—if the allegations are true, if the allegations that are being made by Angie are true, does that not warrant the attention of this Chamber? It's an open question. If it is true, does it not warrant the message? I agree. I see both leaders, the Conservatives' and obviously the

Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, saying, yes, it does warrant the attention of this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that if the government—if Mr. Copeland says that there was a letter that Angie had signed, because that's what he's saying. Angie signed a letter of resignation and gave it to someone. Well, where's the letter? Show the letter. I was told that it doesn't exist. If that's the reason why they forced her to resign—can you imagine going from an event and you go into a campaign room in which you're not even told about what was going to happen at that meeting and you see sitting across the table people like Darlene, Eugene and Wayne Copeland? It can be fairly intimidating. A 63-year-old visible minority woman, Mr. Speaker, and an envelope appears, and they're told you've got to sign this envelope. It's a resignation. Well, that tells me we should be concerned. Members of this Chamber that have any integrity whatsoever would see the value of ensuring that the right thing is done on this particular issue. It's not taking a side; it's just making sure that the right thing is, in fact, done. That's the reason that I wanted to be able to spend some time on the issue of democracy.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) said today that he was open to ideas, and the Manitoba Liberal Party has provided him plenty of ideas. We've even had a task force report that talks about ideas, and the Premier has access to the Internet. He can see many ideas. The Liberal Party has provided all sorts of ideas that would make Manitoba a better, a more democratic province, and he has the option whether to do something or not to do something. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, far too often, the direction that we have seen him move on the whole democratic front has not been in the long-term best interest of our province.

Now that he's in his dying years of governance, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that it's never too late. He can take a look at what it is that's there, that's out there, and maybe take a few steps forward. I always like to think that if you're put in a position of leadership, your attempt should try to be as much as possible to leave it better than you received it. The Premier has had a golden opportunity over the years as the Premier of this province to do a lot of wonderful things, and if you look at the bigger picture of the issue of crime, and you ask Manitobans, is it better today than it was in 1999 when he became the Premier, the answer is no. If you ask the question about health care even, their

self-proclaimed priority issue, if you ask, is it better today than it was in 1999, you will still find the answer is no from the public. From the public, that's the answer.

Well, you know, all I can tell you is what I hear at the door, and my plurality went up, contrary to all the efforts that you put into it, my plurality almost doubled. It might have even doubled. I'm not sure of the exact number. So no matter how much communication you're out there to put, has the Premier made our environment safer in dealing with crime? Has he done a better job in terms of the management of health care, Mr. Speaker?

An Honourable Member: You got more votes than he got in Concordia.

Mr. Lamoureux: I'm told that I got more votes than the leader got in Concordia, which, I would find, would be interesting. That would be something. I don't really—[*interjection*]

An Honourable Member: Here it is.

Mr. Lamoureux: Is that right? So, obviously, Mr. Speaker, I suspect that I probably knocked on more doors in Inkster than he knocked on in Concordia, and had he knocked on more doors in Concordia, I think, maybe he would be better in tune. He's great on the platform. He knows the photo ops. He knows the 10-second splits. This Premier is good. He had 11 years in opposition to perfect it, and no one is better. I'll concede that. He is the master at perception.

But, Mr. Speaker, anyone can manage and govern a province when the economy is doing relatively well in comparison to other jurisdictions. Anyone can do that. The challenge is going to be how it is that you invested that money, and we have seen an investment in health-care bureaucracy take a higher priority over the last number of years than we have seen in bedside care.

* (11:30)

The Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) wants me to go more. Well, Mr. Speaker, I will go longer because that's what he wants me to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see a government or a Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On a point of order. The member indicated that I signalled to my—I would rather he go on, Mr. Speaker. I don't mind listening to the member opposite, but I do remind the member that a lot of people in this Chamber have limited their speeches in order to expedite matters. I only want to point that out to the member opposite who, inaccurately, responded to genuine attempts by members of this House to have their House proceed in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, it is not a point of order because negotiations and whatever House leaders negotiate, that is entirely up to them. But in our rules, all members have the right to speak for up to 30 minutes. So that's not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know if the Government House Leader was sincere in what he just said, all he has to do is allow for the House to sit in the mornings. With leave, every member of this Chamber could speak. But, if the government's agenda is different, that doesn't allow for that to occur, or the government doesn't want to acknowledge the need for it to sit for a few more hours. You can still rise even on June 14. You can still keep within the agreement.

I believe it's important that members be allowed to speak on the Throne Speech, that members be allowed to speak on the budget. I have consistently argued for that point. Even when the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) sat in opposition for years, we defended together the importance of allowing people the right to be able to speak. I haven't changed my opinion. Obviously, the Government House Leader has, Mr. Speaker.

I think the priority should not be on how to expedite in order to accommodate the will of this government and this Premier (Mr. Doer), to minimize any sort of true accountability. That is the single objective of this government and this Government House Leader, Mr. Speaker. If they are more sincere about accountability, they would be sitting down, and they would be trying to accommodate that, as opposed to trying to take shots at preventing members from being able to speak. Whether they're opposition members or government backbenchers, or even official opposition members, everyone can be accommodated. It can even be taken into consideration with the rise on June 14.

An Honourable Member: Don't be bullied.

Mr. Lamoureux: So, having said that—

I will not be bullied—[interjection] That's right.

The Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—having said that—my light is flashing, indicating that my time is quickly coming to an end, Mr. Speaker.

But, having said that, I would conclude my remarks by indicating that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has had the opportunity over the years to make the province better than when he first had taken office, and I don't believe that he's measured up to the standards that Manitobans really and truly want. He has been very good at perception, at giving a perception which is not close to what the reality really is, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the subamendment that was moved by the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Do members wish to have the subamendment read?

Some Honourable Members: No.

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Yes? Yes. Okay.

The motion moved by the honourable Member for River Heights:

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end of item (g) the following words:

- (h) the government's failure to address the fact that Manitoba has the worst high school drop-out rate of all provinces;
- (i) the government's failure to be able to deliver quick access to surgery after a hip fracture so that Manitoba now has the worst record of all provinces;
- (j) the government's inadequate approach to improving the Provincial Nominee Program.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the subamendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the subamendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it. So the subamendment has been lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move to the amendment that was moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen).

Do the members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Okay.

The amendment reads:

THAT the Motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets

(a) the government's failure to address the fact that Manitoba's health care system is ranked dead last in Canada, failure to end hallway medicine as promised, failure to keep Manitoba emergency rooms open and safely operating, and failure to ensure that Manitobans have timely access to health care; and

(b) the government's failure to make a substantial commitment to the health of Lake Winnipeg, and to effectively limit Manitoba's greenhouse gas emissions; and

(c) the government's failure to make post-secondary institutions sustainable, by neglecting their needs and failing to provide leadership and a long-term strategy for their growth; and

(d) the government's failure to take responsibility for the fact that Manitoba is first in Canada for robberies and homicides committed using a firearm, experiences very high rates of auto theft and violent crime, and the government's tendency to blame the federal government for these problems; and

(e) the government's failure to make Manitoba competitive by failing to index tax brackets to inflation, failing to recognize that Manitoba's basic personal exemption is the lowest in western Canada, and allowing Manitoba to remain the highest taxed province west of Québec; and

(f) the government's failure to make Manitoba Hydro strong, by raiding it, weakening it, and jeopardizing it to the point where it now carries more than \$7 billion in long-term debt; and

(g) the government's failure to address Manitoba's crumbling infrastructure for the last eight years, leading to washouts, detours, weight restrictions and collapsed bridges.

AND HAS THEREFORE failed to address the priorities of Manitobans.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), that is, the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Nays

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Blady, Bjornson, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 19, Nays 33.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Order. We will now move on to the main motion, the motion that was moved by the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). Did members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

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

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Formal Vote

Mr. Chomiak: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allan, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Brick, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jennissen, Jha, Korzeniowski, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino, Martindale, McGifford, Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Reid, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wowchuk.

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Eichler, Fauschou, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Hawranik, Lamoureux, Maguire, McFadyen, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Taillieu.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* (11:50)

REINSTATEMENT OF BUDGET

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on House matters, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that notwithstanding any rule or practice of this House, the steps or segments of the financial process introduced and concluded during the Fifth Session of the Thirty-Eighth Legislature be forthwith reinstated in this First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature as follows: The introduction, debate and adoption of the budget motion and the tabling of the messages of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor and the Estimates attached thereto shall be deemed to have been introduced, considered and concluded during the First Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature and that the ensuing steps of the financial process be continued at this or at any subsequent sitting of this House in the current session.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, without being repetitive, budget 2000 is a building budget. We are building this province—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

I just put the motion on the budget and it was unanimously passed by the House so there is no debate on that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of all members of the House with respect to moving on this matter as expeditiously as we have. I wonder if there might be leave of the House to allow members opposite and to the Minister of Finance to speak on the previously passed motion that was just carried in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: For the advice of the House and for the smooth functioning of the House, I think it would be appropriate if we granted leave to rescind the motion and then let the members that wish to speak, speak to it, and then reintroduce the motion. I think it would be a lot more—*[interjection]*

Like not to have to reintroduce it, but to revote on the motion. That would be the smoothest way. That way if it's rescinded, members speak, and then I put the vote to the members.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on this matter, your direction to us is to recall the motion—

Mr. Speaker: Rescind it.

Mr. Chomiak: Rescind the motion. It would be our preference on this side of the House to simply seek leave to expedite the matter, but I look to members who have more experience than I in this Chamber with respect to the logistics of this particular matter. The government would just prefer to seek leave of the House to proceed and have members speak on the matter and to a maximum of six members, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): For clarification on House business, Mr. Speaker, we would certainly agree to have leave to have six members speak: two from the governing side, two from the opposition, and two from the Independent members of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The advice of the Chair was to rescind the motion and then have the vote, but it seems like the House is of a different opinion.

So I am asking is there unanimous consent of the House for members from the House to speak to the motion that we have just passed. Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It has been agreed to? Okay. That is the direction from the House to the Speaker, so we will proceed.

Mr. Selinger: As I was saying earlier, it is a building budget. It is a building budget because we are building it through a growing economy, through wind power, through hydro-electric power.

We are building safe and strong neighbourhoods with more police officers, with more funding for transit and returning to the 50 percent cost-share that was taken away in the '90s.

We are building through improving health care, more training for doctors, nurses and technologists, investments in health care infrastructure that were so long neglected when members opposite were in office.

We are building support for children and families through safe and affordable housing, more funding for child protection services, support for low-income working families, increased investment in child care.

We are building protection for our water and the environment, water and sewer projects, climate change legislation.

We are building opportunities for our youth, encouraging young people to work in Manitoba by offering a 60 percent tuition-fee income-tax rebate to post-secondary graduates, keeping tuition fees frozen, exceeding our commitment on funding to universities and colleges with more scholarships and bursary support.

We are building tax savings for Manitoba, \$297 million in new tax benefits, including personal tax cuts for all Manitobans and \$93 million in business tax savings.

Budget 2007 builds on the new course we have set for our province, a course based on entrepreneurship and innovation, growing the skills of our hardworking labour force, expanding our natural advantages and renewable resources and opening new markets for Manitoba businesses at home and around the world.

Our budget is focussed on Manitobans' priorities and lays out a long-term vision for better and faster

health care delivered closer to home; affordable quality education and training; addressing climate change and preserving our water resources and the environment; building our roads and highways; making Manitoba a more attractive place for youth; growing our competitive advantages; investing in a green and growing economy; fighting poverty and removing barriers to employment; building healthier, safer and stronger communities; providing tax savings for Manitoba families and businesses; and continuing with a sound fiscal plan.

Just some of the highlights, Mr. Speaker, health care continues to be our No. 1 priority. Our government has invested over \$1 billion to build and modernize health care facilities and install new diagnostic equipment throughout the province. This includes a long overdue new hospital for Brandon; a fully modernized state-of-the-art Health Sciences Centre, Manitoba's largest ever health care capital project; a new hospital in Swan River; major renovations to Concordia, Seven Oaks, Gimli and Ste. Anne hospitals; a new hospital for Selkirk and the surrounding region. As well, a major redevelopment of Victoria General Hospital will begin, including expanded emergency and new oncology departments.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Budget '07 invests in training for health care professionals and ongoing support for the expanded 100-student Faculty of Medicine class, an increase of 25 spaces for international medical graduates and more than 50 new technologists' training seats and 3,000 nurses in training.

Budget '07 also invests \$3 million in new funding for physician specialist training, including emergency room doctors, oncologists and pediatricians.

Our investments over seven years have now succeeded in restoring the number of nurses who disappeared when the Tories were in office. We are proud that 1,500 more nurses are back to work providing valuable front line patient care in our province. Budget '07 also provides new funding for additional nurse practitioner positions.

* (12:00)

On education, Madam Acting Speaker, investments in quality education for our children and youth are important investments in Manitoba's future. High school graduation rates have increased to 84 percent from 73 percent in 1999. In each of the last eight

years, our government has met or exceeded our commitment to fund public schools at the rate of economic growth, providing a total of \$185 million in new funding, an increase of 24 percent since '99. This year's increase of \$30.3 million is the largest increase in almost two decades and provides increased support for all school divisions. This compares to the Tory years when education funding increased by only \$16.1 million or 2.1 percent.

Our plan for public schools builds on a solid foundation of strong support for education and maintaining affordability for taxpayers. As part of our strategy to reduce education property taxes, we have raised provincial funding to \$956 million for the '07 school year and increased the education property tax credit. We have also fully eliminated the residential education support levy.

University and college enrolment is up by one-third in Manitoba, supported by a 10 percent tuition fee reduction for students. Budget '07 announced a continuation of the tuition fee reduction. As we have done every year, we are fully providing offsetting revenue to universities and colleges tied directly to enrolment, a total of \$95 million since 2000. Last year we significantly increased our support for post-secondary education with the largest ever commitment of \$60 million over three years. Included in this commitment was a promise for a 5 percent funding increase in '07-08. Budget '07 exceeds our promise by providing an average funding increase of 7 percent this year, which is equivalent to a 4 percent tuition fee increase, meaning that students will not have to pay more while universities and colleges will benefit.

Protecting our quality of vast water resources is a top priority for Manitobans. Budget '07 invests more than \$10 million in new funds to address recommendations of the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, advance sewer projects and water projects, improve water management and flood protection and, with this budget, our government has committed to more than \$130 million for water and waste water infrastructure projects across the province. The Tories cut drainage and water resources by 43 percent, which resulted in municipalities picking up these costs. We have doubled the drainage budget and developed a Water Stewardship Department with an Office of Drinking Water.

On highways, Madam Acting Speaker, Manitoba provided its highest level of highway support, \$257 million, up from \$177 million in 1999. This

year the renewal of highway infrastructure is taking on even greater priority as Manitobans have expressed their strong desire to accelerate investments in our transportation system. Budget '07 provides a 50 percent increase over last year, bringing annual provincial highways investment close to \$400 million. Over 10 years, the Tories increased highways and bridge spending by a measly 4.4 percent. We have increased it by 125 percent.

We have introduced Manitoba's first ever multiyear plan for highways and bridges, which is set to complete a record number of projects with an investment of \$2 billion over five years. This budget will advance work on redeveloping Highway 75, the Trans-Canada Highway, northern roads and highways 2, 3, 6, 8, 16 and 59. We are also investing to build the first leg of the all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, a key infrastructure priority for the region.

We are building on the foresight of the original floodway vision, having secured a 50-50 funding partnership with the federal government to complete the entire floodway expansion project. Since construction began a year and a half ago, more than one-third of the channel excavation work has been completed. Manitobans now have protection against a flood equal to the greatest in recorded Manitoba history.

On population and immigration, building on our strong record on education, our government recognizes the need to increase efforts to grow our population and keep our communities and economy strong. Business leaders have made it clear that labour force expansion is the key to competitiveness. Manitoba's performance over the last seven years has been strong. In comparison to the '90s, our labour force has grown at nearly three times the rate, our employment has increased more than twice as fast and our youth population and youth labour force have also outgrown more than twice as fast. In contrast to the Opposition Leader's erroneous claims last spring that thousands of Manitobans are leaving the province, more youth are staying in Manitoba compared to when he was advising the government on youth retention policy. The Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen) said, well, there's still more young people leaving than coming in, and there's still hundreds and thousands of young people leaving every year. We know it anecdotally, and we know it through statistics; so that's unacceptable. I don't particularly care if he wants to make comparisons to the '90s. I'm not interested in that. Of course, the

Leader of the Opposition is not interested in that. It would only dredge up the shabby Tory record on youth retention. In fact, in the past seven years, net migration added 3,300 young people to our population. This is a real improvement over the loss of 2,600 young people experienced between 1992 and 1999.

While Manitoba's population has continued to grow, we are committed to achieving even stronger results. Budget '07 invests in making Manitoba a more attractive place for youth, developing our Aboriginal labour force, and continuing to increase the number of new immigrants to our province. Our government has introduced a major new initiative to attract and retain youth, a 60 percent income tax credit on tuition fees for all post-secondary graduates who live and work in Manitoba. This initiative makes post-secondary education an even higher return investment and encourages our youth to put down roots and establish their careers in Manitoba.

Our government set a bold target to attract 10,000 immigrants to Manitoba annually, and last year we exceeded that goal. Manitoba's immigration was up 24 percent in 2006, its highest level in half a century, far exceeding national performance.

Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program continues to be immensely successful in bringing skilled immigrants and entrepreneurs to Manitoba, serving as a model for the entire country. Based on this success, our government has committed to another bold target: to double our current immigration level over the next 10 years. The lowest annual number of new immigrants in the past four years was in 1998 when only 3,015 newcomers came to Manitoba. This result reflects the attitude of the Tories, that immigration doesn't count in their universe. McFadyen repeats his message that Manitoba has lost almost 40,000 to other provinces over seven years. This is the inter-provincial migration from Manitoba. By excluding international migration, McFadyen insults 45,000 new Manitobans, Manitoba's 38,000 new immigrants and the 8,200 former Manitobans who have come back home from other countries. How welcome would these new Manitobans feel in McFadyen's Manitoba?

Our success in attracting and training immigrants is based in large part on Manitoba's innovative approach.

Point of Order

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

I am not sure, I don't believe that the minister is a new minister, but I'm sure he understands that we refer to each other by our constituencies and not by our names in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Thank you.

An Honourable Member: Thank you for that information.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): Minister of Finance.

Mr. Selinger: Our success in attracting and retaining immigrants—[interjection]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Brick): The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I thank you for reminding the House—it's not a point of order, but I do thank you for reminding the House that we do not call members by their name. Rather, we call them by their constituency.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I do acknowledge that it is a point of order, and with that in mind I'll carry on.

* * *

Mr. Selinger: Our success in attracting and retaining immigrants is based in large part on Manitoba's innovative approach to helping immigrants settle and succeed in our province. Budget '07 provides more than 9.5 million in new funding to enhance settlement services, language training, labour market integration and ethno-cultural and anti-racism initiatives supported by federal resources.

On the economy, Manitoba has a diverse economy with a strong manufacturing base and a large and dynamic services sector to build on our wealth of natural resources. Our competitive business environment includes a well-educated, productive and multi-lingual labour force, among the lowest electricity rates in the world, affordable taxes and low construction costs. Manitoba's capital investment growth is expected to be 11 percent this year, more than double the expected growth in Canada. Private capital investment in Manitoba is expected to grow by 6.5 percent this year, second best in the country.

*(12:10)

Budget '07 broadens the Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit Program to include a new 30 percent tax credit for direct investments in emerging enterprises, start-ups and early expansions requiring large amounts of capital investment.

Manufacturing is a vital part of Manitoba's diversified economy, accounting for approximately 12 percent of output. In our last budget we renewed and enhanced the Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit. Budget '07 makes that Manufacturing Investment Tax Credit even more valuable by increasing refundability to 50 percent. Capital investments in manufacturing grew by more than 16 percent in Manitoba last year, with a further 30 percent expected in 2007. This is in sharp contrast to national growth of only 0.1 percent last year and 5.3 percent expected in '07.

Manitoba's economy grew about 3.1 percent last year as compared to 2.7 percent for Canada. Real GDP, that's gross domestic product, is expected to grow by 2.6 percent in '07, outpacing the forecasted national average of 2.3 percent.

Manitoba's unemployment rate fell to a 30-year low in 2006 at 4.3 percent, the second-lowest rate among the provinces. After a new record for employment levels in '06, some 6,700 new jobs were created. Almost 90 percent were in the private sector.

Consumer strength was reflected in housing starts, which topped 5,000 in 2006, the highest level in almost two decades. In addition, building permits increased 22 percent, more than double the national increase of 9 percent.

What about rural communities and green investing? We're also investing in farm renewal through an increase in the Young Farmer Rebate on Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation loans, a new training program to assist young women to be more active in farm enterprises, and enhancements to the Bridging Generations Initiative made permanent with this budget, making it easier to transfer farms from one generation to the next by providing up to 90 percent financing.

Rural Manitobans are now seizing new market opportunities in biofuels. Budget '07 broadens eligibility for MASC's Alternative Energy Loan program. Biodiesel plant development and construction is already underway in at least four sites in Manitoba. We have taken steps to support the growth of this emerging industry with the elimination of the sales tax for the biodiesel portion of any blends. Manitoba is also supporting new biodiesel use in long-haul trucking fleets and in school buses. Our vision is for Manitoba to be a leader in biodiesel production, creating jobs, expanding markets for farmers and spurring greater economic activity in our rural communities.

Budget 2007 also introduces a new 10 percent green energy manufacturing tax credit, designed to encourage new and expanded production and use of green energy equipment, the first of its kind in Canada to support local green energy manufacturing consumption.

In the north, Madam Acting Speaker, our government is working with northern Manitobans to provide better access to education and training, increased economic development and more employment opportunities in the north. This budget provides additional dollars to expand educational programming through the University College of the North, including 50 new nursing spaces, meeting our commitment to double northern nursing training.

In addition, we have recently committed \$45 million to enhance the University College of the North's capital facilities in The Pas and Thompson and to establish two new regional centres in Grand Rapids and Oxford House. Budget '07 also provides funding to improve UCN's electronic network, linking 14 regional centres, including one on reserves and one in the constituency of St. Johns.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

With new support for roads and transit, growth in the Building Manitoba Fund and gaming revenue sharing, budget '07 provides significantly increased resources in Winnipeg, Brandon and other municipalities. In '07 the City of Winnipeg will receive an increase of \$29.1 million in new funding, an increase of 18.3 percent. This includes \$21 million for road improvements, part of a new two-year commitment to invest \$50 million in Winnipeg's roads and bicycle routes.

Provincial funding for city streets will advance projects like the Chief Peguis Trail extension and major rehabs of the Fort Garry bridge and the Inkster Boulevard. This new funding for road improvements will be built into the City of Winnipeg's base budget for future years.

Through the Building Manitoba Fund, other municipalities will receive a 5 percent general assistance funding increase in '07 and a 17 percent increase in rural community development grants. This new funding will support municipal priorities such as public safety and infrastructure.

Additionally, Manitoba is restoring a 50-50 partnership with the cities of Winnipeg, Brandon, Flin Flon and Thompson, a partnership that was

terminated in 1993 to improve the affordability and accessibility of transit systems. Manitoba municipalities will receive \$12.6 million in '07 for their public transit system, supported with funds from the federal Public Transit Capital Trust. Transit funding was cut by the Tories in 1993.

Mr. Speaker, one of our government's proudest achievements has been the success of Neighbourhoods Alive!, a key part of our community economic development strategy. Neighbourhoods Alive! supports community-driven revitalization in neighbourhoods in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. Neighbourhoods Alive! is expanding into five more urban centres: Dauphin, Flin Flon, The Pas, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk.

With respect to child poverty and child welfare, budget '07 has taken another major step forward by introducing a new Manitoba Child Benefit for low-income families. The new benefit will provide more money for low-income, working families to help with the costs of raising their children. This is a significant step in breaking down the "welfare wall," by ensuring that families retain support for their children before they move from income assistance to work.

Budget '07 also introduces a new Manitoba benefit which will complement the federal government's newly announced Working Income Tax Benefit program. Accessible, affordable, quality child care is also crucial to breaking down barriers for parents, particularly women, to return to work. Manitoba is firmly committed to ensuring quality child care is available for parents and families who need it and will continue to call for a long-term sustainable federal investment in early learning and child care. Budget '07 increases the provincial investment in child care by more than \$14 million to backfill for withdrawn federal funds to ensure that the promises made to Manitoba families and communities are kept.

In addition, a new pilot project will begin this year offering training supports to low-income persons over a longer period to improve opportunities for securing employment and high income. Based on recommendations made by the provincial Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate, Manitoba is significantly increasing the level of investment in our child protection system. Budget '07 provides more than \$48 million in new resources to improve child protection services, including funding for caseload reductions, increased funding for foster

families and early interventions to support families before children are placed in care.

Our government continues to invest in children's early years, a time when research clearly shows that investments pay the biggest rewards, supporting kids to do better in school and avoid costly run-ins with the justice, health care and social service systems. With co-ordination from Healthy Child Manitoba, we have established a province-wide network of programs to give kids a better start in life, including prenatal and early childhood nutrition programs, Healthy Schools initiatives and strategies for healthy adolescence. The budget increases resources to support the special nutritional needs of mothers and their babies by expanding the Healthy Baby program to more communities, enhance parenting programs and support parent-child coalitions. Budget '07 also makes a major investment of \$7.5 million to Manitoba's integrated programming related to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, an investment I know the Member for Fort Garry (Ms. Irvin-Ross) dearly appreciates.

The new Manitoba Shelter Benefit is making a difference, providing for support to more than 11,000 low-income seniors, families and persons with disabilities dealing with rising shelter costs—*[interjection]*—exactly.

Manitoba's moving forward with a new multiyear affordable housing plan. We are committing \$104 million for safe, secure, affordable housing through a partnership with the federal Housing Trust, initiatives which will target the housing needs of Aboriginal people, the inner city and northern Manitoba in particular. I know the Member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) dearly appreciates those housing initiatives.

Budget 2007 invests almost \$18 million more for supported living for persons with mental disabilities, something the new Member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) will support, and \$1.8 million more for children's special services.

Municipalities across the province will also benefit from \$5.4 million to replace Handi-Transit vehicles supported by the federal Public Transit Capital Trust program.

Budget '07 expands seniors community support services programs and increases the 55-Plus income supplement, which will provide \$1.8 million annually in new support for low-income seniors. Our government is also easing the tax burden for seniors

by matching federal pension income-splitting tax changes, saving pensioners an estimated \$11 million annually.

When it comes to crime and justice, the safety and well-being of Manitoba families and communities and the integrity and responsiveness of our justice system are priorities for our government. We recognize the importance of having a strong police presence in our communities, both in deterring and responding to crime. In total, we will be adding 30 more police officers in Manitoba.

* (12:20)

Crime prevention and early intervention also form a key part of our strategy. Budget '07 expands our successful Lighthouses program to 50 sites. Lighthouses provide positive after-hours recreation; educational and social activities for youth in schools; friendship centres and other community facilities across our province. Manitoba Lighthouses are nearing a half million visits to date, a clear sign of youth responding to positive alternatives.

Budget '07 provides funding to create a specialized unit to handle child exploitation cases, including a new, dedicated crown attorney. This unit will take a proactive approach to address Internet luring and child pornography, providing closer lines of contact between communities, children's services, police and prosecutions. I know the new Member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun), who is an educator, will appreciate what we're doing to protect children in this province.

Our government is also taking further steps to tackle domestic violence, building on successes achieved in fast tracking domestic violence cases throughout the justice system. Budget '07 expands the internationally recognized Front End Project. Led by the chief judge of the provincial court, this expansion will help the court system work faster and more effectively in youth and non-domestic violence matters.

Manitoba is also continuing to work with pharmacists, retailers, police and first responders in addiction services to combat crystal meth. Budget '07 commits new funding for the provincial Crystal Meth Strategy, including resources to support the implementation of The Youth Drug Stabilization Act and funding for the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

Now, with respect to fiscal and economic policies, Mr. Speaker, budget '07 meets our

commitment to move to full-summary budgeting and reporting, a scintillating topic, I know, for members opposite, as recommended by the Manitoba Auditor General. It projects a summary budget surplus of \$175 million, supported by core government revenue, exceeding core government expenditure. We have had many positive comments from the financial analysts and the financial community on our '07 budget, and, in particular, on our move to full-summary budgeting.

I'll just skip those comments so that I can move to the next section which talks about growth in government expenditures, which is 4.8 percent, a growth of 5 points to 8 percent on a summary basis, and an \$110 million payment on our general purpose debt and pension liabilities. This brings our total debt and pension payment over eight years to \$814 million, the largest such payment in Manitoba's history.

Building on our plan to eliminate Manitoba's pension liability for teachers, we also recently announced our plan to address the unfunded liability of the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund by funding 75 percent of TRAF's outstanding liability. This year we will begin paying the employers' current service contribution. The funding of the TRAF liability accounts for \$1.5 billion of the increase in borrowings. The remainder is to support the capital programs of Manitoba Hydro, health and government services, health and government capital, including the Manitoba floodway expansion.

More importantly, the budget shows net debt as a percentage of gross domestic product going down. This downward trend demonstrates the ability of our economy to carry its current debt load. Manitoba's debt-to-GDP ratio has been reduced by more than 20 percent, from 31.4 percent to 24.3 percent. We have reduced debt servicing costs by 45 percent from 13.2 cents on the dollar to 7.3 cents today. As a result of addressing the long-standing infrastructure deficits across the country, all provinces which have released budgets this year show their net debt is going up. Manitoba's is increasing by 3.9 percent, Mr. Speaker, whereas Saskatchewan's is increasing by 11.8 percent and B.C.'s by 7.6 percent.

Manitoba's sound fiscal approach has been rewarded with four major credit-rating upgrades since 1999. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is projected to have a balance of \$477 million in the end of '06-07, \$213 million more than when we came into office. As projected in the last year's budget, the

only draw for the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is for funds prepaid by the federal government for health wait times reductions.

Budget '07 builds on our previous seven budgets, which have contained the largest tax cuts ever delivered to Manitoba families and businesses. Budget '07 contains \$297 million annually in new, confirmed tax cuts and introduces a multiyear plan for further personal and business tax reductions. Budget '07 continues to build on our record of meeting and exceeding every promise we have made to reduce taxes. Since 1999, our multiyear, tax-cut plan has provided significant tax relief to all taxpayers—families, homeowners, farmers and businesses—along with targeted incentives for youth, seniors, low-income families, environmental protection and manufacturing growth.

There is no question that education property taxes have been a particular concern for many Manitobans. The government has greatly reduced the burden of such taxes. We are living up to our commitment to increase school funding by the rate of economic growth. In budget '06, we eliminated the \$100-million residential education support levy. Starting in '07, the Farmland School Tax Rebate will rise to 65 percent from 60 percent providing savings of \$29 million in '07. We have committed to reach an 80 percent reduction by the year 2010. The education property tax credit—

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

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few brief remarks on the record with respect to the budget and the motion that's before us.

The only thing that seems to be building from this budget, budget 2007, is our dependence on federal handouts, Mr. Speaker. Continuously, year after year after year, all we see is increased federal transfer payments coming from the federal government, and that's nothing to be proud of. The reason it is, is because it signals the decline of our economy relative to the rest of Canada. Our economy is certainly not doing well relative to other provinces, and, as a result of that, federal transfers are increasing.

Some of the results speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. We found out today from Stats Canada that we, in fact, lost 300 full-time jobs in this province

from May 2006 to May 2007. That's nothing to be proud of. Unemployment rates are the highest in western Canada, and, in 1999, when this government took power, the NDP took power, we had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Today we have the highest unemployment rate in western Canada. Those are the results of the fiscal policies of this government. Those are the results of the economic direction given this province by this government and this Finance Minister, and those results speak for themselves. They're nothing to be proud of.

We have to look for more full-time jobs. We have to look for more full-time jobs for our graduates. We have more than ten thousand graduates who are coming out of our colleges and universities every year in this province. Where are they going to find full-time jobs? They are looking for full-time jobs. They have student loans. They've got other obligations. They want to ensure that they have opportunity and hope for advancement within the province, and clearly, if the jobs are not available, if full-time jobs aren't available, they're not going to stay in Manitoba. They're going to follow the path of the 35,000 Manitobans who've left this province since 1999 in search of hope, opportunity, in search of full-time, meaningful, long-term jobs that they're looking for in this province and which are not being delivered by this Finance Minister, have not been delivered by this government since 1999. They've had eight years, eight years, within which to create an economy capable of generating

long-term, meaningful, full-time jobs in this province, and, clearly, they have failed.

Internal growth in our economy is extremely important. It's not important how much money we get from the federal government, in my view. We have to try to wean ourselves off those federal transfer payments. We have to grow our economy to do that, and, clearly, the economic and fiscal policies that have been followed by this government have clearly failed. We shouldn't be more dependent on federal transfers; we should be less dependent on federal transfers.

A strong, growing economy is a fundamental prerequisite to all of the things we value as a society. It provides a quality of life, Mr. Speaker. It provides opportunity, health and social justice. Therefore, it's critical that the Province, the Government of Manitoba shows leadership to create a framework for investment, private investment in our economy, and growth and prosperity. This growth has to be sustainable.

Manitoba, though, has been falling behind other provinces in economic growth. Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order. As previously agreed to by the House, this debate will continue on Monday, and the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) will have 26 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 8, 2007

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