

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 18, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Winnipeg Police Service Auxiliary Cadets)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), that Bill 2, The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Winnipeg Police Service Auxiliary Cadets); Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (cadets auxiliaires du Service de police de Winnipeg), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill is specifically designed to support the Winnipeg Police Service's new auxiliary force cadet program. They will provide that cadets will perform duties and exercise powers as set out by regulation. The bill also provides that cadets will be subject to The Law Enforcement Review Act.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 15—Traffic Signals

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 per cent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

This is signed by D. Bond, R. Sigurdson, L. McLeod and many, many other Manitobans.

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

RCMP Rural Service

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitobans deserve to live in a safe environment and feel secure in their homes and their communities. Some regions of rural Manitoba have been hard hit by crime, including residential break and enters, property theft, vandalism and other offences that threaten people's security.

In some areas, RCMP detachments are not staffed on a 24-hour basis. Criminal elements capitalize on this, engaging in crimes at times when officers may not be readily available to respond to calls for service.

Some believe the current RCMP detachment boundaries need to be redrawn so that service delivery could be faster and more efficient.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider working with the RCMP, the federal government and communities to develop strategies to address service challenges in rural Manitoba, such as the possibility of having response units that could be dispatched to regions affected by crime waves.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider working with the stakeholders to determine if the current RCMP detachment boundaries are designed to ensure the swiftest and most effective service delivery.

This petition is signed by R. Anderson, T. Ducharme, R. Ducharme and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Auto Theft—Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those involved in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by K. Power, R. Panufnik, R. Smith and many, many other Manitobans.

Bipole III Project

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts, regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable and cost taxpayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with a shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to the necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by J. Brownell, L. Tarko and N. MacDonald and many, many more Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Multiple Sclerosis Treatment

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

More than 3,000 Manitobans and their families are impacted by multiple sclerosis, and Manitoba has one of the highest rates of MS in the world.

New research indicates that there may be a link between a condition known as chronic cerebrospinal

venous insufficiency and multiple sclerosis. Preliminary studies indicate that many MS symptoms can be relieved with angioplasty, a common procedure.

In order to test this procedure for safety and effectiveness, additional research and clinical trials are needed. Manitoba is not testing for CCSVI, conducting research or conducting clinical trials.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be monitoring MS patients who have undergone the liberation treatment and studying its impact. Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with a clinical trial when their research community presents a proposal, and has invited other provinces to join them. Meanwhile, Manitoba's provincial government has not taken up this initiative nor shown leadership on this issue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider making the province of Manitoba a leader in CCSVI research and to move forward with clinical trials as soon as possible.

And this is signed by T. Kostyra, R. Kostyra, T. McLachlan and many, many others.

Bipole III Project

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly and these are the reasons for this petition:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts, and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable and cost ratepayers at least an additional \$1.7 billion. The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased

by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with a shorter, cheaper, and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this is signed by W. Reimer, A. Teghtmeyer and K. Friesen and many others.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): It's nice to be so welcomed and I'm pleased to table the following reports: Red River College Annual Financial Report 2009-2010, Assiniboine Community College Annual Report 2009-2010.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today, we have Jared Kuehl, manager of Enbridge Incorporated in British Columbia. He is the guest of the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from the Junior Parliament Group from East Selkirk Middle School and Walter Whyte School. We have 41 grade 7 and 9 students under the direction of Ms. Deanna Cameron and Ms. Jen Cyr. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Football Stadium Cost and Funding Options

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, 232 days have now passed since the Premier desperately announced that he wanted to play banker with respect to the stadium deal. He then went and dug a great big hole at the University of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, taxpayers and Bomber fans are now waiting to see a stadium deal that's good for the Blue Bombers and fair to taxpayers.

Can the member for St. Boniface indicate today when he will be climbing out of that hole to let Manitobans know what's going on?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm we will be proceeding with the stadium. Much work has been done. All the partners, the Bombers, the University of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, the Province, the private partner, are all working together to advance this project. This project will provide a first-class quality facility available to Manitobans. It'll be used all year round. It'll be available for amateur sport, University of Manitoba athletic teams, as a training facility, and it will also, obviously, be used by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and it will allow us to avoid tens of millions of dollars of costs on repairing the existing stadium, which everybody acknowledges is in its last days.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, both Bomber fans and taxpayers have now waited 232 days to— for some degree of certainty from the member for St. Boniface. They've waited 232 days, which is more than half of the time that he's been in the Premier's office, consumed by fumbling the ball on this deal.

I want to ask the Premier if he can be specific today, with 232 days and counting, on this fumbled deal, when can we expect him to clear up basic questions about what the stadium's going to look like, what it's going to cost and who's expected to pay for it.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the stadium project is moving forward. It's going to provide a first-class facility. It's going to provide a first-class facility that Manitobans can have the benefit of.

People need to remember that it was the member from Fort Whyte's opposition that opposed the MTS Centre. The MTS Centre is now a highly valued facility, highly used facility. They did everything they could to block it. We know they're trying to block this project as well. We know that they're trying to block having clean water in Manitoba. We know they're trying to block hydro development. They're the party of doing nothing. We understand it.

We're the party of moving the province forward. We will on this project. We will on better health-care access, more access to physicians for all Manitobans. We'll move forward in making sure young people get an education up to the age of 18. We'll move the

province forward. They'll stop it in their tracks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the member for St. Boniface has said many, many things about many topics over the years, including recent assurances, as of August of this year, to taxpayers about how any cost overruns would be handled in connection with the stadium deal. We now know that he reneged on those promises to taxpayers that were made as recently as August with respect to overruns.

I want to ask the Premier: In his current state of desperation, what new assurances will he be providing to taxpayers that he's actually done due diligence before he goes out and makes a new round of promises to Manitoba taxpayers?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this publicly owned facility, owned half by the University of Manitoba, half by the City of Winnipeg, will be available for the benefit of all Manitobans. Students come from all over Manitoba to go to the University of Manitoba. They will now have a first-class facility to replace the decrepit stadium that they've had there for many years that was in a very bad state of repair. The stadium will also be available for the Blue Bombers. It'll also be available for community use. It will provide 2,400 jobs, years of employment for Manitobans at a time when we're wanting to continue to move forward with strategic infrastructure projects in this province. It will be done in partnership with the City, the Bombers, the university. Of course, the Province will be involved, and we've had good involvement up to now from the private partner.

* (13:50)

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want to stop the project. They want to block it. They want to do nothing, just like they did on the MTS Centre, just like they don't want to protect the UNESCO World Heritage Site, just like they don't want to do anything—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Role of Winnipeg Blue Bombers

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

We have some youth parliamentarians here, and I'm sure some of them have dreams of following in some of the members' footsteps. So let's set a good example here. We have that good opportunity today to set good examples, so let's take it and let's have some decorum.

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): In today's—this morning's paper, the Premier is quoted as saying, and I quote: "The Blue Bombers want to play a role in providing a business case for continuing to have the stadium built as we're moving forward on it right now."

I'll just read that again: "The Blue Bombers want to play a role in providing a business case for continuing to have the stadium built as we're moving forward on it right now."

I just want to ask the Premier if he could translate that quote from NDP-speak to plain English.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the translation of everything we've said is: We're moving Manitoba forward to have first-class facilities.

We're having better schools. We're having better hospitals. We're having better housing for people. We're having better recreation facilities so that people can make productive use of their leisure time. We're doing it in a forward-looking fashion to avoid tens of millions of dollars on—of expenditure on a nearly time-expired existing facility.

The members opposite want to back into the future by doing nothing. Their plan is to take things apart. They want to gut The Water Protection Act. They want to gut the opportunity to have a UNESCO World Heritage Site. They want to cancel converters and decrease the reliability for Manitoba Hydro. They want to abolish the minimum wage. They want to stop the stadium just like they stopped the MTS Centre.

We'll move the province forward; they'll drag us backwards.

Cost and Funding Options

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I—he's gone from 30-second attack ads to 60-second attack ads. They're no more convincing here than they are anywhere else, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the Premier if he can move beyond the 60-second attack ads here in question period and try to focus on responding to questions that are important to taxpayers and important to Blue Bomber fans.

He said in the paper today—and the suggestion in the paper this morning is that there's been no

business case yet developed with respect to the stadium plan.

I want to ask the Premier that, as of today, we're now 232 days since the original announcement. He's suggesting in this morning's paper that no business case has yet been developed. Can he please assure the House today that he was misquoted in this morning's paper?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I can confirm to the House today that we're moving forward on the stadium project. I can confirm to the House today, just like we moved forward on the MTS Centre, we will provide a good quality facility that will be publicly owned and publicly accessible for amateur sport, the University of Manitoba, the Manitoba Blue Bombers and for community use. That's where we're going.

And we have done that on many other projects. I can confirm today we're moving forward on hydro development in this project to supply energy to our customers both within and outside of Manitoba. We won't put it at risk. I can confirm today we're moving forward on the UNESCO World Heritage Site. I can confirm today that we're moving forward on greater protection for Lake Winnipeg in terms of the amount of phosphates [*inaudible*]

And I can also confirm that the members opposite will drag their feet, block, stall and obstruct every single one of those projects like they've done for the last several years under the leadership of the member opposite.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we all remember all too well when he confirmed that Crocus was strong and a good investment. We all remember all too well when he confirmed that the west-side bipole would only cost \$2.2 billion. We all remember today when he confirmed that they would end hallway medicine. And now he's confirming a whole bunch of other things.

But here we are 232 days after the announcement, more than half of his time as Premier consumed by this failure of a deal, we have no idea what the stadium's going to look like, no clue as to what it's going to cost and no answers on who's going to pay.

How can he justify this complete and total failure of leadership?

Mr. Selinger: And, again, we know that the existing facility is going to cost tens of million dollars in

repair bills; that's well documented. And the reality is there needed to be a plan to move the project forward, and I'm pleased that all levels of—the City government, the provincial government, the Bombers, the university, and with input from citizens of the community, including the private partner, took the leadership to move this project forward. No question that it's a project that will provide great value to the community, great value in terms of recreational use, great value in terms of a facility that will serve the students of the University of Manitoba and, of course, it'll provide a new home for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

Members opposite don't want to do that. We know that. They've made that clear from the get-go. They didn't want to put one nickel into that project. They opposed it every step of the way just like they opposed the MTS Centre, just like they opposed having clean water in Manitoba, just like what they tried to do in the spring when they wanted to cut a half a billion dollars out of the budget and lay off teachers, lay off nurses, lay off police officers. We know what their agenda is, and we know what Manitobans need for the future.

Vale Inco Mine Premier's Knowledge of Plant Closure

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a new question to the leader of the party formerly known as the Gary Doer party.

I want to just ask the leader: Yesterday—I'm not sure what they go by these days—but yesterday he said when the news came out about the terrible situation in Thompson, when the terrible situation—*[interjection]* they don't want to talk about the 500 job losses in Thompson.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, when the announcement came out yesterday that more than 500 workers would lose their jobs in Thompson with an impact on the—all of the families in that entire community, the Premier said that he was caught off guard—he said he was caught off guard by the announcement. I just want to ask the Premier—yesterday he said he was caught off guard by the announcement and he was angry about the lack of notice.

I just want to ask the Premier: Can he indicate when he and his government were first warned that the smelter closure was a possibility?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member opposite got up and defended the company. He thought the solution to the challenges with Vale Inco were to give them another massive tax cut. That's what he was arguing in this House yesterday. When they have the second most competitive tax regime in Canada right now, his solution was to give them another tax cut.

We stand with the people of Thompson. We stand with the working people of Thompson, the City Council of Thompson, the school board of Thompson, all of whom we met with this morning and had a discussion with them about a—bring unity to the community to sit down with Vale Inco and look at constructive solutions to their role in mining in Thompson and in Manitoba. And there will be tremendous co-operation as we work towards finding a go-forward strategy with Vale Inco, which will add as much value to Manitoba's economy as possible. And I can tell you right now that the comments made by the member opposite were not well received in the community of Thompson.

Mr. McFadyen: I appreciated the opportunity yesterday to speak with Mayor Tim Johnston, who's doing a terrific job in showing leadership on the issue in Thompson. I think if we can be positive about the work being done by Tim Johnston, the mayor of Thompson, and other community leaders on this, then this helps us move forward.

Mr. Speaker, what doesn't help us move forward is when we have the sort of statements made yesterday by the leader of the NDP when he said that he was caught off guard. He then makes a desperate trip north after the announcement when it's too late to do anything about it and offers this weak response to dealing with the issue.

* (14:00)

He didn't respond, Mr. Speaker, to the question the first time I asked it, so I want to ask him again: Can he indicate when he and his government were first warned that the smelter closure was a possibility?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in public, the confirmation that they wanted to close the smelter and the refinery came very recently, and in a

matter—as a matter of fact, we do not believe there was due notice or consultation with the community on their decision to proceed in this fashion, and that is exactly why we have said it is a decision that we find not acceptable to the people of Manitoba, the people of Thompson, the people of the north and the government of Manitoba.

I know the member opposite wants to defend the company. I know the member opposite wants to solve—address the problem by giving them another massive tax break. That's what he was indicating yesterday, when we know that the tax regime for mining in Manitoba is considered the second best in the country.

We want to work with the people of the community, the mayor and council whom we met with this morning; the school board, some of whom we met with this morning; the working people of Thompson, represented by their union; and other members of the community to ensure that Thompson has a prosperous future. We know they have good quality assets; we know they have a strong workforce. We know they have a strong community, and we have committed to work with them to find a solution to this to make sure Thompson thrives and as a result—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the trouble is that the people of Thompson would have been better served if some work had been done earlier in order to deal with the big challenges that they're now facing. And if the Premier hadn't been so consumed over the last 232 days with the failed stadium deal, he may have been able to provide—put more time and energy into working to head off the announcement that was made yesterday.

In fact, the comments I made yesterday were identical to the comments made this morning on CJOB by the Minister of Energy (Mr. Chomiak) with respect to the company. The Minister of Energy and I said exactly the same thing almost word for word yesterday [*inaudible*] said this morning on CJOB. In fact, the only person in the House who is on a different message saying that he was surprised, that he was panicking and desperate, was the Premier yesterday after the announcement was made. And that's why I want to ask him one more time if he can indicate when he was first warned that the closure was a possibility.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member has just alleged that I'm the only person that was surprised by this announcement. Does that suggest that he knew about it earlier? And if he did know about it earlier, why wasn't he doing something about it? Why wasn't he standing up and defending the interests of the working people of Manitoba? Why wasn't he standing up and defending the north? Why wasn't he talking to us about how we could work together on a solution?

You know, these glib one-liners searching for headlines really don't serve the interests of Manitoba. Working with the people of the north to find a solution to the problem is the way forward, and I was pleased to go up there and meet with the people of Thompson last night while the member opposite was missing in action.

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

Mr. McFadyen: The reason I'm asking when he was first warned about the possible closure of the smelter is that there was a story about it in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in—on Wednesday, October the 24th, 2005, Mr. Speaker. Now, the current Premier was sitting at the Cabinet table when this story appeared, and the story says in the *Winnipeg Free Press* that the Thompson smelter will be processing concentrate for the next five or six years until a smelter can be built in Newfoundland. That smelter is now nearing completion in Newfoundland and the smelter in Thompson, as predicted five years ago in the *Free Press*, is now being closed.

I just want to ask the Premier: Why is it that he missed the warning five years ago that this was coming and why, after 24 hours of theatrics, why didn't he do something sooner to prepare and deal with what was—what has been known by him and his government now for more than five years?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the obvious question is if the member was—had such a heightened awareness since 2005 himself, why is it just now that he's raising this matter? He's had five years as Leader of the Opposition to show a scintilla of interest in northern Manitoba. We haven't seen any of it. The reality is this—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum, please. Order. Hard to hear the questions and the answers.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2005 there's been a very substantial change in ownership at Inco. It's now owned and controlled by Vale, and their announcement recently has shut down the refinery. This is completely new direction for the people of Thompson. They never expected that the refinery was on the chopping block.

They thought a solution was being worked on to find a way to continue to have value-added processing in Thompson, not just mining, not just milling, but value-added processing. They understood when the '56 agreement was signed that it was going to be an integrated operation providing a range of job opportunities for the development of that community, and they have an expectation that that would continue. They were completely caught off guard by this most recent announcement and the lack of consultation and the lack of notice on it. And that's why we have said it's an unacceptable decision.

Mr. McFadyen: And he was the Minister of Finance sitting at the Cabinet table also privy to information about the taxes paid by the company at the time in 2005 when the story appeared.

The story first appeared, as I said, in August of 2005, and I want to assure the Premier that I would have been quite prepared to ask a question about it at that time except for the fact that I wasn't elected until December of 2005, four months after the story appeared.

But apart from the fact, Mr. Speaker, that he has no grasp of any of the facts or details of anything that he talks about in the House, apart from that reality that everything he puts on the record in this House is phony, is made up and is false, which belies his incompetence, this would not be of particular concern except for the fact that there are 500 families in Thompson now worried about their future.

How could he have so utterly failed the people of Thompson on this important file?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the lame excuse from the member opposite is that he never entered the House till December, four months after the story. Well you know that still gave him five years to do something about it if he was really concerned about it. That's pretty pathetic. It's pretty pathetic.

During that period of time, Mr. Speaker, we have a strong record, and during that period of time, our government has worked very closely with

companies like Inco to ensure that they move forward, including the new Birchtree Mine.

We've always taken a collaborative approach to working with the major industries in northern Manitoba and, indeed, around Manitoba, to find solutions. And that's why we were surprised and disappointed and angered by their decision to shut the refinery without any recent notice about that, without any opportunity for consultation, and leaving people in the north in a state of shock about this. And that's why it's unacceptable.

The member opposite defends the company. Everything they did was absolutely fine. As a matter of fact, he defends the company so much he wants to give them another tax break. We want them to invest in Manitoba.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, there's no need to respond to anything that is contained in his responses because we've got a really serious issue the 500 families in Thompson are being affected by.

And now, Mr. Speaker, he's got a plan to raise taxes after the next election on Manitoba families, but this is of concern as well to Manitobans. The reality is that there are major new investments and jobs being created in Saskatchewan, in Newfoundland and in Ontario by the very company that he is today attacking.

Rather than attacking people who create jobs, Mr. Speaker, will he take responsibility for his complete and utter failure to show leadership on this file?

* (14:10)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we are working responsibly with the local level of government, with the community, with the union, with the school board to come up with a united front to deal with Vale, to make the case why they should continue to invest in Thompson. It's got an excellent workforce. It has a strong infrastructure.

We've just committed to an \$82-million University College of the North facility that the members opposite voted against. That's how much they care about Thompson. We're building new housing in Thompson that they voted against. We have said today we will continue those projects. We've given assurance to the community that we will proceed on these projects to help them diversify their economy, to help them to add skills to their

workforce and ensure they can participate in the future.

And we expect Vale to work with the community and to work with us to ensure that mining remains strong and value added in northern Manitoba for the benefit of all Manitobans.

Child and Family Services Agencies Child Abuse Investigations

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, he attacks major employers, he attacks anybody who criticizes him in his state of desperation, and I think Manitobans deserve better.

And one area that is of great importance to everybody in this province is what we see happening within his Child and Family Services system. Mr. Speaker, in September we were all saddened and distraught to learn of the six-year-old boy who allegedly suffered incredible and awful abuse over several months. He sought help no fewer than four times, reportedly being returned to his abusers before finally receiving assistance from Child and Family Services. Police have said it's one of the most severe cases of abuse they have seen.

I want to ask the Premier to explain how it can be, that under the watch of his government, that this little boy was returned to his abusers three times before his government finally took appropriate action.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the incident as reported is certainly—it's heartbreaking, and one can only put yourself in the position of a little boy that was looking for help from neighbours and, thankfully, the neighbours did respond by phoning. And it reminds us all of the importance of the public in reporting concerns about child welfare.

But the case and the role of both the law enforcement and child welfare has been the subject of some conversation in the media and, certainly, raised serious concerns on our part, which is why we took the unprecedented decision that we should have an outside external review of what took place. We do that, as we know, automatically for child deaths, but in this circumstance we also thought that that independent review was so necessary to guard

against this in the event that there were shortcomings in the delivery of child welfare services.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, now, the member opposite, who is arguably better at anybody in this Chamber at pretending that he cares about these situations. If he actually cared, he would have done something about it by now. He wouldn't continue to come into the House, time and again, and feign concern.

Well, Mr. Speaker, members opposite have said so many times since 2007. For three years this minister and his government have made promise after promise after these sorts of situations that they would take action to fix the province's CFS system. In fact, this minister made a promise that, and I quote, every child will be seen every time.

I want to ask this minister how he can justify this broken promise and his complete failure to take action, as opposed to his words when it comes to this very important issue for Manitobans.

Mr. Mackintosh: It's one thing, and I think it's entirely legitimate that members of this House question whether standards are properly followed by public servants, social workers, or foster parents, for that matter. It's quite another to make suggestions that people in this House don't care about what happens to our youngest and most vulnerable. That is really repugnant and I think it reflects very poorly on the Leader of the Opposition.

Having said that, we are very concerned that we do identify what took place. It's important that there be an outside review to determine whether a child welfare worker—or workers—took the appropriate and reasonable steps according to the standards.

It's not appropriate, in our view, that the member opposite wants to politically pre-empt an outside, independent review of a most serious matter.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, his words were convincing for three years and I, and other members of the House, gave him the benefit of the doubt for three years. We never doubted the sincerity of the words in terms of his caring for three years. But we're now at the point where after three years of making such statements, we continue to see these things happen time and again under his watch. And it's not about his feelings or his ego; what it is is about his actions and his failure to lead.

I want to ask, Mr. Speaker, since the minister is upset that I may have hurt his feelings, if the Premier

(Mr. Selinger) will show leadership on the issue today and stand up and respond to this question: Will the Premier show leadership today because of the failure of his minister? Will the Premier stand up today and say that he is concerned enough that he's prepared to set aside other things he may be working on, put this on the top of his priority list and get real action to prevent future tragedies in the system?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the very fundamental shortcoming in the presentation of the member opposite is he would expect Manitobans to believe that if he took half a billion dollars out of the budget, that he would still make improvements and, indeed, increase the child welfare budget of 60 per cent like we have, Mr. Speaker.

I also remind the member opposite that when they were in office, kids were warehoused in hotels, headline after headline. It was a result of the actions of this government that we are now down to an average of about two kids, down from 166 just a few years ago. We've increased by thousands the number of foster beds available. We've enhanced the standards. We've enhanced the training. We've enhanced the investments and we're moving toward a new prevention stream of child welfare.

Mr. Speaker, if those members ever got their hands on child welfare, we know they would take the well-being of children. It's not a good place.

Foster Care Written Decisions on Child Removal

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, the issue of a young six-year-old having to plead four times for help and not be heard by this minister's policies and Child and Family Services system, is much more important than the kind of answer we just received from the minister.

Mr. Speaker, Gage Guimond was removed from a loving foster family and died at the hands of an abusive family. This young boy could have been in the same situation as Gage Guimond had he not had the ability to cry out for help. He had been in foster care and was moved back into an abusive situation. What checks and balances were put in place to ensure his safety?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the—as Manitobans have heard, the inspector that reported on this one said that the child had been interviewed. There were interviews that

had taken place. The question is whether those were thorough enough.

Clearly, something went wrong here and that's why it's important that we have an independent review of what happened, and we will also send that external review to the Children's Advocate. There may be further questions that she will have, further inquiries that she will want to follow up on. So that is the appropriate course.

And as the members know from the hearing and the standing committee in June, Manitoba does have the strongest system anywhere when it comes to outside reviews. And, in fact, the Children's Advocate said we're the only province doing it, and I think that's a huge commitment compared to other provinces. We've got to make sure we get to the bottom of this.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Under this government we've had review after review and recommendation after recommendation and children are still falling through the cracks and being placed in unsafe circumstances by this minister and his policies.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister today whether he would implement recommendation No. 47 of Gage Guimond's report and recommendations, which I've asked him many, many times, and that is to ensure that no child is moved from a long-term foster placement until there's a written reason documented why it's in the best interests to move that child.

Will he implement that recommendation today?

* (14:20)

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member knows full well from a number of questions on this in the House that the southern authority has reported back on action on that. We're interested not just in one recommendation from that report but all of them.

And I also think that members in this House would find it very unfortunate that the member would want Manitobans to think that there were no cracks in child welfare, that there were no deaths in child welfare under her watch. She knows that is not the case.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I have never indicated that. What I am indicating today is that children are dying in the system as a result of some of the policies that he has put in place and because he hasn't put the proper checks and balances in place. And he isn't listening to the recommendations and

the reviews that have been provided to him over years and years, and again, we're doing another review.

Mr. Speaker, safety legislation for children isn't worth the paper it's written on if it isn't followed through on. Will he show leadership and will he ensure today that children are not put in abusive situations, in abusive families under his watch? Will he today send the directive to the agencies?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, under Gage's law, which was passed by this Legislature, the strongest message possible was sent—backed up by stronger standards that the safety of children comes first. But it is also backed up by the new overhaul of child welfare that was launched with Changes for Children in late 2006.

But the member wants to get up and talk about her ideas about not moving foster children. What we did hear in the committee in June was the Children's Advocate saying the opposition is asking to stop taking kids from foster parents. That is a very simplistic approach. Mr. Speaker, we've got to continue on the path of overhaul, making sure that the new positions, in fact, 230 of them, go to work on the front lines and to help the front lines, that we keep kids out of hotels, that we enhance standards and we also enhance accountability for expenditures in child welfare.

Education System High School Graduation Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in typical NDP fashion the government has looked over their classmate's shoulder when drafting policy and this time they've come up with the wrong answers.

They fashion their punitive policy on—to address high school dropout rates, high ones in this province after New Brunswick and Ontario. And if the government had done their homework, they would've known that dropout rates in Nova Scotia and PEI have decreased more than in New Brunswick.

They would know that in Ontario one in five children doesn't complete high school. They'd also note, Mr. Speaker, that this government, which doesn't have any vision and they like to look at their neighbours' test papers, but maybe in the future they should start looking for answers that work for Manitoba.

I ask the Premier: Why is he not addressing the basic reasons that young people are dropping out of school instead of fining parents?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are using a multi-pronged approach to ensure that young people complete high school.

Just a couple of weeks ago I attended the Pathways to Education announcement on Selkirk Avenue with the Community Education Development agency, who are partnering with local schools, local community organizations, and getting some funding from the Royal Bank and some funding under our Brighter Futures program.

They've enrolled over a hundred children in a program that gives them mentoring, homework assistance, access to part-time employment, scholarship and bursary money, and creates a culture of success for inner-city kids to complete high school. Those are the kinds of initiatives we support.

We've set up a Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship with 27 members. Two-thirds of these members are people that work with Aboriginal communities all across this province of Manitoba, regardless of jurisdiction, on ideas and practical approaches to help young people complete high school.

We recently had Izzy Idonije in Winnipeg to do a First Down program at Sister MacNamara School, which is an attendance program to help kids go to school and feel good about being at school—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and after 11 years of poor visionless education policy, we have the second highest high school dropout rate in all of Canada. In 11 years this government has tried, but everything they've turned to almost has been made worse instead of better.

We have alarmingly increasing rates of people using food banks because this government has not addressed poverty.

This government has got fetal alcohol spectrum disorder rates which are as high as they've ever been.

They have done worse for Child and Family Services than we have had—we've had more kids in Child and Family Services than anytime in the history of our province.

How can this—people of Manitoba possibly trust this government when so many things have backfired on them?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, our high school graduation rate has gone from 72 per cent to just under 80 per cent; that's a very significant improvement. Our dropout rate had decreased by 29 per cent.

But we're not satisfied with those results. We think we can take it to a higher level, and we think we can take it to a higher level by working with parents and educators and community organizations that have an interest in seeing young people succeed, and we know that those people exist all across this province. There's private businesses that want to help with this. The Premier's Economic Advisory Council has come up with an excellent mentorship program to allow young people to have mentoring opportunities with employers and employees to show them what kinds of job opportunities exist in Manitoba. We have co-op education programs with our post-secondary institutions.

I visited Sisler High School just this week, one of the 10 best high schools in Canada, one of the largest enrolment in Manitoba of 1,800 people, and I saw a high technology program there in the new media that didn't exist two years ago, and young people are getting great success in that program and getting jobs as early as grade 10 in fixing computers and developing new technologies.

Those opportunities—we want more of those in our high schools. We want more opportunities for success, and we will have them under our program.

Mr. Gerrard: And after 11 years this government has the second highest high school dropout rate in all of Canada. At that rate it would take a century to be the best in Canada.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that this government has not done their job. They have a visionless policy. Instead of taking accountability, this government hasn't realized that the people who are not graduating are often the poorest, and what this government wants to do is to fine the parents of the poorest people in this province in order to try and keep kids in school.

There are much better ways to do this. There are much better ways to address things like poverty. There are much better ways to engage kids in schools than to fine the parents. Why didn't this government come up with a much better approach?

Mr. Selinger: We're willing to take any approach that has proven results. That's why we have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. That's why we invest in young children and young families. That's why we're expanding our daycare program with an early learning curriculum so that people aren't just being child minded, but they have opportunities to learn while they're in child care. That's why we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, because it gives families the opportunity to earn incomes to support their children, and that's why we're taking these several initiatives, including what I think is a very worthwhile announcement today to ensure that young people stay engaged in education till at least 18 years old.

If the program that they're in isn't working for them, we will work with the school divisions to develop alternative programs that they can be successful at. That can include apprenticeship. That can include co-op education. That can include all kinds of experiences that allow them to have confidence about entering the labour market.

But we want them to learn. We want them to earn. We want them to succeed. And we will do that with these new initiatives, and the member opposite will vote against it and try to cut a half a million dollars out of the budget and say we should balance the budget yesterday on the backs of children and families. We won't do that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Springfield Heights School 50th Anniversary

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, it is with particular pride that I acknowledge the 50th anniversary of Springfield Heights School, as I, among—along with many others, was among the first students who walked through the doors when it opened in September 1960.

I especially want to congratulate the administration, Mr. Mario Beauchamp, principal; Ms. Joelle Guillou, vice-principal; the staff, students and parents for organizing and hosting such a wonderful event.

* (14:30)

The anniversary celebration on September 30th brought together staff and students from the past and present. The occasion provided everyone with an opportunity to go back in time and get a better

appreciation of just how much the school and the surrounding community has grown in the past 50 years.

The students who first attended Springfield Heights School were in grades 1 through 8, but it didn't take long before Springfield Heights was designated as an elementary school to accommodate all the new families with young children who had moved into the neighbourhood.

As the community grew, so did its cultural diversity. This was soon reflected in the programming offered at Springfield Heights School, which began offering both a Ukrainian bilingual program and a French immersion program. These language programs continue to thrive at the school and are a reflection of the rich cultural makeup of the community.

The last 20 years have seen the introduction of a variety of new programming, through projects and initiatives that have had a positive impact in the school and for its students. Some of the projects put in place include a recycling program, a literacy lab, and a student conflict mediator/peer support initiative.

Springfield Heights School, through its students, has also extended its horizons beyond the walls by reaching out to the broader community through organized fundraisers as a way of coming to the assistance of others. These include supporting students in Africa and collaborating with the Kiwanis Club of Winnipeg to assist charitable organizations in the city.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour and a pleasure for me to share in the celebration of Springfield Heights School's 50th anniversary. Springfield Heights has proudly served its students and the broader community since 1960, and may it continue to do so for many more years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Marjorie Anne Heinrichs

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): It is with great sadness I rise today to remember Marjorie Anne Heinrichs who passed away November 9th in a tragic car accident. Marj was the second eldest of six children born to Sydney and Helen Reimer of Rosenort. Marj graduated from Rosenort Collegiate, married her high school sweetheart Jim and they had five children: Tom, Jennifer, Katie, Sara and Billy; and two foster children: Cody and Callie. She will

also be remembered by her grandchildren Alex, Sativa and Isabella. Sadly, her eldest son Tom was also killed in a car accident in 1994.

Marj was a gifted storyteller and began her career writing a column in the Morris paper, the *Scratching River Post*. She was a photographer, author and recorder of Aboriginal history and, as such, nurtured a deep connection to Roseau River First Nation and others in northern Manitoba. She also worked for Golden West radio station in Altona and sat on several boards, including a women's shelter and regional health authorities.

Marj discovered and nurtured what was sacred in this world through a tender heart. Her soul was nurtured by that which was holy in children, in those who suffered, through the wonder and beauty of creation, inside the Christian stories she inherited and the Aboriginal journey which invited her in. Indeed, when Charles Nelson spoke at her funeral, he told the congregation that he'd offered a burial place for Marj beside his mother—a very high honour.

Marj was described as an uber-mom to all of her kids and to others as well. She loved to travel, garden, bake, cook, host, go for walks, drink red wine, listen to CBC and shop till she dropped.

I knew Marj as a friendly face who was putting her microphone in my face and asking me questions. The last time we spoke was in Rosenort and we talked about care of seniors within the community, something that she was committed to. Marj was the dear—the daughter of dear friends Syd and Helen Reimer, who I have known over the last seven years since I was elected.

Marj was a wonderful person, taken too soon from her family and friends. So many people will miss you, Marj.

Thank you.

Evelyn Shapiro

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, rarely in life do we meet people who not only influence the system but re-envision the entire structure of something like geriatric care. I deeply regret having to relate the recent passing of Evelyn Shapiro—the creator of the first provincial home care program—at the age of 84.

Born in Lithuania, Professor Shapiro received her B.A. and M.A. from McGill University before joining the University of Manitoba as an assistant professor in 1972. She worked in the department

now known as Community Health Services in the Faculty of Medicine.

Professor Shapiro kept busy. She was a research associate with the Manitoba Longitudinal Study on Aging, a member of the Gerontological Advisory Council of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Council on Ethics in Human Research. She became a full professor in 1990 and a senior professor in 1998.

However, she didn't lock herself into the ivory tower of academia. She worked as a senior health policy advisor from 1988 to 1990 and gave generously of her time, serving on different health advisory committees and organizations. She also participated in the founding of Manitoba Centre for Health Policy.

Evelyn Shapiro's achievements cannot be recounted in only two minutes, but we will remember her most as the key architect of the universal Manitoba Home Care Program. Started in 1974, it became a blueprint for similar programs across the country and around the world. Tens of thousands of Manitobans benefit from Shapiro's vision. Nearly 39,000 Manitobans receive home-care services a year.

Mr. Speaker, these services are more crucial than ever as our province ages. Professor Shapiro was one of seniors' most passionate advocates, and she was accordingly recognized in October 2006, when she was appointed to the Order of Canada and in 2008 with an appointment to the Order of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my deepest condolences to Professor Shapiro's family. She was an exemplary woman who fought for some of the most vulnerable among us and left us a legacy that none of us will soon forget. Thank you.

Dan Giesbrecht

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): This fall, the Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce held their annual gala celebrating the Winkler Citizen of the Year. This year's award went to Dan Giesbrecht, a well-known retired educator and principal from Garden Valley Collegiate, who served his community for nearly 40 years.

Dan Giesbrecht has made significant contributions to education and sport in Winkler, which has benefited students in the community. He has led students on field trips outside of Manitoba, allowing them to gain a better understanding of the

world beyond the borders of our province. The work that he has done has left a lasting impression on the lives of students that he has taught.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Giesbrecht has inspired his students to be the change you want to see in the world. He is truly dedicated to enriching the lives of students through education, as he has proven over his extensive career.

In the spring of 2009, the Province of Manitoba awarded Dan Giesbrecht in the inaugural Outstanding School Leader Award for his ability to encourage his students to change the world for the better. Through his actions, he has encouraged young people to make the most of their futures and think critically about the world they would like to live in.

Throughout his life, Dan Giesbrecht has followed the advice of his father passed on to him, and I quote: "You don't get anything for nothing, and never ask anybody to do something that you aren't prepared to do yourself."

Although he has now retired, Mr. Giesbrecht plans to continue his role in advocating for youth in the community and would like to see youth play a strong part in the community's future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Dan Giesbrecht on becoming the 2010 Winkler Citizen of the Year. Mr. Giesbrecht has an extraordinary career on—has had an extraordinary career. On behalf of the Pembina constituency, I thank him for the time he has dedicated towards providing a higher education to students. Thank you.

Brandon Infrastructure Investments

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the summer of 2010 saw our provincial government continue its record level of investment in the city of Brandon, a level of investment unprecedented in Manitoba history, a level of investment which is helping build a strong foundation for future growth in my home community.

Recently, many exciting new projects have been announced that will improve the lives of residents in and around Brandon, especially in the areas of health, education, infrastructure and neighbourhood renewal.

In the past year, we've announced major funding improvements to downtown Brandon: funding announcements for a new fitness centre and physical plant at Brandon University; funding for the restoration of the historic agricultural display

building No. 2 on the Keystone Centre grounds; funding for low-income family housing; and the development of over 50 units in the historic Massey warehouse building in downtown Brandon; and funding for green initiatives to capture methane gas; renew Brandon's transit fleet; and provide energy-efficient retrofits to hundreds of family homes.

* (14:40)

In addition to these investments, I would like to highlight three projects in particular, which will have a tremendous impact on the lives of western Manitoba residents. The first is the Western Manitoba Cancer Centre. When fully operational, the Westman cancer treatment centre will provide radiation therapy, chemotherapy and outpatient care to patients throughout the—throughout western Manitoba. The facility will be a major component of the regional—Brandon Regional Health Centre campus which we've been building over the last decade.

The second project is the new \$48-million Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology at Assiniboine Community College. The Len Evans Centre will be able to accommodate upwards of 1,400 students and including more than 700 new apprentices. This high-tech, world-class training facility, which complements the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts and pre-stages the future redevelopment of the monumental Parklands building, will help Manitoba meet a growing demand for skilled workers.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the historic development of Assiniboine Community College in Brandon's North Hill is an initiative which will ultimately position Brandon as a national centre for post-secondary education in Canada.

The last project is the \$40-million reconstruction of 1st Street, 18th Street and the David Thompson Bridge in Brandon. These—this new—these new roadways replace narrower 'throughfares', Mr. Speaker, making it safer for drivers and pedestrians, offering better flood prediction—protection—and providing Brandon with a suitably high-profile entranceway.

Together, Mr. Speaker, these improvements are enabling Brandon, the Westman region, and all Manitobans to move forward towards a stronger future.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
THRONE SPEECH
(Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen)

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

We the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fifth Session of the Thirty-Ninth Legislature of Manitoba, in the name—standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased to rise today to provide some comments in response to the Speech from the Throne that was presented on Tuesday by His Honour Philip Lee.

And I want to first thank His Honour, the staff of the Legislature, including our pages, and our many great people who support us here each and every day for ensuring a very smooth opening to the Legislature on Tuesday. And I know that many of the guests that were here appreciated having the opportunity to be part of the experience, and so we offer our compliments to His Honour, to our staff here of the Legislature, to yourself, Mr. Speaker, to our pages and the others—and staff of government who were involved as well in a very significant way in the preparation of the speech.

Mr. Speaker, our concerns about the speech relate not to the government staff who would have been prepared in its preparation, but to the content of that speech, which was disappointing to us in several ways.

Mr. Speaker, 11 years into this NDP government, what we got on Tuesday was a rehash of old broken promises. There were some ideas that had been proposed by members of the opposition within that speech, and I want to acknowledge many of my colleagues in opposition for having put forward some good ideas over the past number of years. Many of those ideas made their way into the speech, and those ideas are good ideas.

The issue and the problem and concern we have is that the ideas are being promoted by a government

that has no ability, no strength, no commitment to actually follow through in implementing those good ideas. It's a government that, after 11 years, is tired. It's a government that is weak and unfocused. It's a government that is increasingly desperate in terms of the comments that it makes both in the House and publicly, Mr. Speaker, and for all of those reasons, we're unable to support its Throne Speech.

If we believed for a second that anything in that speech was actually going to be done, Mr. Speaker, we might have a different view of the speech. And in earlier speeches we, along with all Manitobans, really hoped that a lot of the ideas that were contained in the speech would actually be carried out. But after 11 years, we are certainly more aware than ever that when this government says something, it certainly doesn't mean that it has any intention or ability or energy whatsoever to follow through on it. That is really at the heart of our concern about the speech.

Mr. Speaker, words alone are—can be powerful things, they can be meaningful things. But when they're delivered by a tired and weak government after 11 years that's broken its promises and failed on every major challenge they said they would address, when they have failed to tackle violent crime in the way that they promised they would back in 1999 and in every year since, when they fail to be fiscally responsible, which they were elected on in 1999.

Who can forget the words of then-NDP leader Gary Doer when he said, we're going to keep the things the Tories got right and we're going to do one thing differently from the Tories and that's we're going to end hallway medicine in six months with \$50 million. That was the basis for the Gary Doer party's election in 1999.

And, Mr. Speaker, to our disappointment—and we have given them ample opportunity to actually follow through on these things. *[interjection]* In fact, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) says 10 and a half years; I think it might be slightly over 11, but we're not going to quibble. *[interjection]* He's giving the government the benefit of the doubt. And we are, of course, justifiably, I think, and reasonably, sceptical about the commitments contained in the Speech from the Throne, and again, the facts are what the facts are.

Manitoba is known as the violent crime capital of Canada. That is something that none of us are proud of as Manitobans.

And I certainly recall, growing up in St. James with my friends, getting on the bus, going downtown, watching a movie at the Met, maybe stopping over at the Paddlewheel for fries and gravy, and doing all those things without any concern at all. Too much—too many fries and too much gravy on some cases, but the—all of us on the rubber chicken circuit have some amount of awareness of how that can happen. But that was a time, Mr. Speaker, when our parents wouldn't have had any concern about us doing that as kids.

And I think today it would be fair to say that most parents here in the city of Winnipeg, myself included, would be greatly concerned about our kids wandering around downtown. We wouldn't allow it without us being there. And I think members opposite as well are all people who are involved in the community in different ways. I know I have the great pleasure of running into the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) from time to time down at The Forks and on Saturdays at MTYP and we—I have the opportunity with many other members of the House here to bump into them in different places. And I think we all have that same kind of anxiety about whether we would just allow our kids to hop on the bus, head downtown for a Saturday afternoon and be absolutely certain that they were going to be safe. That doesn't exist anymore today in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, and that is a very sad comment and a very significant failure on the part of this government.

And so we were disappointed, to put it mildly, Mr. Speaker, when all we got in the Speech from the Throne was more of the same kind of tired promises and a complete lack of energy or commitment or explanation as to how they would actually follow through in the implementation of any of those promises.

And so on that count, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne was a disappointment in that it just absolutely failed to provide any degree of comfort to any member of this House, whether you live in Winnipeg or whether you live in Brandon, whether you live in the Interlake or Dauphin or any other community in this province, that this government is at all serious about reducing violent crime.

* (14:50)

So, on that front, Mr. Speaker, and on that point alone, we have reason to vote down the speech. Without looking at any other aspect of the speech, that's a good enough reason by itself. Providing for the safety of our citizens is the most fundamental

responsibility of government. Our senior citizens look to us to ensure that they can leave their apartment blocks or their homes and walk to the store without fear of being mugged. Our families look to the government to ensure that our kids can go to a movie downtown or go shopping downtown without fear of something happening, and families all over the province have that sense now that something has changed in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it hasn't been a good change, particularly here in Winnipeg but also in other communities around the province. So, on those grounds alone, the speech isn't worthy of the support of this House.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the government promised that they would be fiscally responsible when they were first elected. I think I remember the line from the Gary Doer party at the time when they said that we would keep the things that the Tories got right: We'll balance the budget. We'll be fiscally responsible. We won't do what past NDP governments did, which was run up debt and then leave a huge mess for future governments and for future generations.

A lot of that debt that we still have on our balance sheet, a lot of that debt was run up by earlier NDP governments and still hasn't been paid off even as of today, and this government has gone on a 11-year spending spree that has run up that debt to even higher levels. When you combine all of the debt, of Crown corporations, of core government and of the other entities that this government has responsibility for, because I know they like to consolidate their numbers, when you consolidate all of them, that produces a total debt of \$24 billion already, and rising, Mr. Speaker, at a rate of 10 per cent a year—\$24 billion and rising at a rate of 10 per cent a year, at the same time as the government's revenues are rising in the range of between 1 and, at the absolute upper end, 3 per cent a year.

So, when you increase debt by that amount, Mr. Speaker, you, in effect, put in place a ticking time bomb, a tax bomb for future taxpayers. And what they have done over 11 years is they've assembled this mess that—of debt which will become a major source of financial pressure for Manitoba families. We fear that that pressure is coming sooner rather than later.

These are families who have already endured the devaluation of their pension funds because of the Crocus mess. These are families that are dealing with

other struggles in terms of their finances and their job security as a result of factors both within the control of the government and outside of its control. But what they look to the government for is to know that regardless of what happens and what the pressures are, that they've got a provincial government that's on their side, that wants to keep their costs down and that is genuinely concerned.

What we have instead is a government that during the good times that were—that really started in 1998. If you look at the way the numbers started to realign after years of hard work and years of focus on building an economic base in Manitoba through a very forward-looking economic strategy, the economy of Manitoba, if you look back, really started to take off in the early part of 1998. Now, not being a revisionist historian, I'm reasonably certain that there was a Progressive Conservative government in power when the economy started to take off in 1998, and that was as a result of the efforts of many, many people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite I know, because they lost three elections in the 1990s, have a hard time with that era, that they're out of step with the rest of Manitobans. And I know that in the Speech from the Throne there were three references to the 1990s. There was also, of interest, a reference to the year 1215, all of which were fascinating academic historical references. But they do nothing to bring down violent crime, which is really the issue that Manitobans are concerned about today. They do nothing to address the massive deficits now being run by the NDP after promising that they wouldn't be fiscally reckless. They do nothing to address the fact that the debt is growing. They do nothing to plan for the possibility—some economists would even say the likelihood—that interest rates are going to go up in the months and the years ahead, and we know that a single point rise in interest rates—and I know they're not very good at anticipating things. They can't—they're 232 days into the stadium fiasco and they haven't sorted that out, so I wouldn't expect them to understand the possible impact of an interest rate hike.

But a one-point rise in interest rates will eventually add about \$200 million to the annual expenses of government, and those \$200 million, Mr. Speaker, and members opposite know this, those \$200 million in debt payments are not optional. The banks who have lent the government this money don't say, sure take a year off when it comes to your debt repayments. Those are mandatory payments;

otherwise, we end up in a Greek situation where defaults start to lead to dramatic action. So that's not optional, those repayments, and so what this NDP government has done in running up the debt is they have, in effect, put our children's future in the hands of bankers who live outside of the province of Manitoba, and that is the ultimate in irresponsibility.

And they had—what's most disappointing as we look back is the missed opportunity over those 10 years as other provinces around us recognize that the growth through that period, starting in 1998 and carrying on until the bust of 2008—so it started under a Progressive Conservative government, went bust under an NDP government—that that period of growth was a great opportunity to tackle the debt of the Province and to prepare ourselves for what would inevitably happen, which was the—would be that the economy would turn down. And sure enough, that's what happened, Crocus first and then a variety of other failures. And, Mr. Speaker, what we find ourselves in a position today is seeing that debt now accelerating at a rate much more quickly than our ability to pay it off.

There is an Irish saying that you make hay while the sun is shining, and this NDP government, instead of following that good common sense advice, chose instead to squander the opportunity to pay down debt and leave us in this position. I think some people also say that you fix the roof when the sun is shining. Instead of fixing the roof while the sun was shining, they made that hole in the roof even bigger, so that when it rains, Manitobans get soaked. And, Mr. Speaker, that is part of the worry that we have today about the terrible financial position that we find as this NDP government's legacy to the next generation: a legacy of debt, a legacy of financial pressure, a legacy of rising crime. And all of these things, you know, undermining both the personal security and the financial security of Manitoba families is what they have done, and that's why they don't deserve to carry on in their position of government.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues in the Throne Speech that we have great concerns about: broken promises in health care. Hallway medicine is still with us now 11 years after the promise and, to be fair, 10 and a half years after hallway medicine was supposed to have been ended. And I'm glad that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has made that point that it's 10 and a half years now since it was supposed to have been done, and now we're waiting. In a lot of ways—I don't want to count the number of days that would be but, in a lot of ways, that is

something that as we—every day passes, and that promise fails to be kept, can just be stacked on top of all the other broken promises that continue to fester away under this tired and weak NDP government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have failures in violent crime, failures in financial management, failures in health care. We know that the news came out recently about a directive that hospitals in Winnipeg were to discharge patients as rapidly as they could and they were to block seniors from entering personal care homes, block families from providing access to our seniors to personal care homes because they had so badly failed to plan for what's happening. They were so obsessed with playing politics in so many different areas, so obsessed with their little political games here and there, abusing their departments, abusing the government to play games with advertising and a variety of other things, that they just took their eye off the ball and they failed to plan for what we now have happening in this province, which is growing pressure because of our aging population and an inability on the part of the government to meet that pressure.

And I want to commend members of this House for raising issues: the member from Morden who, on behalf of his constituents, has been asking for—

An Honourable Member: Pembina.

* (15:00)

Mr. McFadyen: —the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who has been asking for years for the government to take action on the Tabor Home because of the needs in his community facing seniors. He's been asking for real results. Other members in this House who have asked for results, the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik), who, for years, needed more space than what the government has provided in his communities.

Because of their mismanagement of the project, we now have an ongoing shortage of spaces in Neepawa and in other communities around the province. And so we see this complete failure to plan, this obsession with news releases and spin, and announcements, and getting into the *Free Press* and all the other things that they spend their time trying to do while they failed to actually deliver results for the people of Manitoba.

And so we've had failure on crime, failure on financial management, failure in health care. We've had—we've got grave concern about their misguided plan to raise taxes after the next election,

Mr. Speaker, which is absolutely clear when you look at the campaign they just ran in Winnipeg. And let me just say for a moment, pause, that while we and I and our party disagreed with the plan put out by Judy Wasylycia-Leis to raise taxes, one thing that I think needs to be acknowledged is that she was honest enough to put it out in front of the public. They voted it down, but that plan was put out there.

And I think, unfortunately, that this provincial NDP which was running that campaign, running that failed campaign and running attack campaigns against Councillor Smith and other people through the course of the civic campaign, as they were out threatening people and bullying people in the Minto constituency, and doing other things to attack Councillor Smith and others who were running, as they were spending all their time doing that, these problems continued to mount, the shortage of care homes for seniors and others.

And we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, that they have learned the wrong lesson from the civic campaign, that the lesson they've learned now is that, rather than telling everybody we're going to raise taxes, let's tell them that we're not going to raise taxes, because when we told them we were going to raise taxes in the civic campaign, they voted us down. So let's—the lesson the NDP take from that is let's just be sneaky and slippery and let's not tell anybody about our plan to raise taxes after the election. And we'll just do it after and we'll hope that after that election we'll have enough time, and enough spin, and enough advertising dollars to try to recover from that. And that is really what the approach is.

And it's not grounded on anything other than their own budget numbers or anything other than their own civic campaign. And what it's grounded in is the fact that they know that transfer payments, which now make up 40 per cent of the budget, remain flat. They know, Mr. Speaker, that own-source revenues are projected to grow at a rate that's certainly below 4 per cent over the next period of time, more likely in the range of 1 or 2 per cent, and yet they're increasing spending in this budget, budget to budget, by over 5 per cent.

And then they're saying that four years from now the budget is going to be magically balanced without any plan to grow the economy to increase own-source revenues, with the full realization that transfer payments have reached a high-water mark and are either going to be flat or are going to start to

taper down over time and, with a commitment, just magically balance the budget.

So how do you fill that gap between rising expenditures and relatively flat revenues? What's the answer to that question? [*interjection*] That's exactly right. Members on this side of the House have put their finger on it. The only option they've got is to raise taxes and rates and fees on Manitoba families. And we're going to fight them, Mr. Speaker. We're going to fight them from today and to the election because Manitoba families deserve better than a sneaking tax increase from a tired NDP government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the desperation that they're displaying all over the place today will translate into a bunch of phony promises, just like Crocus is strong, ending hallway medicine. They're going to go into the campaign, no, don't worry we're going to keep taxes frozen; we won't change any taxes. You know we're the ones—we brought in—remember the minor corporate tax cuts we brought in when we were in government. You know we're good with minor corporate tax cuts. Nobody needs to worry. And that, I'm afraid, is going to be an issue that is going to be a problem for them.

And so, Mr. Speaker, supporting small business in Manitoba is about tax relief. It's about an economic plan. It's about a common-sense approach to supporting small business entrepreneurs and others who want to take risk by ensuring their taxes are competitive with other province, and that we are pursuing a broader agenda of keeping taxes and rates down for all Manitobans, including small business, including others who contribute to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, so the absence of an economic strategy, the excessive reliance on transfer payments and this out-of-control waste and mismanagement in government are heading exactly where they always do and that's the higher hydro rates, higher bills to Manitoba seniors for their hydro. It's leading to higher rates in terms of taxes and fees across the board, and I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said on CJOB: Don't worry. There won't be any major tax increases after the election—and the key word being major within that. You've got to watch very carefully and pay close attention to the words, because the slippery words contain a lot more hidden meaning and hidden agendas and those are agendas that Manitobans deserve to understand before they vote next October.

In the same way that he hasn't emerged from the hole at the University of Manitoba to explain what's

going on, we highly doubt that he's going to emerge from the hole to explain his plans for rising taxes on Manitobans after the next election. Yet another reason, Mr. Speaker, to not support this Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, we have called on the government to, as part of its economic strategy, to move forward in a variety of areas. With CentrePort, we've called on them to move forward in terms of joining the New West Partnership. We've called on them to embrace the strategy of free trade, and start with our next-door neighbour. Saskatchewan is a good place to start with free trade and our other western neighbours, all of whom are projected to grow more than Manitoba this year. It's interesting when you look—the projections just released—the three provinces to the west of us are all projected to grow more quickly than Manitoba and that is clearly, at least in part, related to their forward-looking approach and their leadership that those provinces have shown in the New West Partnership, which Manitoba has been left out of.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're very concerned about the announcement in Thompson and the impact on that community and families. We are worried about the signal and the message that comes from the fact that the company is announcing the creation of 15,000 new jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, billions of dollars in new investment in Ontario and Newfoundland. And, as Canadians, we are proud of our country, Canada. We're happy for the people of Newfoundland, Ontario and Saskatchewan, who are going to see this investment and these opportunities. We worry about the people of Manitoba again being left behind because of the policies of our provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, so the failure on economic policy, the failure in financial management, the failure in so many other areas means that we cannot support this government. We have—we're also concerned that the speech doesn't acknowledge 11 years of wasted money on bloated health-care bureaucracy at the expense of front-line care, and we're also concerned that the speech fails to acknowledge that the shortage of personal care home beds in Manitoba is a direct result of their failure to plan.

We're concerned that the speech fails to recognize that far too many of our First Nations and Métis people remain on the outside of the economic life of our province, or to offer any plan to address this failure. And on that note, we were disappointed

and concerned—and I had a chance this morning to speak to Chief George Kemp, from Berens River First Nation, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg this morning, after reading his letter to the editor today, where Chief George Kemp said that the Premier's decision to force the hydro line down the west side of the lake would be one of the most significantly damaging decisions for generations to come that this province has seen.

That, Mr. Speaker, is not a partisan message. It's consistent with what the former CEO of Hydro, Len Bateman, has had to say. It is consistent with what the landowners and producers have had to say who are concerned. It's consistent with what ratepayers are telling us. It's consistent with what engineers—there were 10 engineers with Mr. Bateman present at that shameful committee meeting that was conducted by the new Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) and many other Manitobans coming forward with concerns.

And this coalition, Mr. Speaker, of Métis people, of First Nations people and others is a—important one and we hope that they'll be listened to by this government as we move forward. They haven't been listened to to date. In fact, this Throne Speech is a slap in the face to the community of Berens River. It's a slap in the face to landowners in Manitoba. It is a slap in the face to seniors and ratepayers.

* (15:10)

It is an insult to serious environmentalists who see the damage of the west-side route. It is an insult to those people who know about the woodland caribou ranges that are going to be intersected. It's an insult to the people who care about the Aspen Parkland. It's an insult to people who care about the two significant staging areas for migratory birds that are going to be intersected. It's a concern for anybody concerned about crossing five major highways, four major railway lines, the Red River which floods on a regular basis within a hundred metres of the homes of Manitoba families. It is an insult to people who are looking for hope and opportunity on the east side of the lake.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that they would use the speech to brag about the fact that they were going to do damage to our province in all of those ways, damage to our environment, damage to our reliability of our power system, damage to ratepayers, damage to First Nations, damage to our farmers and our producers—the fact that they would brag about it, that

they would brag about it in the Throne Speech, that they're proud of the fact that policy in their government is driven by getting invitations to award ceremonies when out-of-province lobbyists show up and host receptions, the fact that they're proud that they take their policy advice from American activists who are on the record as opposing everything that Manitoba Hydro does.

If you look at the record of what these activists have said about Manitoba Hydro over the years, they have said things like we oppose generating stations because we think they create greenhouse gases. We're opposed to transmission lines. We are opposed to everything that Manitoba Hydro does because, Mr. Speaker, we down here in the United States get no benefit from a successful Manitoba Hydro. We're much more interested in technologies that benefit the American economy like clean—so-called clean coal. That's what the American activists have said on the record, and those are the people that they take their— that the Manitoba NDP take their advice from. They take their advice from people who despise Manitoba Hydro. They take their advice from groups who raise money from companies that have an economic interest in keeping Hydro out of the American marketplace.

The groups in the U.S., some of them, Mr. Speaker, that protest against power sales into the United States, are funded by trusts that receive money from companies in the United States in the energy business who want to stop exports from Manitoba Hydro into the United States. And so these groups organize protests against Manitoba Hydro. Sometimes they turn into a *cause célèbre* when Manitoba Hydro wants to try and do something, and rather than having the strength to stand up for Manitobans, the strength to face down the activists who hate Manitoba Hydro, they were weak. They buckled. They folded like a cheap suit in the face of opposition from American activists, and for that reason they shouldn't be in government in the province of Manitoba today.

Mr. Speaker, their anti-Hydro agenda, which is backed up—which is—*[interjection]* Well, members opposite are laughing and I know that the members who are laughing are laughing because they don't understand the dynamics of what's going on in the American marketplace. They don't understand that a lot of the groups that are highly influential with the U.S. administration right now are trying to build made-in-America approaches, and they can't be faulted for that. They are Americans who want to see

their economy succeed, but these groups view Manitoba as a competitor in terms of energy supply. They don't view Manitoba Hydro as a friend in terms of energy supply, and that's why they're very well orchestrated, very well organized and very well funded in terms of pressuring the current administration.

And so, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was worried about how he would be perceived by organizations in the U.S. who are very close to the current administration in the energy business, if he was worried about his perception with powerful American organizations in the United States, if he was trying to get a job in the United States where those connections were important, then this decision actually would have some logic to it. But, if that was what he was trying to do, if he was worried about his image with the NRDC and the other groups that are plugged in with the administration, then what he might do is make a decision that carried favour with those groups, and if he was applying for a job to go work in the United States, that would make some sense.

But if he's—wants to be the Premier of Manitoba and stand up for Manitobans, then an individual who makes a decision like this can be considered nothing but grossly negligent. And the people who take their orders from somebody who's driven by these motivations, whether it's out of naivety, whether it's out of a lack of due diligence, whether it is out of pure incompetence, whether—maybe it's based on being clueless when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, if it's those things, Mr. Speaker, I'm afraid that's not a good enough excuse for this failure, and that's what's driving the west-side line.

Now, Mr. Speaker, so they brag about it in the speech. They take tax dollars from hardworking Manitobans to put into an advertising campaign at taxpayers' expense, driven by politics, and that is something that they will have to answer for to Manitoba taxpayers in the months ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the speech also fails in so many other ways. It fails to assure parents that their children are learning the skills that they need to succeed in today's workforce. It fails to do the right thing for Manitoba's farm families. It carries on this many-year-long approach of the NDP government of enacting divisive policies between the city and our rural communities that result in the neglect or, in some cases, the penalization of farm families and rural communities in the province, their new tax on

producers in supply management issues being one example of a new NDP penalty brought in on farm families.

And, unfortunately, like so many other things they do, even though the new tax was designed to punish those farmers, the effect of it is to actually put upward pressure on the price of milk, eggs and poultry, so it's everybody in Manitoba who pays the price. I know they are trying to take a direct shot at farmers with that new tax. In fact, though, Mr. Speaker, because of their failure to anticipate the effects of their actions, it's all Manitobans who pay for their new milk, poultry and livestock tax.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can't support a speech or a government that neglects and penalizes farm families and rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, the speech fails to acknowledge the chaos in Manitoba's child welfare system. It fails to acknowledge that it was the policies of this government, caused by its policies, that has resulted in the tragic abuse and loss of life of children in this province as a direct result of the policies of this NDP government, the politically motivated interference in the world of Family Services driven by pure politics and a lack of care for the people who are impacted by those policies that has resulted in the chaos that we're seeing and the tragedies which happened, and no amount of indicating care and concern is of comfort to those people who are suffering as a result of their policies.

Mr. Speaker, there are agencies out there that are doing a very good job, and I want to say that we have seen really good examples from the Métis agency of good work being done. We've seen really good examples of other First Nations agencies out there doing a good job out there on behalf of the children of Manitoba. But there are too many examples of things going off the tracks to allow the government to get away with continuing to play politics in Child and Family Services, and the speech fails to do anything about it.

The speech also fails—and we were all very saddened in this House, as I know all Manitobans were, to read about the tragic car accident which took place a number of weeks ago involving young people who had been drinking and driving and the terrible pain being felt by their families. And there are families throughout the province of Manitoba—and I've met many of them; the members, all members of this House have met many of them—who continue to grieve and suffer today as a result of the

deaths of members of their family caused by reckless drunk drivers.

And those families, Mr. Speaker, were ignored in this Speech from the Throne. Those families have seen the pain of the loss they have suffered, and we see, not just in terms of the individual awful and heartbreaking stories, but we saw the numbers that came out before the House came back—since the last time we've sat, in fact—new numbers which came out which shows an increase in drunk driving in the province of Manitoba. That increase goes against the trend that was in place as of the time this government took power and, obviously, as the amount of drinking and driving was decreasing, this government took their eye off the ball and it's now on the rise again, and we need to address that issue. We're disappointed that it didn't happen in this speech.

*(15:20)

Mr. Speaker, the speech fails to deal with addictions treatment. We've seen chaos in that system as well—the resignation of one of the leading addictions experts last spring—and we need to do better for Manitobans who are dealing with addictions, and the fact that this is not acknowledged or addressed in an appropriate way within this speech, with actual action and follow-up is something that is of great concern to us. We know it is a matter that every family in this province deals with in one way or another, and we're disappointed that the government hasn't shown more leadership on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the speech contains, as I said at the outset, some good ideas offered by members of the opposition. It fails, though, to convince us that any of them will actually be implemented after 11 years of broken promises. The speech fails to acknowledge that the government's 11-year track record of failure to keep its other promises, like ending hallway medicine, have caused the House to realize that the promises contained in this speech are very unlikely to be kept.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it has to be acknowledged that the current government is tired, it's out of steam, it is weak, it has failed on every major challenge it's taken on, and as it gets tired and weak, and as its failures continue to mount, the government's level of desperation increases. As we get closer to an election and the failures mount and they continue to sink, the level of desperation increases like somebody flailing around in a sense of

desperation. The attacks on employers, the attacks on city councillors, the attacks launched on anybody who has the fortitude and the honour to stand up and tell the truth about this government and to criticize this government in a constructive way are shameful.

And so I would just say that their policy of, attack now, ask questions later, is something that is disappointing because the challenges are getting larger and larger. And every bit of energy that this government has, the dissipating energy that remains needs to be marshalled and, at least to their best ability, focused on reducing violent crime, bringing fiscal responsibility, keeping taxes down, bringing stability to Child and Family Services, making our hospitals and our health-care system work better, providing for our seniors in our personal care homes, standing up for farm families, standing up for companies and people who want to invest and create jobs in Manitoba. Whatever energy that's left, it's got to be focused on those things rather than dissipated through their flailing, desperate attacks on everybody who has anything to say about their shameful record.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear, at this mark in history, after 11 years, that this government is not up to the job. This government has failed to deliver positive results, and it is going to take a new and energetic government, one chosen by the people of Manitoba, who are the bosses, though they're the ones who'll make the mistake—who'll make the decision. They are the ones—

An Honourable Member: It would be a mistake.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reference was to the 2003 election where Mr. Asselstine, the fraud examiner, indicated that had their financial fraud come to light prior to that election it would have had a material impact on that election. So I was just making reference to the fact that there was a mistake by Elections Manitoba in not setting the record straight, which happened before that election.

But the reality is that here we are, Mr. Speaker, desperate efforts to rig elections and to skirt the rules of democracy, desperate attacks on everybody who dares to criticize them, and the result of all of it, I think, is that it's becoming increasingly clear that this government has lost its way, that the office once occupied by people like Duff Roblin and Ed Schreyer, that that office is now occupied by somebody who, through a dodgy leadership process, has spent just over a year mismanaging his way along.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the government doesn't enjoy the confidence of members. The government has failed, and it is going to take a new government to follow through on bringing about reductions in crime, bringing about fiscal responsibility, keeping taxes down, supporting farm families, cleaning up Lake Winnipeg with actual results based on the scientific advice of Dr. Schindler.

And, incidentally, the fact, Mr. Speaker, that they would use their attack ads to attack Dr. Schindler and other scientists in the way that they did by implication is one of the most shameful things I have ever seen. It just seems that they just know no limits in terms of their desperation, and to attack Dr. Schindler and his recommended approach to cleaning up Lake Winnipeg is hitting absolutely rock bottom.

And I know Dr. Schindler and the many other scientists are looking forward to a debate, a real debate, over the next 10 months in response to the NDP attacks about the best way to move forward to clean up Lake Winnipeg for our kids, for our grandkids, to ensure that the awful algae blooms all over Victoria Beach this summer and other beaches along the lake, which are worse—the summer of 2010—this isn't the 1990s I'm talking about. You only have to look back a couple of months. The summer of 2010—the worst year on record for blue-green toxic algae, under the watch of this tired, political, desperate NDP government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we stand with Dr. Schindler and the other scientists, no matter how hard the desperate NDP wants to attack them and their recommended approach to cleaning up Lake Winnipeg, and we will do better.

And so we know, Mr. Speaker, that our city and our province need better sports facilities and infrastructure. We know we need stability within Child and Family Services. We know we need to bring an end to political interference in Child and Family Services and political games with political goals. We know it's time for a new government. It's time for real leadership. It's time for a commitment to tackle the provinces that we now face.

And so I want to speak, Mr. Speaker, and I would move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end, the following words:

But this House regrets:

(a) That the government's Throne Speech failed to acknowledge that after 11 years, violent crime is rising, waste is rampant and past health-care promises have been broken; and

(b) That the speech did not provide a credible plan to reduce violent crime, reduce waste and improve health-care; and

(c) That the speech endorses large ongoing deficits and rising debt which will result in higher taxes for Manitoba families; and

(d) That the speech failed to acknowledge the government's misguided plan to raise taxes on Manitoba families starting after October 2011; and

(e) That the speech failed to take immediate steps to improve Manitoba's competitive position by seeking entry into the New West Partnership; and

(f) That the speech failed to protect Manitoba seniors and families from hydro rate increases caused by the Premier's interference in Manitoba Hydro; and

(g) That the speech fails to acknowledge that for 11 years the government has wasted money on bloated health-care bureaucracy and boardrooms at the expense of front-line care; and

(h) That the speech fails to acknowledge that the shortage of personal care home beds in Manitoba is a direct result of the government's failure to plan for the needs of our seniors; and

(i) That the speech fails to recognize that far too many of our First Nations and Métis people remain on the outside of the economic life of our province or to offer a plan to address this significant failure; and

(j) That the speech fails to assure parents that their children are learning the skills they need to succeed in today's workforce; and

(k) That the speech continues the government's divisive policies of neglecting or penalizing Manitoba's farm families and rural communities; and

(l) That the speech fails to acknowledge the chaos in Manitoba's child welfare system caused by its policies or to apologize for the tragic abuse and loss of life caused by this government's political interference in the child welfare system; and

(m) That the speech fails to deal with the problem of increased drunk driving or to acknowledge that this

reckless behaviour has caused heartache for far too many families; and

(n) That the speech fails to deal with addictions treatment or to acknowledge that drug abuse and addiction are contributing to much of the crime that plagues our province, now known as the violent crime capital of Canada; and

(o) That while the speech contains many good ideas offered by members of the opposition, it fails to convince this House that they will actually be implemented; and

(p) That the speech fails to acknowledge the government's 11-year track record of failure to keep other promises, like ending hallway medicine, causing this House to realize that the promises contained in the speech are unlikely to be kept; and

(q) That the current government has failed in its promises to Manitobans, and as a result, it is now clearer than ever that it will require a new government to deliver positive results on crime reduction, fiscal responsibility, job creation, tax relief, protection from rate hikes, access to family physicians, support for farm families, the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg, better sports facilities and infrastructure, stability within Child and Family Services and other goals that are supported by all Manitobans.

And as a consequence the government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik),

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

But this House regrets:

(a) The government's Throne Speech failed to acknowledge that after 11 years—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: —when moving a motion, you cannot dispense—

(a) That the government's Throne Speech failed—
[interjection]

I have to read the motion back to the House. Order, order. For the clarification for members, I have to read the motion back to the House.

(a) That the government's Throne Speech failed to acknowledge that after 11 years violent crime is rising, waste is rampant and past health-care promises have been broken; and

(b) That the speech did not provide a credible plan to reduce violent crime, reduce waste and improve health care; and

(c) That the speech endorses large ongoing deficits and rising debt, which will result in higher taxes for Manitoba families; and

(d) That the speech failed to acknowledge the government's misguided plan to raise taxes on Manitoba families starting after October 2011; and

(e) That the speech failed to take immediate steps to improve Manitoba's competitive position by seeking entry into the New West Partnership; and

(f) That the speech failed to protect Manitoba seniors and families from hydro rate increases caused by the Premier's interference in Manitoba Hydro; and

(g) That the speech fails to acknowledge that for 11 years the government has wasted money on bloated health-care bureaucracy and boardrooms at the expense of front-line care; and

(h) That the speech fails to acknowledge that the shortage of personal care home beds in Manitoba is a direct result of the government's failure to plan for the needs of our seniors; and

(i) That the speech fails to recognize that far too many of our First Nations and Métis people remain on the outside of the economic life of our province or to offer a plan to address this significant failure; and

(j) That the speech fails to assure parents that their children are learning the skills they need to succeed in today's workforce; and

(k) That the speech continues the government's divisive policies of neglecting or penalizing Manitoba's farm families and rural communities; and

(l) That the speech fails to acknowledge the chaos in Manitoba's child welfare system caused by its policies or to apology for the tragic abuse and loss of life caused by government's political interference in the child welfare system; and

(m) That the speech fails to deal with the problem of increased drunk driving or to acknowledge that this reckless behaviour has caused heartache for far too many families; and

(n) That the speech fails to deal with addictions treatment or to acknowledge that drug abuse and addictions are contributing to much of the crime that plagues our province, now known as the violent crime capital of Canada; and

(o) That while the speech contains many good ideas offered by members of the opposition, it fails to convince this House that they will actually be implemented; and

(p) That the speech fails to acknowledge the government's 11-year track record of failure to keep other promises, like ending hallway medicine, causing this House to realize that the promises contained in the speech are unlikely to be kept; and

(q) That the current government has failed in its promises to Manitoba, and as a result it is now clearer than ever that it will require a new government to deliver positive results on crime reduction, fiscal responsibility, job creation, tax relief, protection from rate hikes, access to family physicians, support for farm families, the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg, better sports facilities and infrastructure, stability within Child and Family Services and other goals that are supported by all Manitobans.

And as a consequence, the government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

And this amendment is in order, so we will now proceed with the debate on the amendment.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I say with sincerity, I'm very glad to see you. I also want to acknowledge what a privilege it is to stand in the House today to speak in enthusiastic support for the government's Speech for the Throne. Yeah, I'm very excited to do that. I—you know, yesterday, when the member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) was doing her member's statement and dedicating her remarks to members of the

Canadian Armed Forces, giving a really informative and meaningful speech about the flag from Afghanistan, I was reflecting on how lucky we all are, really, to stand in this House and it's because of people like them and their predecessors. And I think that's particularly true for women and so I was deeply touched by what the member said, and I will hold it in my heart as I make my remarks today.

I'm grateful also to the Clerks here in the Chamber who take such good care of us. Even when we go astray in procedural matters, I'm always in awe of how they know exactly what to do and when to do it. I also want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the people with whom I work most closely here at the Legislature, you know, my caucus, of course; also with Deputy Minister Milton Sussman, who is doing an excellent job in a very complex role. He's a very key support to me and for the people of Manitoba.

Second last, but of course not least, I want to offer my gratitude, in the history books, you know, so that it will be on the public record, to my husband, Sam, and to my son, Jack, who—as every member of this House would have a similar experience, of course—they make many sacrifices on their own to allow for us to participate in this democracy and it's to them today I extend my love and my gratitude. And to the people of Seine River, who have put their trust in me, I thank them for their continued encouragement and support, and it is for them that I stand today and speak with enthusiasm and excitement and with gratitude, indeed, for the vision that has been presented in our Speech from the Throne.

We know that, of course, the priorities that we will focus on to move Manitoba forward even further relate to building an innovative economy, educating for the future, investing in health care and innovation in health care, making a commitment to make our communities safer, helping families, and helping families working to protect the environment, and building a strong north and a strong rural Manitoba. This speech, Mr. Speaker, in so many respects, it has it all, and we are very, very proud to be standing here and offering our support for that Speech from the Throne.

And I listened to the Leader of the Opposition, for a long time, and I listened to what he said and I can say that—that certainly we can agree on the fact that our discussion of this speech and our work in the coming months, it will be an exercise in contrasts. On this I do believe we agree and so I think when

those rare moments pass, we should acknowledge them, and I do agree with the member opposite that we do view things differently. And I know that when I listen to this Speech from the Throne, what I hear is a vision that shows that we're a government that cares about the families of Manitoba, not just about the people at the top, not just about a select group of friends, but it's a speech and it's a vision that shows that it's inclusive and that there's something in there for everyone, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that's what matters to Manitobans.

I know that when I look closely at some of the things that we're doing to commit to even better education in Manitoba—which of course is something I care deeply about, Mr. Speaker; I'm a teacher by trade—I'm delighted to see the kinds of commitments that we are making to students and to their parents about reporting on progress.

* (15:40)

We've listened to Manitobans who have said that while, you know, you are doing an excellent job with our children, sometimes we have some difficulty in understanding what some of the complexities of these report cards can mean. And we want to work together to find a method of evaluation that can be more easily understood so that we can work together with parents to improve learning. And so that kind of commitment, I think, is a really important one.

I also think that the commitment that we're making for students to make it easier for them to move between high school, into trades, colleges, university, is a critically important investment. And, of course, I was delighted today, as someone who spent most of her teaching career teaching in the high school, to see the commitment that we will ensure that students are staying in school, Mr. Speaker, and staying in an environment where they can learn.

And this commitment to ensure that students are being educated to the age of 18 is about vision. It's about ensuring that these young people are ready for the realities of today and tomorrow. We know that when you first listen to this announcement, Mr. Speaker, you may feel concerned about individuals that may be asked to stay in a school building where, for whatever reason, whatever their circumstances, they may not wish to be.

And, having been a high school teacher, I know that for some students this, you know, historically has been a reality. What we're saying today is that we want students to stay in learning. So to stay in

school, or another appropriate environment, where learning can occur, is not only going to help that individual, it's going to help that family and it's going to help that person make some plans for the future, not to mention a number of other benefits that we'll speak of in the coming days. So I was really proud to see that kind of educational vision and commitment shown by our Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and by our government.

It's no small wonder, Mr. Speaker, that I would be particularly interested and proud in the continuing investments in health care and in innovation that our government is making. Yesterday, of course, we made the commitment to Manitoba families that we will work to ensure that every Manitoban who wants access to a family physician will have one. And we think this is a critically important situation.

Now, of course, we know that, according to StatsCan, in Manitoba roughly 85, 86 per cent of Manitobans report having access to a family doctor now. We think that that's an excellent start but we can do better. We know that we can improve health outcomes overall by ensuring that people have access to Manitoba—[interjection]

Now, I hear the members opposite making comments from their script, which I have to admit is already becoming boring, that making comments from their script, saying that you've had 11 years.

Well, we need to talk a little bit, I think, about what we had to do over 11 years, a little historical context, if you please. We know that a decade ago health-care professionals were fleeing the province in record numbers. If they weren't being fired, they were being driven out of the province in disgust. We know that there were fruit flies buzzing around the operating room at the Health Sciences Centre and that infrastructure was crumbling. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that, in addition to renovating and—or rebuilding over a hundred health facilities in the province of Manitoba, we've also been able to turn the ship around of doctors leaving Manitoba in record numbers. And we've seen a net increase of doctors every single year since we've been in office. By the way, last year being a record-breaking net new doctors of 60 doctors and we're delighted about that.

And, I suppose, we ought to mention nurses. We know the members opposite have never gone on the record to say that they regret the decision of firing those nurses. And I welcome the opportunity for any of them to stand up today. I'm interested in particular

the Leader of the Opposition, but I—right now I would be happy to end my speech if one of them wish to stand up and just say once and for all we admit it; it was a stinker of a decision. Bad, bad, bad and we could just move on. That's—we just need them to make that—we can't seem to get them to make that statement, Mr. Speaker.

But I digress. And so we were able to, in that decade, turn the ship around, Mr. Speaker, and we were able to bring 2,500-plus nurses back onto the registry. We were able to—I guess that's for every one they fired, we've hired, now, two and a half back. We've been able to make investments across Manitoba, so this is how we have set the stage over that decade and more to ensure that we are able now, with the infrastructure in place, more doctors, more nurses, nurse practitioners, more professionals across the board, and facilities in which they can work, that we can now make the commitment to Manitobans that they will become part of a primary care network.

It is the way of the future for health care, Mr. Speaker. Focus on primary care, not make continued investments again and again and again in acute care. Of course, we need to look after our sick but invest, invest in primary care, and I just wish that members opposite, and I say this with great sincerity, wouldn't be so short-sighted in their vision.

We know they moved that amendment last June that said that they would eliminate a half a billion dollars from the budget in one year. It was regret—even Stephen Harper says that he would take six years to return balance after an economic down—even Stephen Harper says that, but, no, the Leader of the Opposition says in one year. Hide, if you need to, if you're a nurse or a teacher or a police officer because it's decapitation central. In one year, this is what they said that they would do and we reject that vision. We reject taking that half a billion dollars out of the system that's going to be at the bedside when your children or your mother or your grandmother needs the most. We think that that's wrong. We think that that's extremely short-sighted. We know they've done it before and it's predictable that they would do that again.

So I've also, you know, heard mention, Mr. Speaker, of their discussion about bureaucracy in health care, and I want to remind members opposite that of course we are working with our regional health authorities to ensure that funds are moved to the front line, and I can report today in the House—it may come as interest to members opposite that

corporate spending today in the WRHA is under 3 per cent. Now, when you go back to the 2007 election and mine for health-care promises, and you have to look pretty hard, but when you look at their health-care promises, one of them was that they would reduce spending in the WRHA to 3 per cent. We're under that today. We're not only keeping our commitments; we're keeping theirs as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, you know, we certainly want to continue to make these investments in primary care and of course we made a commitment in our speech to make continued investments in long-term care. We know that we have our loved ones who are growing older that want to have choices and we know that one of those choices of course is to be in a personal care home environment if that's what they need, in an environment that they wish to be in, and we've made a commitment in this speech to review our long-term plan and to put forward a new long-term care plan.

The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, at our asking a couple of years ago, is doing a new analysis and projections that's going to help guide us. That report is due out this December. We're thrilled about that but the other thing that we wish to do, Mr. Speaker, is not only do that capital construction which is very important, we want to ensure that we have supportive housing for our loved ones because we know they want options and most importantly, we want to build and grow our Home Care program.

You know, we know that the members opposite have already taken one good run at privatizing Home Care, and with the greatest of respect, I hate to even mention this on the day that we speak words in memoriam for Evelyn Shapiro, but we know that members opposite have taken a crack at privatizing. They took a lot of lumps from the Manitoba public and temporarily retreated from that. They wanted to cut home care services and introduce home care user fees. We know that that's not the vision for the future. We reject that kind of thinking which, of course, is the kind of thinking that comes forward when you think you can take half a billion dollars out of a budget in just one year, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:50)

So, as we go forward, we are going to present to Manitobans a new long-term care plan that will build on what we have done so far by adding over 930 personal care home and supportive housing beds, expanding home care, creating a caregiver tax

credit. All of those things have been part of our plan, but we're going to build on that plan and enhance it.

And so, Mr. Speaker, my time regrettably grows short. There are so many other important issues in here for the people of Seine River; the emphasis that we are going to place on making our communities even safer, while at the same time ensuring—doing this with community-based police, and ensuring, of course, that we have a new path for those suffering with mental health issues by establishing a new mental health court.

We're going to work hard to expand the SafetyAid program. And we're going to really focus on, arguably, the most important thing, and that is giving our young people something to do by developing new programs to improve our community clubs, to give our young people places to go, prevent crime and deal with criminals in a very firm way and in a way that can offer hope for the future.

The people of Seine River, Mr. Speaker, care deeply about the environment. We know that we're going to continue on our commitment to protect water. We are not, as the Leader of the Opposition said, going to repeal the Water Protection Act. It's shameful; we reject that thinking because we know that protecting our natural heritage, not destroying it, is one of the most important commitments we can make for the people of Manitoba in the future.

So, Mr. Speaker, again, I speak with great enthusiasm for the forward-looking vision of this Throne Speech. I know that it is a Throne Speech for everyone. It will build on success. It's not, like members opposite would have, about tearing things apart; it's about building an even better Manitoba for everyone. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for leave of the House to revert back to committee reports if that's possible.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to revert to committee reports? *[Agreed]*

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts First Report

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson): And I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- April 29, 2009
- May 19, 2010
- November 17, 2010

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Special Audit: Rural Municipality of La Broquerie dated March 2008
- Auditor General's Report on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority – Administration of the Value-Added Policy dated May 2010

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the April 29, 2009 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mrs. STEFANSON

Committee Membership for the May 19, 2010 meeting:

- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Mr. JENNISSEN
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Committee Membership for the November 17, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials speaking on the record at the April 29, 2009 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Officials speaking on the record at the May 19, 2010 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Ms. Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Local Government

Officials speaking on the record at the November 17, 2010 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Ms. OSWALD
- Mr. Milton Sussman, Deputy Minister of Health
- Ms. Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Local Government

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Special Audit: Rural Municipality of La Broquerie dated March 2008
- Auditor General's Report on the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority – Administration of the Value-Added Policy dated May 2010

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

THRONE SPEECH
(Second Day of Debate)
(Continued)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now we will resume debate on the amendment.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to welcome you back to the Manitoba Legislature. We missed you for the time that you were gone from this Chamber, and we're delighted that you're back here with us today. So, welcome back.

And I also want to take this opportunity to welcome all the new pages here. I'm sure that they will learn a lot from the various deliberations back and forth in this Manitoba Legislature and the debates that take place, and I hope that their roles are fulfilling and that they learn much from their time here at the Manitoba Legislature.

I also want to take the opportunity, of course, to—before—I'd like to thank my constituents, obviously, for giving me the opportunity to be here and represent them—and proudly represent them here in the Manitoba Legislature. I represent constituents who live in Charleswood, who live in Tuxedo, who live in River Heights, and all those communities are very special communities within my constituency. And I just want to thank all of them for giving me the opportunity to be here as an elected representative for all of them here in the Manitoba Legislature.

I also want to thank my family. Of course, we all know the times—at times we have late evenings in the Manitoba Legislature; we have early mornings. This is a job that takes us away from our families many times and, of course, away from our children, our loved ones, and I just want to thank Jason and Victoria and Tommy for being there for me and supporting me through what has been—the last 10 years, actually, here in the Manitoba Legislature.

And as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, Sunday will mark the 10th anniversary of me being elected as the representative for Tuxedo in the Manitoba Legislature. It's hard to believe that it's been 10 years, and I think back—I think this is my 11th Throne Speech since I've sat in the Manitoba

Legislature, and I'll get into talking a little bit more about the Throne Speech in a little bit.

But I have learned an awful lot here in the Manitoba Legislature, Mr. Speaker. I've gotten to know many people on either side of the House and made friends on both sides of the House. And I think, you know, moving forward, there's certainly the respect, from all of us, I believe, in terms of the jobs that we do and for the people that we represent. And we're all sort of in this together, and sometimes it's game on, game off. We do—and I know the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) mentioned earlier—we do disagree quite often, of course, in the Manitoba Legislature, we do, as we're debating various debates, but it has to do with policy and the way that we would go about approaching making a better Manitoba for Manitobans. They have one view, we have another, and we—this is the place where we have the privilege and the opportunity to be able to debate those issues here. And we are very, very lucky to be given the opportunity to live in a free and democratic society where we are awarded the opportunity to do that.

I've learned a lot over the last 10 years. I've held various critic portfolios, including Advanced Education, Education, Health, Conservation, Water Stewardship, and now Finance, Mr. Speaker. And I have to say I've learned something in every portfolio that I have had the opportunity to be in, and I just consider it a privilege to have been able to be awarded the opportunity to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Throne Speech, I think it's unfortunate that I will have to stand before the Manitoba Legislature for the 11th time—and I will be voting against this Throne Speech—I think it's unfortunate that after 11 years—after 10 years I've been here, but 11 Throne Speeches—that the NDP just doesn't seem to get it right. As a matter of fact, each time the government brings forward a Throne Speech in the Manitoba Legislature, it's unfortunate that each time there tends to be more and more rhetoric within the Throne Speech, and it gets worse and worse and worse. So it's unfortunate to have to stand before Manitobans again and tell them that, once again, the NDP government has failed them.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is nothing more than a collection of what I believe are desperate pre-election promises, and after 11 years of failure we're not surprised that there is zero indication of meaningful action from this NDP government. The

NDP has had 11 years to deal with violent crime, they've had 11 years to manage the finances of this Province and they've had 11 years to fix the province—the problems in health care, and they haven't done any of that yet, despite the promises to do so all the way back to the 1999 election campaign. If the NDP was actually going to do anything about these challenges, they would have done so in the last 11 years.

*(16:00)

Manitobans are concerned for their safety, and, Mr. Speaker, I hear that around my constituency. Whether it be in the areas of Charleswood in my constituency or in Tuxedo or in River Heights, I hear time and time again that seniors, children, all Manitobans and families are concerned about the safety of their communities.

They are concerned for their finances, Mr. Speaker, as well, and they are concerned for their health—for health care in our province. But the NDP has nothing left for them but tired, desperate rhetoric, which I think is extremely unfortunate and, really, it is sad because I thought that this Throne Speech would give—would have been and could have been better. I was prepared to give the Premier (Mr. Selinger) the benefit of the doubt that he would make a mark on Manitoba but, unfortunately, his mark is nothing more than a tired, old, desperate NDP spin designed to try and fool Manitobans into believing that he has some sort of a vision for this province, and I think it's extremely unfortunate because he had a big opportunity here that he failed to deliver on.

One of the areas, Mr. Speaker, that's very dear to my heart has to do with our lakes and rivers here in Manitoba and our parks, that our children have the privilege to enjoy and that we, as families, have the privilege to be able to visit and to enjoy the wonderful parks and lakes that we have in this province. Yet the government repeatedly talks about the steps it is taking to reduce phosphorus loading into Lake Winnipeg. The Throne Speech even talks about new nutrient reduction targets and reiterates old promises to try to work with other jurisdictions to tackle the problem.

Well, Mr. Speaker, all the while, at the same time, under the same NDP government's watch, the lagoons have overflowed at, at least, a half a dozen times in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and other lagoons around this province. We know that the waste-water treatment facility of the City of Winnipeg, we know that there has been raw sewage

that has been dumped over the years under this NDP government's watch. We know that that is happening, as we speak, as under their watch and, yet, this government has failed to do anything about it.

As a matter of fact they've been so fixated on wasting taxpayer dollars, some \$500 million, on the removal of nitrogen from the waste-water treatments in the city of Winnipeg. They've been so fixated on spending \$500 million—\$500 million that, by the way, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Schindler and 63 other world-renowned scientists said would be a complete waste of money. Rather than take that money and put it towards the necessary infrastructure to stop the dumping of raw sewage from our lagoons, that desperately need to be upgraded, and to stop the raw sewage from being dumped into—from the waste-water treatment facilities in the city of Winnipeg, they chose to waste it on the removal of nitrogen.

And, to me, that just screams of desperation on this part of the government. They want to stand up and crow about all the things that they are doing about removing nutrients from Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is that the removal of nitrogen will do nothing towards bettering the quality of water that we have in Lake Winnipeg.

What would have helped, Mr. Speaker, is if they had earmarked that money that they've wasted towards nitrogen removal, towards stopping—increasing or—rebuilding the infrastructure necessary in order to stop the dumping of raw sewage into our lakes and rivers. That's where the money should have gone but, unfortunately, the NDP government has so badly mismanaged this whole file that it's unfortunate. It's unfortunate for all Manitobans who want to enjoy—for many of us who have young children, who like to go to the beaches in the summer and enjoy our time at the beaches, it's unfortunate now that many of the times we can't because of the high E. coli counts on the beaches, and it's not safe for our children to be there.

So, rather than being fixated on the removal of nitrogen, they should have focused on these other areas, Mr. Speaker. But, unfortunately, this government has so badly mismanaged the file that it's too bad.

I have brought to the attention of this government on several occasions, and we have known that back since 2005, and this continues to this day, the lagoons at the Whiteshell Provincial Park, in the area of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls,

have continued to dump raw sewage into our lakes—into our lake systems, Mr. Speaker, and yet, when I asked the Minister of Conservation—this was October 6th of 2009—he said that they were looking after the situation. Well, we know, again, to this day, five years later, that nothing is being done. And so members opposite like to crow about what they're doing to save Lake Winnipeg but in actual fact, there are no results showing that and what we know is that there could be—raw sewage continues to dump into the lakes and rivers under this NDP government's watch. So, despite all the attack ads they want to throw out there, the facts speak louder than their empty rhetoric, and I suggest that Manitobans will know exactly what's going on come the next election.

I want to talk a little bit about education. This fall the government promised uniform report cards, but we still don't have any idea what those report cards will look like or if they will give parents any more information about how their children are doing in school. The NDP also promised it would do more about its so-called no-fail policy and a policy on penalizing students for late assignments, but Manitoba parents are still waiting, even though this government has announced what they have in the last little while. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, is that they've had 11 years to get it right, and they haven't gotten it right so far. So the announcements that they're making now are nothing more than empty rhetoric. If they didn't do it in the last 11 years, why should Manitobans believe that they'll actually get it right now?

Mr. Speaker, in the area of family services, I know that children continue to die. We were talking about it in question period today that time and time again, this NDP government has just gotten it wrong over the years and people are continuing—children, vulnerable children in our society, continue to fall through the cracks under their watch. And what's unfortunate about it is that we've warned them time and time again. We've said, don't take these people away from foster families who are looking after them and nurturing them just to put them back into unsafe situations. We've asked and pleaded with this government for many, many years now not to do that. We've warned them and yet, time and time again, what makes me sick is that we stand and we ask these questions. We say, please, please agree to do this today, send out a directive to not allow this to happen further. We say that today. We said it two years ago. We said it three years ago, but this is still happening. What happened with Gage Guimond was

five years ago and yet this continues to happen under this watch, and the minister continues to stand up and say how sorry he is that it continues to happen. Well, what he needs to do is put his money where his mouth is. If he truly believes that, then he needs to stand up for the vulnerable children in our society and make the changes now, and those changes should have been made many, many years ago, and it's unfortunate that children continue to fall through the cracks in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech acknowledged that Manitoba did not feel the effects of a global economic downturn as strongly as our neighbours did. In fact, Statistics Canada recently reported that Manitoba did not experience any decline in GDP in 2009. Even with an economy that has held steady due to the resilience of the people and businesses of our province, the NDP are projecting \$2 billion in deficits over five years, which will further add to the debt of our Province. The Throne Speech failed to outline a legitimate strategy to bring the Province's finances under control without increasing taxes. So we know where the hidden agenda here is; we know that the plan for down the road will be to increase taxes in order to make up for the shortfall in revenues.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the—Manitoba—the NDP have failed to make Manitoba competitive. In terms of our GDP, Manitoba has had the lowest GDP per capita in the West every year since the NDP formed government in 1999. As far as the debt is concerned, last year alone the NDP added \$2.3 billion—that's 10 per cent—to Manitoba's total provincial debt. The debt being carried by every man, woman and child in Manitoba is now \$19,000. Since 1999, the NDP have added nearly \$10 billion to the Province's debt.

* (16:10)

The debt has almost doubled in the last 11 years since this government came into power. Also, it's almost doubled in terms of servicing that debt, and that's the thing that really concerns me is the cost of servicing the debt. While interest rates have remained relatively flat and relatively low for the last 11 years since they came to power, the cost to service the debt has almost doubled, and the concern there and the reason for that is that this government continues to add to the debt year after year after year, and what Manitobans want and deserve to see is a plan from this government to reduce that debt over time. But all we see is here's a government that over the next five years plans to add \$2 billion to that debt

by running deficits over the next five years. There is no long-term plan to reduce the debt, and so what that means is that the NDP is leaving it for our children and our grandchildren to face that problem down the road, and I think it's very unfortunate because it leaves them in a very difficult position.

And we've seen other countries who have gone bankrupt, Mr. Speaker, it's not unheard of to go—for countries to go bankrupt. It's not unheard of for provinces to go bankrupt. What's unfortunate is that this government is taking us along that path.

And I think the other thing that members opposite need to understand is that, while they want to crow about how much money that they're putting in our health-care system, first of all, it's not about how much money you throw at a system that is broken. There's better ways to manage that system and the money within that system. But the problem is if this government had actually developed a plan to reduce the debt of our Province then they would've had to put less money in towards the debt servicing in our Province, and if they're paying less in servicing the debt, Mr. Speaker, then they have more for health care and social services that Manitobans need in this province.

So that's where this NDP government doesn't get it. They keep increasing the debt. They keep borrowing more money, borrowing more money, and they increase the cost of servicing that debt. If they were decreasing the amount of debt that we had in our Province then there would be more money, Mr. Speaker, for the social programs that Manitobans need and deserve in our province.

One of the other problems, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP government has increased spending in this province on average annually 7 per cent since they came to office, and we know that next year—we know from Scotia Finance that they're only forecasting a 2.5 per cent increase in GDP to the province—2.5 per cent growth in our province. Well, if they're increasing expenditures by 7 per cent and revenues are only increasing by 2.5 per cent, where is the discrepancy going to come from? They're either going to have to go out and borrow more money, which we know they're very good at, or they're going to increase taxes. Well, we know that they're actually going to borrow more money because that's part of their plan. But what they haven't told Manitobans is what's part of the hidden agenda in order to continue along their path of increased expenditures. What they need to do is increase taxes.

And, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that if they continue along the path that they're continuing on, which they have for the last 11 years, it's time for them to come clean. It's time for them to come clean and be honest with Manitobans that they are looking at 5 to 10 per cent increase in taxes for each Manitoban in our—for every Manitoban. So that's the hidden agenda of this government. They're not being honest, and I've already told them where they could've gotten the money from but they're not listening. What they could've done is during the good times—during the good times what they could've done is paid down the debt, thereby reducing the cost to service the debt in our Province over the years, and that money could have been made available for the social programs that are needed for the most vulnerable people in our society today.

But what I say is shame on them. They did not set money aside in the good times. They continued at a 7 per cent on average annual increase in expenditures because that's what they do. They continue to spend and spend and spend and borrow and borrow and borrow. And we've seen what's happened to other countries that have continued along that path. I only hope that, for the sake of our children and grandchildren and future generations in Manitoba, that we don't see that happen here in Manitoba.

And, I believe, that people will see exactly what this government is all about, that they've got a hidden agenda. Their hidden agenda—well, their agenda that's out there in the open is out there. Over the next five years they plan to add \$2 billion to the debt, Mr. Speaker, of our Province. We know that but what they haven't told us is that their hidden agenda is to raise taxes for Manitobans. And I think what they should do is come out with an ad, being honest to Manitobans, and let all Manitobans know. Put it out there on the table. Let them know what the real plan is because that way they're actually being honest to Manitobans.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. A lot—it seems like a lot of members have a lot to say but, you know, we just started our Throne Speech and every member here will have an opportunity. So let's listen to the person that has the floor.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And I know members opposite are very sensitive about this issue because they know full well that they are trying to pull the wool over Manitobans' eyes, Mr. Speaker. They know full well.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know it's—my time is running up. I think I've made my point on that point. I hope Manitobans realize what this NDP government is really up to. And the fact is they have failed them over the last 11 years, so how can we honestly believe that they are going to follow through with anything that is brought forward in this Throne Speech. They failed Manitobans in the area of crime. They failed vulnerable children in our province. They failed us on mismanaging our economy. They failed seniors and families on health care. Failure after failure after failure, and this is all they came up with.

Well, I suggest that members opposite seriously consider the amendments that were put forward today by the Leader of the Opposition to stand up for Manitobans, to vote in favour of these amendments today.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying what many have said in this House, and a warm welcome back to you. We all missed you. We're glad to see you back among us. I also want you to know that, in your absence, we were well served by the Deputy Speaker and I want to thank her for her work in that chair.

Of course, as the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) said, we would be lost without the table officers and the Clerk's office and we're very happy that they continue to exercise their patience and good guidance working with us.

And, of course, we welcome the new pages. We're very pleased to see all of you with us and we hope that you'll enjoy your time here with us, that you will hopefully be a good influence on our own behaviour in the House.

I also want to say just a thank you to the House leaders who have served before me. I know that I will be well served by their wisdom and guidance in the many days to come, and how much I'm looking forward to working with the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I think often when we have students and classes and people who come down to the House to watch question period, I always regret a bit that they don't get to see the other times in this Chamber and in committee rooms when most of what we're doing is being co-operative. Most of what we're doing is trying to figure out, despite our differences of opinion, how to continue to move democracy forward. And I'm very much looking forward to my role as House Leader in continuing to do that.

I'd also like to, of course, thank my constituents, the fine people of Fort Rouge, who continue to put their trust in me and they're always keen to offer support and suggestions and ideas. I've met with many of them over the last several months, on their doorsteps and in community meetings, and got many emails, after I was named House Leader, of congratulations—congratulations on many positions that I don't hold but they were warm congratulations nonetheless.

* (16:20)

I will speak to the Throne Speech. I'll be speaking against the amendment put forward by the opposition.

And I want to talk to you about what struck me, listening to the Throne Speech, was how much of the Throne Speech represents real, practical help to everyday families. And I think, you know, we invite people from our constituents to come and listen to the Throne Speech, and I always listen to think, you know, how are they experiencing it? How are they listening to it? How are they taking what's being said and saying that that's relevant to me in my life, that's going to make a difference in my everyday life?

And so many things in the Throne Speech that will be important to the families in Fort Rouge and all over Manitoba, families that need primary care, that need doctors, that need nurse practitioners. I think a very important commitment to make sure that everybody has access to primary care, to doctors, to nurse practitioners, and innovative ways to deliver that care. I think Manitoba has been a leader in innovation in health care and continues to be, and I think that's going to be very important to the families that I represent.

Continued commitments to child care and to early childhood education, not only to creating and developing more spaces and better child-care centres but also to those people, those professionals who work in that field, who are early childhood

educators, commitments, for example, to the first pension plan outside of Québec for those people, recognizing that they are professionals and that for too long they were not given the wages and the benefits that they deserved. And this government has made tremendous progress in that regard.

I also think, you know, for families who are concerned about their children's education, there're many promising initiatives in that Throne Speech. We've talked about some things that are simple—like having common report cards so parents can know how their kids are doing—but vital to parents. Parents want to be involved in their kids' education. They want to know how they're doing and they want to know how they can help them, and having report cards that parents can understand is a big part of getting there.

I also think the commitments that we have made to cleaner water, to green spaces, to new parks and protected areas are very critical to today's families. You know, when you talk to Manitobans, everybody believes that Lake Winnipeg is their lake. Everybody believes that having the opportunity to go there and swim, to camp, to rent a cottage or to stay at a friend's cottage or own their own cottage, everybody believes that that's part of the Manitoba experience. And we know it's so much part of the Manitoba experience that many of the agencies that receive funding from my department to work with newcomers make a day at the park, a day at the lake part of the settlement experience that they go through, introducing them to the great outdoors and the great areas that Manitoba has to offer. Because, you know, Manitoba and Canada is—are unique in some ways among countries, where the most beautiful landscapes, the most pristine landscapes are shared by everyone. They're not the domain only of the wealthy. They're not the domain only of people who can afford to have access to it. They belong to all of us, and it's a trust that we take very seriously.

And, of course, a commitment to continue to have some of the most affordable energy prices in North America, which is very important to families who continue to look at their own bottom line and continue to be concerned about how they are going to afford to live and raise a family here in Manitoba.

And, you know, what also struck me in listening to all of those things that are going to go and that are going to help families in my constituency in the Throne Speech was how all of those things would be at risk—would be at risk if the promise that the

opposition has made to cut half a billion dollars out of the budget, if that promise was kept. And every one of them voted for that just a few months ago, that they would take half a billion dollars out of the budget, and there's no way to do that without firing nurses, laying off teachers, laying off police officers. That's what that cut means.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, they are the only political party in North America that thinks it's wise to recover from the recession in one year. Not even the Tea Party in the States has taken such a radical and reckless approach to economics, but I think it's important to point out that that is their plan. That is their plan for the future.

I also was very interested to hear in the Throne Speech about the successful immigration program that is going on in Manitoba. And recently, last weekend, of course, Manitoba was featured on the front page of *The New York Times*, and the immigration program and the people that have been coming to Manitoba and calling it home were interviewed. And I think that we should all be proud of that, and I think we should all be proud of the people that have called Manitoba home.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, I will give them credit for every one of the 500 provincial nominees that came here under them if they will give us credit for the over 50,000 that have come since.

I would also say, on the topic of immigration and the Provincial Nominee Program, Mr. Speaker, that now that that program has been in place for some years, we've had the opportunity to do some research, working with professors at the University of Winnipeg and other places, have worked on a study talking to some of those provincial nominees, so we can get an idea of what their experience has been, what their success has been.

And I think, you know, in reading that study, it's very enlightening to find the tremendous successfulness of those provincial nominees; 85 per cent of them are working within the first three months of arriving here. People who arrive here, sometimes without a lot of language skills who come to a culture that they don't know a lot about, 85 per cent of them are finding jobs within the first three months.

In five years over three-quarters of them are homeowners. That I think is an incredible testament to their initiative, to their drive and their ability to be successful. And also, I think, one of the things that

we are very proud of in the Provincial Nominee Program is that 95 per cent of those people interviewed tell us that they have no plan to leave Manitoba. And so they are coming here, they are staying here, they are thriving here and we are very proud of their contributions to Manitoba.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we have made it a priority to make sure that that Provincial Nominee Program can continue to grow. We know that that is a consensus shared by the business community, by the labour community, by all of those cultural communities that are represented. And that's why we will continue to make that forceful case to the federal government that you cannot put a cap on success, that you should not punish the most successful immigration program in the country by putting a cap on it. And we will continue to make that case as strong as we can.

We'll make the case and we will not go back. We will not go back to the 1990s when Manitoba was losing population, when Manitoba was shrinking. We are a growing province. We have turned that around in the last decade and we are going to continue to grow.

I also want to talk about—in the Throne Speech, of course, we heard a commitment to increase, for the 11th year in a row, the minimum wage. And this, I think, Mr. Speaker, is historic and it's certainly a dramatic shift in culture from the 1990s when we saw the minimum wage stagnate, when we saw the purchasing power of those families who earn the least in Manitoba stagnate and decrease.

And I know that that commitment is not shared by members opposite. I know that their leader believes that those families who are relying on minimum wage—that for them an increase is meaningless. In fact, I believe that he doesn't even think the minimum wage is necessary anymore. That's what he said in the *Brandon Sun* or in the *Red River Valley Echo*, I think it's called, that he believes that the minimum wage is nothing more than political candy. I can't frankly think of a way to insult those families who rely on that wage more than by telling them that the money that they need to feed their kids, that the money that they need to raise their families is only candy.

On workplace safety and health, of course, Mr. Speaker, we have, I think, a very good record. I think we continue to improve that. When you look at the time-loss injury rate, that has come down by more than a third in the last decade, and if you look at all

the components of that, you can see that really it's because workers and business owners and manufacturers and people at workplace—at the Workers Compensation Board have worked together to make Manitoba a safer province for people who are working on the job.

And part of that is increasing inspections. When we came to office, there were about 1,000 inspections, Workplace Safety and Health inspections done in a year in this province. In fact, I have heard and talked to people who said that when 10 years ago there were employers in this province and industries who believed that they weren't subject to the Workplace Safety and Health regulations because they'd never seen an inspector, but we have turned that around. There are over 10,000 inspections done every year and we know that that awareness has really helped to save injuries and to save lives.

Well, we've doubled the number of Workplace Safety and Health inspectors in order to do those inspections. And in the last budget when we announced funding for an increase of five more inspectors, do you know what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said was what Workplace Safety and Health was all about?

*(16:30)

An Honourable Member: What'd he say?

Ms. Howard: He said that all this was was more red tape and bureaucracy. And you know, I would challenge him to say that to the parents of young workers that I meet with—young workers who've been injured on the job and young workers who've been killed on the job—that those inspections, that those inspectors, that that's all it is, is red tape and bureaucracy.

In fact, you know, Mr. Speaker, what I find even more shocking than those comments are the fact that when we introduced legislation in the last session to increase fines in workplace safety and health for accidents against employers who had been negligent in exercising their duty, for the first time in a decade, increase those fines, they stood against that increase. They spoke against those increased fines.

I heard from the opposition that those fines, we don't need them. We don't need any fines for workplace safety and health violations. All it is is a tax grab. All it is is the heavy hand of business. For employers who repeatedly are negligent, for repeat offenders, where workers are killed on the job, they oppose. They oppose. The party of law and order

opposes applying the law to those employers and making sure that they pay for that negligence.

And, you know, today and the last couple of days we've heard an awful lot of crocodile tears from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) about the north and it's interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, that this is coming from the same party that made as part of its election platform cancelling the University College of the North, taking an institution of higher learning that's going to provide access to people who maybe have never had access to that kind of education before, saying that that is unnecessary, that they would cancel it, and making that part of what they think the reasons are that people should vote for them. That's their commitment to the north.

They also in their platform made a commitment to take all of the highways budget dedicated to the north and just divert it right back down to the south, which, you know, anybody can tell you that having roads, having good roads, is a key part of economic development. So that's their commitment. That's their commitment to the north, and the people of the north know that and they will remember that.

Let's talk for a brief moment—I touched on the importance of clean water to my constituents. I listened attentively to the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) talk about water, and, you know, it strikes me when I look at the commitments that the Leader of the Opposition has made on water, that, really, he is a disciple of the three Rs because you know what he said about water regulations? Well, he said he would remove them and then he said he would relax them and then he said he would repeal them. So that is their plan on water laws and on water regulations, on protecting clean water, is remove them, relax them and repeal them. And so we know that there is no commitment at all to cleaning up Lake Winnipeg. We know that they would be content to see increased pollution in those lakes and rivers, that that is what they have stood on in this House time and time again.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am anxious, of course, to hear what other people in this House have to say with regards to the Throne Speech. I want to thank you for your diligent attention here and for the work that you do to keep all of us functioning and all of us in order. I know it's not an easy task. And I want to thank all of my colleagues, all of my colleagues in every party, on every side of the House because we all know that this is a job that consumes a lot of your life, a lot of your time, but it is also one of the most

important jobs I think and probably, maybe sometimes, one of the least celebrated jobs, but when we are in here, when we are representing our constituents, even when we disagree, we're serving some of the highest values I think in our society, and those are the values of democracy and fairness and justice.

So thank you very much and I look forward to hearing what others have to say.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): It's certainly good to be back and to hear the Throne Speech and the debates and whatnot. I have had a very busy summer and a great deal of that summer and fall is courtesy of the government and their crazy Bipole III plan that's certainly made things busy for me in my constituency, but, also, too, this summer, Mr. Speaker, I did have the opportunity to go to the—it's called the BILLD conference in Madison, Wisconsin. B-I-L-L-D. It's for leadership development and it was—I know other members have gone to that conference as well and it's certainly a learning experience. And I hope to make me—I hope it helps me to become a better legislature—legislator as a result of the course, and I'm sure it will.

Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly speaking in favour of the amendment proposed by my leader because, obviously, there were so many shortfalls in the Throne Speech that there is no way I could even begin to support that Throne Speech in any way. And my leader's amendment really did touch on a great number of those, and I will also touch on a few of those also.

But, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I came across this paper from one of my colleagues, and it says, five commitments to you and your family. And it's dated 1999, and I know that the NDP loves to go back into the '90s and the 1999 is in the '90s. And it's five commitments to you and your family, and it's signed by Gary Doer, and it says, right at the bottom it says: Keep this card; we'll keep these commitments.

So, well, let's check on these commitments then. We'll end hallway medicine and rescue health care. Hmm. How are we doing on that one? I don't think we're doing so well on that one.

We'll renew—the second one is: We'll renew hope for young people. Well, in the Throne Speech, it says, and I'll quote right out of the Throne Speech: They will also make students more accountable ensuring along with hard—rewards for hard work,

there are also consequences for late assignments and that underperformance can result in a failing grade.

Well, I guess the current Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) has just thrown the previous Minister of Education under the bus on that one—because I'm—just—wow. And it also says in here on this very—we'll make our communities safer by tackling the causes of crime with improved youth programs and ensuring immediate consequences for gang violence and home invasions. Well, they have had some attention on that. We're now the gang capital of Canada—the violent crime capital of Canada. So I guess there's just more work to do on that.

And the fifth one is also interesting: We'll keep balanced budget legislation and lower property taxes. Oh, that one went under the bus, too, because in 2009, you couldn't balance the budget, so you brought in legislation to use the profits from Crown corporations and four-year rolling averages and anything you could get out of. A year later, even that wasn't going to work so you just got rid of balanced budget legislation altogether. So, I guess that one's—you know, we should maybe call Gary Doer and see how he thinks about how this current government is doing on this one, because, obviously, it's just not working. So, you know, the terms have come out here.

It's a—the Throne Speech is a desperate ploy at pre-election vague promises, and I think it was—I actually heard it on CJOB radio this morning. There was a caller phoned in and was talking about this great new health plan that the government has announced, and even the host on the radio program said, I don't think they've done it in the last 11 years. I really can't see them doing it in the next. So, obviously, the message is out there that they're vague promises. They're just promises; they don't hold true on their promises.

They failed, as I outlined. They failed on violent crime. They failed on finances. They failed miserably on hallway medicine. They're tired, out of ideas. The whole Throne Speech was just reworked promises, reannouncements of reannouncements. If they got bonus points for doing reannouncements, these guys would get a lot of points for that. So—and, obviously, it's a very weak government that they're just flailing about; they have no new ideas, resurrecting old themes. They haven't worked in 11 years and they still keep resurrecting them. So why would Manitobans believe anything that they'd say now?

* (16:40)

Now, Mr. Speaker, on October 25th, there was a legislative committee on Crown corporations for Hydro and I think several of the members here who were here that night will remember that night. There was a large group of concerned landowners present from my constituency that were there that night. There was also some retired Hydro employees. There was some university professors. There was a great number. In fact, there was more people there than what there was seats available, so.

And, from that committee, my landowners—and I call them my landowners, because a great deal of them were my constituents—my landowners understood that we were going to ask permission for one person to speak on their behalf. They understood that. And they also understood that it may not happen, but we said we're going to try. We're going to go into committee, we're going to ask permission for one landowner, Karen Friesen, to speak on behalf of the landowners, and we were going to ask for the past CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Len Bateman, to speak. We just asked for 10 minutes for each, five minutes of questions.

An Honourable Member: They didn't deny it, did they?

Mr. Pedersen: You know, the NDP spent an hour arguing why this shouldn't happen. And that was unfortunate because when you think about it, a half an hour of listening to presentations versus an hour of the NDP wasting our time. But you know what my landowners told me, and I will speak—I'll tell you what my landowners told me after that night. They understood that they may not be able to present. They understood that, but they said when the NDP committee members turned their back on them, they faced the Chair, they refused to look at the landowners.

My landowners and I—I'm just quoting what my landowners told me—my landowners told me that was an insult to them. They have never been treated so disrespectful and have legislators sitting on the committee to turn their back on constituents, on taxpaying Manitobans; that's what really hurt them the most. And it's just a sign of the desperation they have; it's a sign of the broken promises; it's the sign of how they have mishandled the whole Bipole III file. What they went—and my landowners have attended a lot of these Hydro information meetings; they've met with the minister—a few of them met with the minister. Don't know if the minister has answered

their—has written back to them yet from their questions posed that day. I will thank the minister for at least meeting with them, the few of them that day, very hastily put together meeting, but they put it together and they did show up.

But the fact of the matter is, on Bipole III—and I'll just put it down in six very simple points. My landowners have concerns about the effects of the line on themselves and on their livestock because this comes very close to both residences and to livestock operations. My landowners still have not got an answer. In spite of four rounds of consultations, they still do not have a definite answer on minimum separation between the edge of the easement and the residences and their livestock operations and their yards.

You would think that Hydro would be able to give them at least that much of an answer, but that answer has never been given to them. They continue to ask about GPS and guidance system, about precision that they use in their precision agriculture in southern Manitoba across my constituency, and yet all they get is placates from the Hydro representatives in these meetings saying that that, no, there's no problem; no, there's no problem.

Believe me, my landowners are looking at those answers like they look at this NDP government. Why should we trust those answers, the non-answers that they're getting?

My landowners continue to ask about the effects on the land values, about current and future irrigation projects. Are they—would they even be considered to be compensated for that? There has been no answers to those. Even the very simple thing—I've got two different answers out of Hydro and out of the minister's staff about such a simple thing as the distance, the clearance between the ground and the cable on Bipole III, and that's—and we've asked very specifically: What is the minimum clearance between the ground and the cable under full load, under hot weather, because the cable will sag? I've got two different answers. Why is it I can't even get an answer out of something which seems to be so simple as that? Why are they continuing to stonewall my landowners? Why would my landowners even consider having this, when you can't even answer such a simple question?

And, of course, the big one is in here, and I have many landowners that do not want this line. It is not about compensation; it is not about how they've been treated disrespectfully. They do not want this line

crossing and interfering with their farms, with their operations—plain and simple, they don't. So the big question is: Are you going to expropriate them? Does this come down to expropriation? Do they—do we have no landowner rights left in Manitoba for such a project which is so misguided by this misguided government?

There's a number of references—and I think I counted 13 as I went through this whole Throne Speech—of seek input, we'll focus, we'll work. Well, obviously, they're not seeking input; they're not focused; they're not listening to my landowners; they're not working with my landowners. Why would we even think about supporting this crazy project? Coming across our—the west bipole. *[interjection]* You're building roads on the east side and we support that. We should have roads into remote communities on the east side, but if you can build a road, you should be able to build a hydro line.

And what happens when my constituents ask me: So what is the real reason? Why is it that this government is so set on going on the west side instead of the east side? I tell them it's because the government—this government listens to American lobbyists and not to the people of Manitoba, because there are people calling from all walks of life in Manitoba, calling for this project to go down the east side of Lake Winnipeg and not around taking the west detour. But apparently—and when I explain that to my landowners that I tell them that it's American lobbyists that's driving this government, they shake their head, and they say, that can't be, there's got to be a better reason. And I say, no, there isn't a better reason. That's what it is.

Even the—Mr. Brennan from Manitoba Hydro has been—now he's musing about going from DC to AC, because he's talking about the cost of converters. It wasn't even—we weren't even asking about this. It was—he was talking to CBC Radio about this, and Mr. Brennan starts talking about—well, you know, maybe we should go—if it costs too much for converters go to AC.

This project is so much like the stadium; it's all over the map. We don't know what they're really doing, what the real costs are. The rumours are out there now, and maybe the Hydro minister can—the Minister responsible for Hydro will confirm it, but it was pegged at \$2.2 billion. There are rumours now swirling and of four—over \$4 billion. So what is the real story? Again, it's like the stadium—like where are we really at here on this project? Is there really

anybody in charge of plans? And given the disaster that this—the financial disaster planning of the stadium that, as unfolded by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and his record with Crocus, why would my landowners even begin to think that they could trust any answers on Bipole III?

* (16:50)

We're talking about food production when you're coming across my constituency of—with Bipole III. You're interfering with food production, and that's—we think that's wrong. In a time when world food production is critical, all of a sudden now it doesn't matter. We don't matter in southern Manitoba in my constituency. Food production in my—in Carman constituency has now taken a back seat to U.S.-based environmental lobby. There's something very wrong with this whole scenario.

And, of course, there are many other areas in this Throne Speech that—just before I leave Bipole III, because I've certainly spent a lot of time, I do hope that the government can provide some answers. Because if they could come out and provide some real answers maybe we could have a real discussion about this. But there is so much unknown in here that my landowners are going to hold very firm on this.

But in other parts of the Throne Speech there was no mention of the hardship that the livestock producers have faced from markets, from weather. A Throne Speech is about direction but apparently, there is no direction from this government. There was no plans, no mention of any plans for a federal inspected beef processing plant in the Throne Speech. It's not about announcing the actual plant. This government will get into that. They'll—if they ever get that far, they'll announce it 10 times before it ever happens, but there wasn't even an announcement of a plan.

And, of course, there was no mention in the Throne Speech about how they cut the funding of 10 per cent to the regional development corporations around the province. They didn't mention about discontinuing the Manitoba Community Profiles website, and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) obviously didn't have any input into the Throne Speech either because there was no mention of a comprehensive water management strategy. We have been faced with some very wet years across agriculture in Manitoba in the last number of years and we've seen the lack of maintenance from this government in provincially controlled drains and yet

there is no mention in this Throne Speech about creating any type of strategy.

And, of course, under trade there was—the Throne Speech was very heavy on what it didn't mention. It didn't mention about the New West Partnership, about joining the New West Partnership or at least asking to join the New West Partnership. We're missing a tremendous opportunity now.

And, of course, it's been in the news and it was mentioned in question period today also about Vale Inco, and certainly our hearts go out to the families in the Thompson community and to the community itself. It's going to create a tremendous void when this shutdown comes. But I think what really hurts in this is that the same announcement that Vale Inco used to announce the discontinuation of the smelter, they announced \$10 billion of investment in Newfoundland Labrador, in Ontario and in Saskatchewan, and all they could announce in Manitoba is how to cut jobs and how to cut money. That speaks volumes about this government and about how out of touch they are.

Mr. Speaker, there's—this Throne Speech, it certainly was—it was very consistent of a desperate government. They highlighted their failures in there by trying to wash over their programs that they haven't been able to carry through with. Very tired government. Very weak government, and I know talking to my constituents that they don't believe them. They put out promises. There's no end to their promises and announcements and reannouncements. My constituents know very well that they will not carry through on these promises because they cannot get themselves organized in order to be able to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am going to just wrap up by saying that this is—it's amazing after 11 years in government that they couldn't even be more imaginative in a Throne Speech, and I certainly hope that the government would at least consider what my leader has put in for the amendments on here because it would help move Manitoba forward. We have such a great province. We have so much potential in this province, and it's such a shame that the NDP are squandering our potential here. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): It's my pleasure to stand in the Chamber today and, like many have done before me, welcome you back to the Chamber. It's good to see you here. It's also a great opportunity to extend my congratulations to all the new mayors and reeves and councillors who were elected in this last

exercise in democracy, and sincere thank-you to those who chose not to run again, and to those who had chosen to run but were not successful in their bid at re-election. I wanted to thank them in my constituency for their dedication and commitment to public service.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it's an opportunity to thank the volunteer fire departments and public works departments who stepped up to the plate when Lake Winnipeg reared its ugly head in the lowest episode recorded of barometric pressure in Manitoba history. And, once again, we saw a storm surge with wind-added levels of nine and a half feet sustained for a prolonged period of time which had devastating effects in the South Basin of Lake Winnipeg and I know many of those volunteer firemen and those public works employees stepped up to the plate and put themselves in harm's way to make sure that people were safe and secure in their homes and did their best to make people's homes safe and secure as well.

I also wanted to mention in particular this past week, my visit to the St. Andrews Fire Department, all three of the halls in St. Andrews, to celebrate 40 years of community service to the public. It takes very special people to run into buildings when everyone else is running out. It takes very special people to be that calming voice and influence on individuals who are in distress in a motor vehicle accident and it takes very special people who, as I said, will put themselves at risk in very dangerous flood episodes to be there to protect people's homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand and speak after the member from Carman. Unlike the member from Carman, I know that the next election will be about health care. It will be about infrastructure. It will be about rural depopulation. It will be about First Nations issues. It will be about all the things that he said, less than a year ago, it wouldn't be about, and I think that's reflected in our commitments in this Throne Speech, if you want to look first and foremost at the commitments that we made to health care. And, certainly, our commitment to health care has been to bring that service closer to

home in rural Manitoba, and I'm very much looking forward to the opening that we will have in Gimli of the new six-unit dialysis unit.

And, Mr. Speaker, I must say, when we first announced that in the election in '07 during a campaign, I recall being essentially accosted by an opposition candidate supporter saying, why are you doing that? We can't afford to do this. What are you doing that for? There's no way Gimli needs a dialysis unit. Well, that's why I'm glad, after the '07 election, that we're sitting on this side of the House because we know that rural Manitobans deserve better health care. We know that rural Manitobans deserve better health care close to home, and that's why we were successful in that election. That's why we will be successful in the future because health care is a priority for this government, has been a priority for this government, and will continue to be a priority for this government. So I'm very much looking forward to what we will do with our vision to build a stronger health-care system in Manitoba.

And, when you look at the innovation, providing a new ambulance helicopter that can evacuate people quickly to receive urgent care after, perhaps, motor vehicle accidents in remote areas or other types of trauma they might incur, and being able to be evacuated very quickly and receive the urgent care that they need.

The 100 per cent access to a family physician, Mr. Speaker, is a tremendous commitment, and we have set the table for that with the work that we have done over the past 11 years, hiring more nurses, nurse practitioners, retaining doctors, and investing in the equipment and infrastructure we need to provide Manitobans with the health care they deserve.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 26 minutes remaining.

The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 18, 2010

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