

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

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

Vol. LVI No. 3 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 24, 2004

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 24, 2004

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Highway 200

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Highway 200 is paved from Winnipeg to the Canada-U. S. border except for approximately a 10-kilometre section between highways 205 and 305 which remains unpaved. School buses, farm equipment, emergency vehicles and local traffic must travel on Highway 200 which is dangerous, if not completely impassable, during wet spring weather and other times of heavy rainfall.

Due to unsafe conditions, many drivers look to alternate routes around this section when possible and time permits. The condition of the gravel road can cause serious damage to all vehicles.

Insufficient traffic counts are not truly reflective of the traffic volumes because users tend to find another route to avoid this section. Traffic counts done after spring seeding, during wet weather or during school recess are not indicative of traffic flows.

Maintenance costs for unpaved highways are high and ongoing. It would be cost-effective to pave this section.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Lemieux) consider paving Highway 200 between highways 205 and 305 to ensure a smooth, safe and uninterrupted use of Highway 200.

Signed by Donat Alarie, Irene Alarie, Joyce Cassie and others.

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

Pension Benefits

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Pension benefits for thousands of Manitoba health care workers are being cut because the government has refused to support the front line health care workers in their desire to maintain their existing Health Care Employees' Pension Plan.

The government is doubling the early retirement penalty to 6 percent a year from 3 percent.

There will be no cost of living benefits for retirees in the foreseeable future, which means that inflation will erode retirees' pension cheques over time.

The government's refusal to support the existing pension plan will have a negative impact on hundreds of front line health care workers.

The government is demonstrating a lack of respect for front line health care workers by its decision to allow administrative costs in the regional health authorities to skyrocket by millions of dollars.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the provincial government to consider redirecting administrative cost savings to front line health care workers.

To request the provincial government to treat front line health care workers with the respect they deserve, and to consider supporting the health care employees' pension plan by not cutting pension benefits.

Signed by Elaine Saccucci, Julie Tabinc, M. Hawranik and others.

* (13:35)

Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Manitoba Legislature sat for only 37 days in 2003.

Manitobans expect their government to be accountable, and the number of sitting days has a direct impact on the issue of public accountability.

Manitobans expect their elected officials to be provided the opportunity to be able to hold their government accountable.

The Legislative Assembly provides the best forum for all MLAs to debate and ask questions of the government, and it is critical that all MLAs be provided the time needed in order for them to cover constituent and party duties.

Establishing a minimum number of sitting days could prevent the government of the day from limiting the rights of opposition members from being able to ask questions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to consider recognizing the need to sit for a minimum of 80 days in any given calendar year.

Signed by Merly Rogal, Carmen Juan and Ernesto Reyes.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table, in accordance with section 28 of The Auditor General Act, the report of the Auditor General on the Investigation of the Maintenance Branch of the Manitoba Housing Authority.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following reports: Advanced Education and Training Annual Report, 2003-2004; Manitoba Council on Post-Secondary Education Annual Report, 2003-2004; University of Manitoba Annual Financial Report, 2004; the University of Winnipeg Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2004; Brandon University Annual Financial Report for the year ended March 31, 2004; Red River College Annual Financial Report, 2003-2004; Assiniboine Community College Annual Report, 2003-2004; Keewatin Community College Annual Report, 2003-2004; and Collège de Saint-Boniface Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2004.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The Real Property Amendment Act

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Real Property Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels, and that it be now read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Health, seconded by the honourable Attorney General, that Bill 6, The Real Property Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the minister responsible for that act, I would just tell members that the purpose of this act is to simplify the making of minor amendments to mortgages so that the cost and the speed with which those amendments can be made while respecting the rights of all parties to them will be improved.

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

* (13:40)

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have the six individuals who were appointed to the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for 2004-2005 year.

In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months, and they will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignments in September and will complete them in June.

They are, working with the government caucus: Martin Frigo of the University of Manitoba, Jonathan Mays of the University of Winnipeg and Alexandra Miller of the University of Manitoba.

Working with the caucus of the official opposition: Tara Baxter of the University of Manitoba, Kerri Lee Holland of Brandon University and Miles Morgan of the University of Winnipeg.

Copies of their biographies have been distributed to members. The interns are accompanied by Professor Friesen. She looks after the academic portion of the internship. The administration of the program is carried out by our Clerk, Ms. Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: We have seated in the public gallery from Applied Linguistics Centre 11 visitors under the direction of Mrs. Ruth Klippenstein. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

Also in the public gallery from Carpathia School we have 19 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Dennis McIntosh. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child Poverty Reduction Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, today the Manitoba Child Poverty Report Card was released and in it there are some very disturbing numbers. One in six children in Canada is living in poverty; one in five in Manitoba is living in poverty.

Mr. Speaker, that number is 53 000 children living in Manitoba are living in poverty. Manitoba has fallen to the second highest rate of children living in poverty, not because the number has gone down but because Newfoundland and Labrador's number has gone up.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier is now into his sixth year of a mandate and he has done nothing to reduce the child poverty state here in the province of Manitoba. As was requested today, could the Premier say when he is going to bring a strategy forward to deal with a very serious issue, that issue being child poverty in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, many of our friends and neighbours are going to be out here this evening with a vigil to support democracy in Ukraine. I know that some of our members will be at the AMM convention and others will be out at the vigil tonight. I think when we cherish democracy in this Chamber, I think we want to again pledge ourselves to democracy for the people of Ukraine and wish them well here this evening.

Mr. Speaker, the child poverty rate was some 23 percent in 1999. It is 20 percent this year, or 2002 rather, the year that this study is released and reporting on. Any 1 percent is obviously unacceptable to all of us in this Chamber and all of us in this community. Some of the recommendations that were made by us in opposition and recommendations we implemented in government; to raise the minimum wage, to create employment for individuals that would be employable, to have a strategy to end the clawback of the child poverty benefit, we have implemented all of those recommendations, most of them, well, certainly the minimum wage, and others were opposed by members opposite.

* (13:45)

We have also introduced the Healthy Baby program, the first one in Canada, that we feel will have some impact, but obviously, we accept the challenge of child poverty in Canada and the challenge of child poverty in Manitoba as a challenge for our government. We accept that responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, I think, are very much in agreement that the significance of what took place in Ukraine is very important to democracy. However, I think the House frankly is embarrassed that the government did not see the significance of it to make a ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of life is that this Premier has now been the Premier of the province for getting on six years. During that time, despite all of the political rhetoric and the political spin, according to the Manitoba Child Poverty Report Card, things are not getting better.

Mr. Speaker, some 10 years ago at Winnipeg Harvest they were providing food to some 5500 children. Today that number, under this Premier's watch, has grown to 17 000 children. We know that Winnipeg Harvest provides snacks and meals for some 100 schools and community centres.

The simple question to this First Minister is this: Programs that he talks about are not working as was asked for by the Manitoba Child Poverty Report Card organization, as they are asking for. When will this First Minister put in a strategic plan to ensure that child poverty in Manitoba is looked into?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, members opposite will recall that the nutrition benefits for babies were cut by the former government. Members will know that Manitoba is one of only two provinces in Canada that has reinstated the child poverty clawback that took place under members opposite. We accept the fact that the child poverty rate has only gone down from 23 percent to 20 percent since 1999. We think any percent is unacceptable in our society. We accept the responsibility.

Many of the measures recommended to us by the coalition that released this report, we have implemented over our first term in government. The child benefit, Mr. Speaker, was clawed back by members

opposite, and we have reinstated it, one of only two provinces. The nutrition benefits for babies, we have introduced, in fact, a prenatal program for families. We have introduced an affordable housing program in the inner city, both in Brandon, Winnipeg, in Thompson. We have brought in expansion of child care which has also been recommended to the government.

We are continuing to listen to the people on the front lines in terms of implementing the recommendations that they made to us. You will find that recommendations like increasing the minimum wage on a regular basis, opposed by members opposite, clawed back by members opposite, reinstated by us, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, none of us can rest until this rate is much lower.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We all understand the rules in the House about exhibits. We all understand that. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition is using his pamphlet to raise questions, but other members, I would kindly ask you to put them on your desk and keep them there.

Mr. Murray: Again, as it says in this report card released today, Manitoba has had the highest percentage of households with children chronically poor or consistently poor for six years. Mr. Speaker, 22 000 children in Manitoba have been poor for the last six years. This Premier tries to talk a good game, and he tries to talk about all of the programs that he thinks are working, but the facts as stated in this report card are they are not working. He has tried to make a difference and he has failed.

I would like to make reference to the Public Accounts 2003-2004 Supplementary Information. In it, Mr. Speaker, it says that the Department of Industry has spent some \$17,139 U.S. dollars on green classic limousines in Atlanta, Georgia. We have seen million-dollar toilets, we see money being spent on sandwich factories, we see money being spent on laundry facilities, we see contracts being let to towing companies with ties to the Hells Angels, we see millions of dollars being wasted on Hydra House.

When is this Premier going to get his spending under control and deal with the issue of child poverty in Manitoba?

* (13:50)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we saw the nutrition rates for babies cut by some 20 percent in the 1995-96 budget.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers, so I ask the co-operation of all honourable members.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We saw the members opposite take a \$14-million investment in the child benefit, and what did they do with it? They clawed it back. It took us four years to reinstate that child benefit.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that we have guests in the gallery, and we have the viewing public. They came all the way down here to be able to hear the questions and the answers, and I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Doer: It took us four years to reinstate the clawback that was made by members opposite. It took us four years, from our 2000 budget to 2004, to reinstate the child benefit that was provided by the federal government and, in an unbelievable measure, clawed back by the former government. Now, we accept the fact.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation, I see two loges that are empty. You are more than welcome to use them, because I need to be able to hear the questions and the answers in case there is a breach of a rule. I am sure each and every one of you would expect me to call that and make a ruling on it, but if I cannot hear it; I need the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the rate has gone from 1999 at 23 percent down to over 20 percent. As I said before, any percent is unacceptable to this government. We absolutely are committed and responsible for continuing to invest prenatally, early childhood, right throughout the system to do everything we can to reduce the number of children living in poverty. We accept that responsibility and

we accept the report card today, and the actions we have taken since that report card has been issued.

Physician Resources Pediatrician Shortage (Brandon)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Over the last two days we have seen the Minister of Health make a serious blunder regarding the diabetes strategy. We have also seen him make a serious blunder when he told people in Brandon to put their best foot forward and solve their own pediatrician shortage.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us what he is going to do to help correct the pediatrician shortage in Brandon so that high risk pregnant moms and sick children do not have to be rushed to Winnipeg to see a doctor? When is he going to end highway medicine?

* (13:55)

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that during our time in office we have put 167 million new dollars into the Brandon RHA, including approximately \$70 million in new capital and new equipment for that new facility.

Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to tour that new facility last week and it is spectacular. I want to say that this week there have been no transfers from Brandon because we have been successful in getting a pediatrician from Winnipeg to cover some of the coverage that is required to keep the pediatrician available for all high-risk pregnancies and births in Brandon. We will continue to work very closely with Brandon, both in the short term to solve the problem and in the longer term to make sure there are enough pediatricians to provide the quality health care that people in Brandon deserve and will have under this government.

Health Care Services Surgery Waiting List (Brandon)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): The people of Brandon feel quite insulted that this minister did not even make an appearance in Brandon until one month into the crisis of a pediatrician shortage. He can stand here and say all he wants about what he is doing. The people in Brandon do not agree with him.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health has allowed the surgical waiting list in Brandon to skyrocket from 900 in 1999 to over 2000 today, and that is an all-time-high waiting list for surgery in Brandon. I would like to ask this Minister of Health this: Why is he not providing help immediately to bring down that waiting list? Why has he told them they have to wait until April? He is just swimming in new money, and he is telling the people of southwestern Manitoba that they cannot have that surgical waiting list dealt with until April.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): First of all, Mr. Speaker, there was no integrated waiting list in 1999. There were no wait lists for surgery that were integrated, so that number is not a comparable number.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, what was done was to add together everything possible. Now in Brandon many more things are possible than there were in 1999. For example, we opened a new MRI. We opened a new critical diagnostic facility. There is new CT scanning equipment in Brandon. There is new ultrasound scanning equipment. What is happening is people in Brandon who used to be on Winnipeg's waiting lists are now in Brandon getting the service that they deserve and need. That is why there are waiting lists in Brandon, getting the treatment from the MRI, from the CT scans opened this early summer, late spring, and providing quality service to the citizens of Westman.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister can say what he likes about how wonderful he thinks that things are in Brandon, but the fact of it is there is a very serious pediatrician shortage there that is causing a crisis for moms and babies. That surgical waiting list is at an all-time high and this minister did not even go to Brandon to help address this situation and instead told Brandon, "Put your best foot forward."

I would like to ask this minister this: When is he going to put his best foot forward and do the right thing for the people of southwestern Manitoba, get his act together, provide leadership on these issues and do his job?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday I spent a full half-day in Brandon meeting with doctors, meeting with the regional board, meeting with the president and the chair.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that the clock is ticking, and we are trying to get as many questions and answers in. Also, when a Speaker is standing all members should be seated and the Speaker should be heard in silence. I ask the co-operation of honourable members.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I have been delighted to be in Burntwood. I have been in The Pas. I have been in southeast Manitoba. I have been in Portage la Prairie. I have been minister for about five and a half weeks, and I intend to be in all regions supporting all of their recruitment efforts. I would also remind members opposite that we built the Brandon centre which is a state-of-the-art centre with state-of-the-art equipment that was promised seven times. It was built by this government.

* (14:00)

Livestock Slaughter Facility Funding

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, we are now 555 days into the BSE crisis; 555 days of closed borders. It is evident that Manitoba needs a major slaughtering plant facility of its own whether the border is open or not. We are given to understand the federal government is prepared to commit major amounts of money to build such a facility.

Has the Minister of Agriculture and her government had any discussions to date with the federal ministers on the partnering of a building of a slaughter plant in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member is now starting to talk about the importance of investing in slaughter capacity when he had said last year that it was not a good idea to invest in slaughter capacity.

I can tell you that I have raised this issue with the federal minister many times. It was at Manitoba's suggestion that the federal government came forward with a proposal that there would be a loan-loss provision put in place. We have been lobbying the federal government to put assistance into place for slaughter capacity in this province. We have not had a firm commitment that they will, but it has been on

our agenda, and I have raised it many times with the federal minister.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, it is quite evident by the comments that the minister has made that she has not yet met with any of her federal counterparts to discuss the building of a major plant in this province.

Mr. Speaker, on September 29, our leader, Mr. Stuart Murray, and our caucus announced—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that when addressing another member in the House it is by constituency or the portfolios they hold.

Mr. Penner: Thank you very much. We are very proud of our Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray).

On September 9, our Leader of the Opposition announced a five-point BSE recovery plan costing some \$72 million. Mr. Speaker, \$40 million would increase the slaughter capacity, \$2 million for feasibility studies, \$10 million to upgrade small plants and \$20 million as a cash advance program that would see the establishment and the maintenance of that herd of cattle in this province. This would be covered by the money that is left over from the \$180 million that the minister and her government have announced constantly.

Is this government now prepared to partner with the federal government, utilize and build a state-of-the-art plant in the province of Manitoba to facilitate the five-hundred-and-some-odd-thousand head of cattle that would be able to go to that slaughter plant every year in this province?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, in the member's comments where he said that I have not raised the issue, I guess he was not listening to my first answer because I told him very clearly that I have raised the issue, and this issue was on the federal-provincial ministers' meeting. It was at Manitoba's request that the federal government came forward with a loan-loss provision.

The member talks about putting money into plants. He does not seem to realize that we have made a commitment to Rancher's Choice, Mr. Speaker, and they are very happy with the investment that we are prepared to make in that plant. Other people are looking at slaughter capacity. I do not know whether the member heard there is a group at Neepawa that is looking at a slaughter

facility. There are other people who are looking at slaughter facilities for other species. Our government is definitely committed to slaughter capacity in this province.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Speaker, it is very obvious to producers that the government has used Rancher's Choice to keep the continuing debate and discussion going on building a plant when, in fact, twice the government has used a poison pill to stop the construction and stall the processing facility in this province.

The first time it was a required commitment by the producers to raise \$3.5 million, and the government knew that farmers did not have any money to put into this, invest in this plant and, therefore, to stop the construction.

The second one was using a second poison pill to require producers to contract the delivery of their culled cows and culled bulls without a proper business plan being presented to the producers to accommodate and give them a sufficient reason to believe that this processing plant could, in fact, be maintained and earn a profit to give them some return.

Will the minister today agree that this processing plant has been used as a discussion item only to keep them discussing till the border is open?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the member opposite is so disrespectful of the farmers of Manitoba, and in particular, the group of people who have worked very hard to get Rancher's Choice forward. Our government has worked with them. Our government has put funds in place with them. It was the producers that came to us and said, "We will make a commitment." The producers said they would make a commitment, and asked us to support them, and we did. It was the producers that said they would commit a supply, and I cannot believe that the member opposite would consider investing in a plant without an assurance of a supply of animals coming through it. He does not understand what is happening. He has absolutely no respect for the people in charge of Rancher's Choice.

Hydra House Internal Report Release

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has

been asking for a copy of this government's financial review of Hydra House. We have been asking for that document. We have asked for it through Public Accounts. We have asked for it by letter that we sent to the Premier. We asked for it by a letter that we sent to the minister. We have asked for it as a letter through the media.

Mr. Speaker, this morning on CJOB the Premier said that he has given every piece that has been requested by the opposition through Public Accounts, every piece of information that has been asked for.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a copy of the financial review of Hydra House. I wonder if the Premier could table it.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad we did not meet in Public Accounts Committee last night like we offered, and I would offer again to have the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislature meet tomorrow. Members obviously do not want to meet.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would suggest to honourable members, instead of shouting back and forth, if they would like to have a discussion in the loge, they would probably be able to hear each other a lot better. You are more than welcome to use the loge if members wish to have a conversation.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader was up on a point of order?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It seems that the Premier is developing another bad habit.

Yesterday the Premier said that we could have a Public Accounts Committee meeting last night. Well, I waited in my office for a signal from the House Leader that indeed the Public Accounts meeting would be called, because according to the rules of the House and the Legislature, the Clerk needs to be notified by the House Leader that, indeed, a Public Accounts meeting is called.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to challenge the Premier to agree that we could move ahead with a Public Accounts meeting very soon, even tomorrow evening, and allow the Chair who is the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) to at least be able to invite the required witnesses that need to appear before Public Accounts.

* (14:10)

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, just to clarify the offer that was made by myself yesterday in the House. Mr. Speaker, an offer was made to the opposition to have Public Accounts Committee meet last night in order to have questions and answers to the two former ministers. Indeed, if the current Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick) is wanted there, we were prepared to have that meeting last night, but we did not get an answer. That was an offer made, and that offer remains.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members that negotiations should not be taking place on the floor of the Legislature. Also, points of orders and privileges are only to be raised to point out to the Speaker a breach of a rule or a departure from our Manitoba practices.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, do you have something new to add to the point of order?

Mr. Derkach: I certainly do, Mr. Speaker. The protocol, I think, that is followed in order to advise individuals who have to appear before Public Accounts is that the Clerk's office is notified of a Public Accounts meeting. In that way the Auditor General's office can be notified to appear before Public Accounts. Staff from the departments can be notified to appear before Public Accounts.

Mr. Speaker, I have never received a letter or any memo from the Clerk's office, nor from the Government House Leader, that there would be a Public Accounts meeting last night. I am offering the Government House Leader that we are prepared to even go ahead with Public Accounts this afternoon if the proper personnel can be notified and the proper witnesses can be notified to appear before Public Accounts.

We are prepared to go ahead with it. We are not stalling, Mr. Speaker. We want to move ahead. It is the government that is trying to hide this thing under the carpet.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, do you have anything new to add to the point of order?

Mr. Mackintosh: Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know how that is a point of order. The opposition wants to go and have an argument about rules in the Public Accounts Committee. The Rules Committee is scheduled to meet next week on the issue of Public Accounts procedures. What we are saying is to expedite this matter, to have questions and answers fairly asked and answered, we were prepared to meet last night, we are prepared to meet this week. That offer was made. If there is an agreement that we have a committee meeting with the former ministers and indeed the current minister, we have a deal and the rules are on for next week.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I would suggest to the House leaders that they do their negotiations among themselves, and on a point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I recall the Leader of the Opposition saying that the government would not even deal with this matter because the Auditor's Report has to be dealt with only after it is tabled in the House. We did deal with it.

I remember the Leader of the Opposition saying that the minister responsible would not be available to the committee. She was available to the committee. Then I remember the Leader of the Opposition saying the former minister would not be available to the Public Accounts Committee. Well, we want both former ministers that are part of the audit investigation available to the Public Accounts Committee. We have pledged to do that. We continue to pledge to do that, Mr. Speaker, and we will do that just to demonstrate our commitment to have ministerial accountability starting when the audit began in 1997 on to the present scope of the investigation. We are ready to go.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I have to rise on another point of order because the Premier should know what the rules of the House and the rules of the Legislature are, and it is the government that calls the Public Accounts Committee.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in order to call a Public Accounts Committee, the Clerk's office needs to be notified, and so does the Auditor General's office need to be notified. We are ready to go to Public Accounts. I would commit on behalf of this caucus we are ready to go with it today, tonight, or whenever the notice is given and whenever the meeting is called. It is up to the government to call the meeting.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: We will make it clear once again, Mr. Speaker. We are prepared to have a Public Accounts Committee meeting, not to have a bun fight over rules. We want to use the time of the Public Accounts Committee wisely and have questions and answers of the appropriate ministers while the procedures are dealt with in the appropriate form, which is the Rules Committee. We are prepared to do that. If they say yes, let us get the ministers before the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, every member in this Chamber, every member of the media gallery, knows we requested the financial review on Hydra House that the government did, and every member in this House knows, and every member of the media knows, that was not provided. Despite that, on radio today, this Premier said to all Manitobans that he and his government have provided all the pieces of information that were asked by the opposition.

This issue that deals with vulnerable people in our society is a very serious issue. I am going to be very careful with what I say because I know the word "liar" is unparliamentary but I will say this. As the Premier has said, "If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it must be a duck." I am simply asking this Premier this: What is he trying to hide? Why is it when we ask for the report, we are told we cannot have it? He knows we do not have it, and why does he go on radio and say, "We have given everything they have asked for?" What is he trying to hide? Why does he not stand up and apologize and tell the truth?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to go to the Public Accounts Committee, and I am saying that publicly because I am tired of the Leader of the Opposition misrepresenting the facts. Last night, the Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote, "We want Manitobans to know that under the Doer government, \$1.4 million went to toys and not to proper care." That is absolutely false. I will table the October 20, 1995, home renovation estimates for the hot tubs the Leader of the Opposition was dealing with. Let us get the former minister and the former, former minister where the audit makes its conclusions. Let us get the two ministers where this audit covers. Let us get to the Public Accounts Committee and let us stop playing games.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that all the Premier has to do is tell his House Leader to call the meeting. That is their responsibility. They can stand up and showcase in this place, provide window dressing as they love to do as a government, but all they have to do then is say what they are going to do instead of standing up here and showboating. This is a very serious issue. We have heard from this First Minister that the truth shall set you free. We have heard from this First Minister saying they cannot handle the truth. Well, he is wrong and he talks about accountability. Manitobans want accountability from their First Minister. They want to feel proud of their First Minister. They do not want a First Minister who says one thing in this House and then says something completely different for the people of Manitoba. Show some accountability and do the right thing.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition was factually incorrect. He makes statements about this government that were factually incorrect: the Cadillacs, the Audis, the donations to private schools, the estimates in 1995 for the hot tubs. The fact that he was trying to put that on our

administration is factually wrong. The former minister should be before Public Accounts and the former, former minister. We are ready to go.

Hydra House Internal Report Release

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, it would all be solved if the government would simply follow the directives the Auditor General has given us regarding Public Accounts and allow us to call witnesses. We are getting more and more frustrated with the issue of financial mismanagement of Hydra House. The Doer government continues to stonewall on this issue. In July of 2002, we had the former minister, the now-Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), tell us we have made all the normal and some quite extraordinary checks into the issue. Then in July of 2004, we have the Premier saying, "We obviously missed the issue of financial accountability." We go to Public Accounts, we asked the Minister of Family Services for the financial report and she says, and I quote, "I will take that request and any others as to the nature of the document that we are discussing under advisement." The Premier then goes on the radio and says, "We will give them anything they ask for."

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Housing and Family Services to do the right thing today. Simply table the report that her First Minister had said she would give to the committee. Table it in the House today, now.

* (14:20)

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, members opposite are trying to create a belief that we are not coming forward with information. I would like to correct that record.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the questions and I need to be able to hear the answers. We still have time left in Question Period and whoever wishes to have an opportunity will get their chance, but we can only entertain one question at a time and one answer at a time. So I ask the cooperation of all honourable members.

Ms. Melnick: We, in fact, gave full access to all information to the Auditor General. The opposition

asked for Public Accounts meetings. We appeared at those meetings. For the first time, although unprecedented in the history of Manitoba, I, as the current minister, appeared at the Public Accounts meetings. We have agreed that our former minister would appear at the Public Accounts meetings.

Also, during the Public Accounts meeting, I, as the current minister, tabled the CARE review on Hydra House. That was done in the department. I undertook to provide additional information about the financial review of Hydra House in 2000 and 2001 at that meeting. When the date is set for the next Public Accounts meeting, I will undertake to get that information to the members of Public Accounts as I agreed to do in the last meeting.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, we met at Public Accounts on September 8. When I asked the minister why will the minister not release a document to the Public Accounts Committee, her answer, and I quote, "Briefing notes are not released to the general public. Briefing notes are of a highly sensitive nature and would not be released." When I asked her again, I quote, "I will have to take that request under advisement." I asked her again: "I will get back to you on that as soon as I can." Time after time after time, she stonewalled that committee. Her Premier then goes out and tells the public, "We will give them everything we want." Come clean. Give us everything we want. Give us the financial document today.

Ms. Melnick: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify the misunderstanding that has been presented by the opposition. When I said I would provide the information, it was to the Public Accounts Committee, not to the member opposite personally. When a date is set for the next Public Accounts meeting, I will provide the information to all members of Public Accounts.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, again stonewalling from the government.

The Premier on September 20: "We do not have any difficulty with the truth, believe me." Well, let us have the truth then, sir. Let us have it.

Again, on September 21, and I quote, from the Premier of the province—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot even hear the question. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please. I think I have been up about 20 times in this Question Period, and I do not think I should have to do that. We have the viewing public. We have guests in the gallery and all members. We know that decorum is very important in this House. I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I remind the minister that she has ministerial responsibility as is indicated by her Premier. We, on the opposition, are simply getting bounced around like a ping-pong ball from the Premier to the minister to the House Leader, who will not call Public Accounts, and back to the minister.

We want the information. I do not want it as an individual. Every member of this House has a right to that information. Every person in Manitoba has a right to know what is in that file. Do the right thing, table it today.

Ms. Melnick: Mr. Speaker, I think we have all agreed it is time to set a date for the next Public Accounts meeting. I look forward to the opposition's commitment to that and their co-operation in setting the date. When the date is set for the next Public Accounts meeting, I will provide the information that I undertook to provide to each member of the Public Accounts Committee when the date is set.

Hydra House Internal Report Release

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the procedure that government is undertaking to stonewall the information on Hydra House. It would not be nearly as bad if we did not have the Premier (Mr. Doer) going on public airwaves and saying, "They have got all the information." The implication is that we are somehow just not telling the truth about the availability of the information.

Then we have the minister who repeated again just now that the information could be provided to the committee, the very information that she has denied for months, the key to understanding what probably occurred during the time of the review that they did shortly after coming into government. The

real problem here is they knew there was a problem, and they continued to do business as normal.

Again I ask this minister this: Will she be prepared to table that information on the financial review for this House? The House can ask for that information, and I do not believe that it is in the best interests of the public that she continues to refuse it.

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I thought the acoustics in the House were better than they apparently are. Perhaps they are good over here and maybe not so good down there.

I will repeat again for all members opposite that when a date is set for the next Public Accounts Committee, I will provide the information I have undertaken to provide to the Public Accounts Committee. We need the date to be set. I will be very happy to provide that information to each and every member of the Public Accounts Committee then.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I have not been spoken to in that manner since Grade 6.

This is a very serious issue. This minister has just led the House to believe that she is not going to table the information. I am asking one more time: Will she table that financial information for the House now?

Ms. Melnick: The information will be provided to each member of the Public Accounts Committee when a date is set for the next meeting.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before I call members' statements, I would just like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left. I would like to introduce Mr. Harry Enns who is a former member for Lakeside.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I rise with some misgivings.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Could you clarify the reason for rising?

Mr. Cummings: I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Cummings: As I was about to say, Mr. Speaker, it is with some misgivings that I rise on a matter of privilege because I recognize it as a serious issue. That is why on this side we have taken great care today to try and get the Minister responsible for Family Services (Ms. Melnick) to clearly understand that we expect, and the public has every right to expect, that she would table the piece of financial information that we are seeking.

I wish to make the case, Mr. Speaker, that my privileges as a member of this House have been breached by the actions of this minister, and by the actions of the government which I believe supports what I consider her unexplainable intentions in the way she is handling this file.

As an opposition, we have a right to ask questions about information that is pertinent to public affairs. We have the right to ask questions about information that is pertinent to the management of public dollars. We have a right to expect that the government would provide fair answers. They can choose not to answer if they so desire, and that appears to be the desire of this government, that they are refusing to answer.

* (14:30)

But what is happening, and the reason I am standing before you at this moment, is that, while they refuse to provide that information for this House, they are saying, "But there is another way that we will provide it." While I have been in this House for a long time, I am quite surprised that the current government would choose the tack that they could ignore a legitimate request in the House, then indicate they are quite prepared to release the information in another form. Regardless if that form is a committee of this House or not, the House should be able to expect that the information that they are requesting would be provided in the House rather than in another form, particularly when that is very specifically asked for in this Chamber.

My experience in the House would always indicate that the Chamber can ask, government can refuse, but then to refuse and say that they will do it in some other way makes no sense and is an affront to the rights and privileges of the members of this Legislature. It is an affront to the taxpayers of this province. If the information, for several months, was unavailable from this government, unavailable from this minister, one can only conclude that they were protecting the interests of someone that might actually know the answer to the questions. We will leave that to decide when we receive the information, but I would like to move, seconded by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that this question be referred to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and be reported back to this House as soon as is reasonably possible.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the issue of timing is not of concern; the issue is whether there is a prima facie matter of privilege. Of course, privilege deals with the very basic rights of members of this House to perform as members. I would make the argument that not only is this not a matter of privilege, it is not even a point of order. Questions can be asked of the government and answers are not, as a rule, required to be provided. Similarly, papers or documents can be requested but cannot be compelled as a result of opposition questions. So it is not a privilege nor an order.

In fact, if we had met last night and had the ministerial questions and answers in Public Accounts Committee, the whole matter would be moot, but the minister has clearly indicated that she is prepared to respect the role of Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I know the opposition. They want to order civil servants, with one notable exception. Indeed, I understand private citizens before the Public Accounts Committee and have a dispute there about rules. The issue of the rules is properly dealt with on a study basis by the rules committee and then this House. If we are going to serve the public

interest, I think it is important that the Public Accounts Committee meet, and have as agreement questions and answers of the ministers, the current minister and two former ministers. We think that is the way to move this along while simultaneously the issue of procedures is dealt with carefully. That is our proposal. Surely the opposition sees the value of moving to Public Accounts Committee as early as this week. We certainly are prepared to accommodate schedules to ensure that the public interest is served by those kinds of questions and answers and in the spirit of ministerial accountability.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): I rise on this matter of privilege because I believe this is a very serious matter. The reason I believe it is a serious matter is that if, in fact, this matter goes unresolved, this sets a very dangerous precedent in the Legislature of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) stood on his feet and raised the issue very carefully with respect to information that is available that he requested the minister to table in the House. The minister acknowledged she had the information, but she said she will not provide it to the House, but she will provide it in another form.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the rules, the practices of this province, the rules of this province are very clear. Members of this Legislature are entitled to information before that information is tabled in any other form. The minister, being new, may not know that, but I recall a day when information was shared with the public before it was tabled here in the House, and the minister got him or herself in fairly deep and hot water because of that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a breach and an affront not only to the Legislature of this province. but it is a breach of the privilege of each and every member in this House. When a minister, and I see the minister is leaving, but when the minister of the House does not table information in this House that she has acknowledged she has and says that she will only provide it in another form, that is a breach of the privileges of each and every member in this Legislature. Also, it is an affront to the democratic processes we respect and it is an affront to all Manitobans.

We have heard contradictory statements from the Premier, from the minister, from the former minister.

The Premier says on radio that we have the information. The minister acknowledges that we do not have the information. The former minister says that everything was fine with Hydra House. The public has a right to know the correct answers to the questions that are being posed. We are here representing Manitobans. This is a serious forum. This is a serious task. To take it lightly is an insult to Manitobans, and that is what is happening by the government. They are starting to operate like an autocracy. Democratic process is being ignored and is being shunned by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I refer even to the calling of the Public Accounts Committee. The minister knows, the House Leader knows, that if he wants to call the Public Accounts Committee, he stands in his place while the House is sitting and says the Committee on Public Accounts will meet at such and such a time in such and such a room today or tomorrow or whenever. We are still awaiting that announcement and that notice. Now any minister can say and the Premier (Mr. Doer), very flippantly, says, "Well, we will have a Public Accounts Committee tonight." Has the Auditor been notified? Has the opposition committee been notified? Has the Chair of the committee been notified?

An Honourable Member: How about the Clerk?

Mr. Derkach: I am going to leave the Clerk and your office out of it, Mr. Speaker, because you are just servants of the Legislature and, indeed, you will do what is asked of you by the proper processes. But what I am talking about is we have a practice in this province. We have a process in this province. We have a respected democratic obligation to the people of this province.

The minister today has transgressed one of the basic and fundamental rules of democracy and of this Legislature. She has refused to provide information that she acknowledges she has to this House, Mr. Speaker. Now the minister, the former Minister of Health and now the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak), who should know much better, is saying I am wrong. I am not wrong, Mr. Speaker. The truth is, and he cannot lie about this, because the truth is that she has the information at hand. She said so. She refused to table it in the House today. She says, "I will give it to individuals of a particular committee."

Mr. Speaker, you cannot do that.

An Honourable Member: No.

* (14:40)

Mr. Derkach: Now the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says you can. Yes, if you are operating like they do in the Soviet Union and they do in Ukraine right now, you will do that. But, if you are operating in a democracy, you cannot do that. I am talking about the fundamental principles of democracy here. I feel that they have been transgressed. The minister has breached a very basic fundamental of freedom and democracy today.

I might get a little emotional about this, but Manitobans should get emotional about this issue, because you cannot operate like a Communist dictatorship in here. There is no room for it. This is not a Third World country. This is not a Third World province. We have rights and obligations. We have a charter. We operate under a democracy. A democracy respected by you and me and all of Manitoba.

Today is a dark day in the democracy of this province and in this Legislature. This is not a trivial issue. Regardless of how the Province wants to treat this, this is a very, very serious issue. That is why the motion was made in a very earnest way. This matter is so fundamental, and has got me upset personally but also as a legislator.

If I have used language that is unparliamentary, I certainly apologize for that. But I am passionate about this, because we have seen suppression in other countries. We have seen what suppression does to people.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and I, whose heritage is from the same country, should have some sensitivity about this issue, because we see what is happening in the country where our ancestors came from today, where democracy is being suppressed by some powerful and unworthy individuals who will choose to do it their way.

When a minister acknowledges that she has important information that can and should be shared with all Manitobans and in this House but refuses to do that and has no grounds to hold that information private, then I think we have a serious issue on our hands. It is for that reason that I ask you, as Speaker

of this House, to very seriously examine this matter and to ensure that this matter gets its proper due diligence and that this matter does go to the Committee on Legislative Affairs and is dealt with at that forum and be reported back to this Legislature.

I thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing any other members, there are two issues that I want to deal with the honourable Opposition House Leader (Mr. Derkach). I just wanted to clear them up. Two issues I was going to raise with you, sir, was making a reference of members present or not, or the absence of members. The other was the language about "cannot lie about this." It was very, very close. I was going to give you a caution on that, sir, but you have already offered your apology in your speech. I accept it. I just wanted to let all honourable members know that we are not to make reference of the presence or absence of any honourable members, and I caution all members to pick your words very carefully.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Derkach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reiterate—

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I gave you a promotion. I should have made reference to the Official Opposition House Leader. I addressed you as the Leader of the Official Opposition. Sorry about that.

Mr. Derkach: I offer my apology to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) and to the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) because I did refer to them directly, Mr. Speaker, and I offer my apology to them as well.

Mr. Speaker: That should end the matter. I accept that.

The honourable Member for Emerson, before you conclude, I would just like to remind all honourable members that I have heard sufficient argument. I do not want this to turn into debate, but if honourable members are rising because they feel there is some point that has been missed by the House Leaders or other people that have risen on this, I will hear the honourable member.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I will not be very long. I have sat or been a member of this Legislative

Assembly now since the spring of 1988. I watch very diligently and participate, I think, in a reasonable manner in most of the processes in this Legislative Assembly. I think all of us have. I think all of us that serve here have a deep appreciation for the democracy that has brought this Legislative Assembly to Manitoba and is currently operating in this manner.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to bring to your attention is when a minister stands in this House and suggests she or he has in his or her possession documents that will or can be tabled and brought to the attention of some members of this House in a committee form or other, that minister has a constitutional right and we, as members in this House, have a democratic right to be able to assess those documents. All of us, not just one or two or four that might be committee members, but all of us have a right to access of those documents. That right, in my view, has been breached here today by the minister. I believe that right is an indication of how far this government in power today in this province wants to stretch democracy. When I say "stretch democracy," it is very often the first signal as to where they would like this Chamber and the process of legislation and regulation and the debates and procedures to be taken.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it behooves all of us that are elected members, that we as members that were elected, duly elected to represent the people of this province of Manitoba, do so in an honest manner, do so in a forthright manner. I believe all of us that sit here try and do that. However, today we saw a demonstration of breach of the right to be able to access the information that is at the disposal of the minister. That is very often the first step in the changes in democracy or democratic procedure that we have seen in other countries. It had already been pointed out the chaos that currently exists in Ukraine and many other countries where dictatorial powers have been brought to focus in assemblies such as this and the democracies and the democratic processes set aside.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that it behooves you and all of us in this Legislature to guard our democratic rights with every power we possess as legislators. That is our God-given right. That is the right that has been enshrined to us or entrusted unto us, that we, for future generations, maintain those rights. I would suggest the resolution

that was passed here today should serve as notice that we reserve the right to review the processes that are utilized by some members of this Legislature and specifically the minister. We, I believe, should call the minister back into this building and ask her to table the documents that have been requested here today before we leave this Chamber because it is our right as legislators to have access to those documents.

With that I will sit down, but I hope this will serve notice that we will keep very close vigilance to protect the democracy and the democratic procedures that we have had the right to, been elected to and entrusted to as members of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the other members, I would just like to remind honourable members that making reference to the presence or absence of members, like referring to calling a member back into the building, it is the same thing. I would ask all honourable members to please respect our rule of making reference to members' presence or absence, okay?

* (14:50)

Mr. Penner: That reference, Mr. Speaker, I truly apologize.

Mr. Speaker: That should take care of the matter.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to apprise you of some facts that you may find useful in your deliberation on this matter of privilege.

I believe this whole issue could have been avoided had the government followed the advice from the Auditor General, who was on record as saying that our Public Accounts Committee is the least effective Public Accounts Committee in all of Canada. We made an effort to change the rules under which the Public Accounts Committee operates.

We passed three motions. One, to have the Rules Committee meet and come back with a recommendation to the committee by September 30. The Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) chose not to call the Rules Committee until December, and so that motion has not been dealt with. We also brought forward two unanimous motions, which we discussed yesterday, which seem to have no ability to

be dealt with by this House, by the legislators of this province, and I think that is unfortunate.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take you back to, I think, that which is the genesis of the frustration that we as opposition members feel on this issue, and give you further indication as to how our rights as individual members and collective members of this Legislature have been breached by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick). As indicated during Question Period, I asked her on numerous occasions to table the report which we referred to today in Question Period and which we have referred to in this matter of privilege.

Time after time after time, and I have quoted from Hansard, and I refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the Hansard of September 8, 2004, on this issue where she said she would take the matter under advisement over and over again. She would not comment on the report. But further to that, I wish to advise you that as soon as the committee ended, that minister then went out into the hall and told the media without consulting anybody that she was not going to release that document because in her view it was a private document that had Cabinet privilege.

For the whole Public Accounts process, that whole afternoon she told us she would take it under advisement without even referring back to the committee. She then went into the hallway and advised the press that under no circumstances would she be releasing that report. So that is why, Mr. Speaker, when we heard the Premier announce on radio that we had access to all the information that we had asked for, we again came back to the House and asked the minister if she would then do as her Premier had asked and table the report with the Legislature of Manitoba. Of course, as you heard and we all heard, she has refused once again, saying she will bring it to the Public Accounts Committee, quite frankly, of which we have no guarantee.

We have no method, we have no means during that Public Accounts Committee, to demand that the minister present the financial information that she gave to the Auditor General. We do not even know if she is referring to the same report that we are asking for. We asked very specifically for the document that she provided the Auditor General that led to his investigation into the allegations of financial mismanagement at Hydra House. We have not even

been told by this minister that that is the information that will come to us.

Mr. Speaker, we have no choice, I believe, but to ask the minister to do the right thing and table it in the House. I would ask you to take that into account during your deliberations.

I would close by saying that, had the government done as they had promised to do when they were in opposition, and moved forward on the recommendations that were made by the Auditor General back in 1997, I believe, I would specifically indicate that it is the now-Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) who spoke at length during a Public Accounts Committee in 1997 as to the wisdom of this Legislature adopting those recommendations from the Auditor and yet is part of the group that is stonewalling in the adoption of those recommendations.

Had we, as a Legislature, had an opportunity to deal with the recommendations and move forward on the recommendations from the Auditor General none of this would be necessary, because Public Accounts Committee would have teeth. We would not be in a situation where a minister of the Crown is abusing the rights and privileges of members of the Legislature.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a few words on the record in regard to this matter of privilege.

Mr Speaker, our rules indicate that we cannot say who is here and who is not here, but I do think that it is important to recognize that you observe on who is here and who is not here. The reason why I suggest that, if we go to *Beauchesne's*, page 28 in the 6th Edition, "By its nature, a question of privilege is of such importance that it may be raised at any time, and Standing Order 48 makes provision for the precedence of a question of privilege over all other business of the House."

Mr. Speaker, I think it is worthy to note, and you have highlighted it in the past, the very serious nature that a matter of privilege really is. It is something that needs to be taken seriously. That is why I will not indicate who is here or who is not here, but I do think it is worth an observation from your point of view as when you might want to reflect on the matters of privilege.

I would go to page 3, which is the very first page, if you like, of *Beauchesne's*. If you go to

Citation 1, in part it states, "to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly fashion." Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) in his comments, and I think that if you check the record in the last number of matters of privilege that were raised, you will find that the Government House Leader has a standard line that really trivializes the importance of individual members' rights. I think that we have seen a pattern with this government, a pattern that does not bode well for credibility on the whole issue of democracy and members' rights to be able to adequately represent their constituents on those issues that are so vitally important.

There are issues that are there that we have a mandated responsibility, whether the government wants to recognize that mandate or not, we recognize the mandated responsibility that we have as members of the opposition to be able to hold the government to account for its actions.

Mr. Speaker, why that is important, the Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) indicated, in experiencing frustration, that you have the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the day making a statement on radio saying how he is facilitating and providing information to all members, to all requests that are being made of the government regarding Hydra House. Then, during Question Period when the issue was raised, there is a tremendous amount of, for lack of better words, bafflegab or intentional misdirection of answers and possibly even questions. The issue is actually sidestepped. The opposition gets frustrated because we know what it is that we should be entitled to receive, yet we see the government stalling on this very important and critical issue. They are indicating, well, it has to go through Public Accounts.

I believe, as a member of this Legislature, and not a member of the Public Accounts Committee, that I, too, have a right to be able to have access to that information. I stood up the other day to make reference to it. The government seems to want to tie it in, and what they are doing is they are tying it in. They say, "Well, we not only want the former minister, we want the former, former minister in order to appear in Public Accounts."

Our concern is what is in the best interest of the public. The critical time, I believe, is that there was an internal review that was done in 2000, but no

public report on that review was given dealing with the financial aspects. The then current minister is the one in which we have a responsibility to try to come clean on this whole issue. The government of the day, and particularly the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) and the current minister responsible, seem to be quite content in saying, "Yeah, we have the information, but we are not going to do anything until Public Accounts comes, and if Public Accounts comes, well, we want not only the former minister, we want the former, former minister."

I think that the government of the day is using Public Accounts as a scapegoat. We could ultimately articulate that what should have been happening is we should have been sitting last September in dealing with issues of this nature. This is the most appropriate place for us to be able to try to draw information out of the government. For the government to be saying, "we are not prepared to share information unless it is in Public Accounts," I do believe that we start infringing upon the rights of all the members inside this Chamber.

* (15:00)

That is why I think that and what could go into *Beauchesne's*. I decided in particular *Beauchesne's* No. 1, the first citation, but I believe that there are other citations that are there that would clearly indicate that the government of the day is wrong in not providing information that on the one hand it is telling the public of the province that it is providing us, and on the other hand is refusing to do what it is telling Manitobans that it is doing.

If the government said we do not have the information, and the opposition was asking for it, well, we might disagree with them but we would unfortunately have to accept that. But that is not the case. It is not only saying that it has the information, it is also portraying the impression that it is providing the information to the public. There has to be some privilege that is being overlooked here, and that is why it upsets me when the Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh), no matter what the issue might be, no matter what presentation is made from members of the opposition, has that standard line to minimize and to belittle any privilege that is raised inside this Chamber.

Much like when I raised the issue of the number of sitting days, the Government House Leader says,

"Well, we sit more and the member should be counting those as sitting days. When we sit in committees those should be counted as sitting days." Well, I do not know what world the Government House Leader sits on when it comes to democratic principles. But I think that the Government House Leader needs to revisit the importance of democracy in our province and, most importantly, the importance of members' privileges and rights inside this Chamber, and not belittle individuals, members when they raise important issues such as matters of privilege.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your recognition of myself in allowing me to rise this afternoon on this matter of privilege, and to offer advice as to whether or not we satisfied the two requirements as it being a matter of privilege and that being at the earliest possible occasion after the breach of privileges of the House.

The second point, in fact, that it has to be a prima facie case established which Maingot offers the following definition: A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense was one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and to send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have been breached or a contempt has occurred and report to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I have never risen in my tenure as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on a point of privilege. However, clearly in my mind a breach has occurred of the privileges of the members of this Legislative Assembly. As well, contempt has been obviously displayed by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Ms. Melnick). Today you heard, and it will be written in Hansard, that she does indeed have information that was requested and that she stated she would not release it to the members of this Legislative Assembly. Only will she release the information to those members as acknowledged as members of the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee is a committee of this Legislature and is made up of members of the Legislative Assembly.

Today, this minister has shown complete and utter contempt for all members of the Legislative Assembly, showing that there is privilege within this

Legislative Assembly offered only those members of the Legislature who are members of this particular legislative committee. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is contemptuous of our privileges as members of this Legislative Assembly.

I will not further debate. I do believe that you will take this matter under consideration as to whether or not it is a matter of privilege. I certainly, Sir, believe that it is and I look forward to the opportunity to debate the matter further. Thank you.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Philippine-Canadian Centre

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, on November 6, 2004, I, along with my colleague, the MLA for Wolseley, and other distinguished guests recently had the privilege of attending the formal celebration to inaugurate the Philippine-Canadian Centre of Manitoba.

The volunteers and donors who made this a special evening are too many to mention, but the new centre would not have been possible without assistance from the Philippine Association of Manitoba, numerous individual donors and other Filipino organizations in the community. These organizations and individuals have been strong supporters of the centre since the beginning. Thanks must be given also to the provincial and federal governments for their financial support through the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program and to the City of Winnipeg for originally leasing the land to our community.

The Philippine-Canadian Centre of Manitoba is important for our community. It is home to important Filipino organizations like the Philippine Association of Manitoba, the Philippine Consulate in Manitoba and other business groups that are leasing out space in the new centre. The centre has a boardroom that can be used by Filipino organizations, as well as a functional kitchen and a multi-purpose room. The centre will serve as a focal point to showcase, unite and promote Philippine culture and its contribution to the socio-economic and political life in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the PCCM board of directors, through the president, Dr. Romulo Magsino, and the entire executive for a successful evening to honour those who made the dream of a Philippine-Canadian Centre a reality. As a proud member of the Filipino community and appointed patron of the centre, I wish the Filipino community much success in the future. Their dedication and perseverance is an inspiration to all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ukrainian Election

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I rise on a member's statement today to pay tribute to the people in Ukraine who have fought for freedom and independence and democracy for so long, Mr. Speaker. What we have witnessed over the course of the last number of weeks and days is somewhat tragic, I guess, for the democratic process in a country that is trying to desperately work its way out of the socialist Soviet Union rule of that particular country for over 70 years, and has, for the last 13 years, attempted to work its way into a democratic society.

Mr. Speaker, the elections held in Ukraine have, by all observers, been condemned as being fraudulent and ones which do not recognize democratic process. Tonight there is a vigil to support the people who are fighting so hard to bring democracy back to a country that has been enslaved under communist and socialist rule for so long. It is a known fact that when democracy is suppressed, people's rights, people's fundamental rights stripped away, then society in general begins to deteriorate and suffer.

When we look at Ukraine, Mr. Speaker, it is a country that is rich, not only in human resources but is rich in so many natural resources and yet a country that is so backward because it has been suppressed for so long that it cannot compete on the global scene. If that country is ever going to realize its potential, it must be given the opportunity to operate in a democratic and free society.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I rise, not only to support the cause by people who are going to be gathering at the vigil, but indeed to echo the sentiments of people whose heritage is Ukrainian to support people in Ukraine. Thank you.

* (15:10)

Kiwanis Club of St. James

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to talk about the Kiwanis Club of St. James. I know that my honourable colleague, the MLA for Assiniboia, shares my sentiments.

For the past 60 years, this selfless organization has sponsored fundraising and community-oriented events targeted at advancing the welfare of individuals of all ages and from all backgrounds. They provide support on a regular basis for groups such as the St. James Air Cadets, the Women's Abuse Centre and The Salvation Army. They provided support for the Brummitt-Feasby ALS house, and this year I had the privilege of working with them on a fundraising campaign which raised over \$7,000 for the St. James Rods football club.

In recent months this group has truly stepped up to the plate and has been instrumental in providing affordable, independent-living accommodations to seniors. St. James Kiwanis Courts and Lodge collaborated with all three levels of government to develop 24 new apartment units which will be accessible to seniors with low to moderate incomes. The apartments are part of the St. James Kiwanis Manor redevelopment project underway at 135 Sinawik Bay.

The St. James Kiwanis give not only from their heart but from their wallet as well. They will contribute \$828,741 toward the St. James Kiwanis Manor project. In addition, \$960,000 in funding will be provided by the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative's rental supply program. This project is a demonstration of a successful partnership between governments, the community, and the non-profit sector. I was honoured to participate in discussions on this project, and I was very impressed by the Kiwanis Courts and Lodge's attention to detail, as well as their willingness to engage in extensive consultation with other parties.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I call on all members of the House to support the Kiwanis in their future endeavours and to congratulate them on 60 years of dedicated service to their community.

St. Leon Wind Farm

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my gratitude to those who took the

time to come to the Legislative Building to be a part of a very important announcement for our province. The construction of Canada's largest, and Manitoba's first, wind farm near St. Leon is an exciting venture that will bring to Manitoba state-of-the-art energy generating methods that will position our province as a leader in clean energy creation.

This new endeavour presents significant economic opportunities for rural Manitoba. The \$10 million this project is expected to generate for Manitoba farmers and other landowners who will have wind turbines on their land will be a welcome addition to their farming and livestock operations.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the \$190 million that will be invested into the construction of the St. Leon wind farm translates into job creation for rural Manitobans that will diversify our economy, encourage further economic growth, and provide significant business opportunities for our province. Moreover, the economic advantages from this project will be far-reaching, benefiting municipalities, school boards and all the people living in the surrounding communities. More importantly, the construction of this wind farm sends a clear message to future generations that the protection of our environment is a priority and responsibility of all Manitobans.

I would like to thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the former Energy, Science and Technology Minister for their hard work and dedication in bringing this project to Manitoba. I would also like to thank the current Energy Minister for taking on their lead in ensuring that this project became a reality. Again, I would like to thank representatives from the Grenier family, the Martel family, the Labossière family, the Brunel family, the Boulet family for driving in and participating in this historic event for the province of Manitoba. I know I, like countless other Manitobans, look forward to the construction of the St. Leon wind farm. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Physician Resources

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I have great concern about the condition of health care in Manitoba today. In their 1999 Throne Speech, the present NDP government made solemn commitments to rescue health care to ensure Manitobans have quick access to health care when needed, and to make sure shortages of health care professionals

were addressed. Today, five years later, in The Pas, Ashern, Brandon, Rivers, Winnipeg and many other communities, there are critical shortages of physicians.

Yesterday, I talked about Ashern, where for 11 of the next 18 days there will be no doctor available to see patients or to cover the emergency room. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine someone travelling an hour and a half, maybe longer if the road conditions are poor, with a severe medical problem like a heart attack from Dauphin or Rivers to Ashern and finding the emergency room closed? The notice circulated in Ashern just said, "Please proceed to another emergency room."

Mr. Speaker, another open emergency room is likely to be another hour away from Ashern. The notice in Ashern said, "Sorry for the inconvenience." To someone who is seriously ill, feeling as if they might be dying, all this government and its representatives can say is, "Sorry for the inconvenience." Not good enough.

The situation in other communities is equally serious. In Brandon, this government has known for a long time that obstetric services there are absolutely critical because obstetric services are closing in many smaller rural hospitals. They have known for a long time that having an adequate number of pediatricians in Brandon is crucial, and yet we face a situation in Brandon where there may be days in the near future where mothers awaiting delivery of a child may have to go to Winnipeg.

The present NDP government has fallen far short of what it promised to deliver. Its promises are broken, shattered, in shreds.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ADJOURNED DEBATE (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion, the honourable Member for Rossmere, (Mr. Schellenberg), standing in the name of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), who has unlimited time.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker,

and I am delighted that there are so many of the members on the government benches that are riveted on what I have to say. That is very, very important. So anyway, I appreciate—[interjection] Anyway, that better not be part of my time. Okay, well, I will try and speak a little bit louder, and apparently people will have to speak a little bit louder back to me just so that I can hear properly.

Anyway, I was saying yesterday when I was making comments about the Doer government and some of the issues on the economic strategy, I think one of the issues I wanted to address with respect to my response from the Speech from the Throne was the fact this First Minister, I thought it was very interesting that he went down to the Health Summit in Ottawa. At that time we saw the live coverage, and as it went around the table and the First Ministers were speaking, but in particular I thought it was interesting that the First Minister from Manitoba basically put his finger in front of Prime Minister Martin and challenged him to live up to the promises that he made to Canadians during the federal election, the last federal election.

I thought it was perhaps somewhat cynical, Mr. Speaker, that the First Minister, the Premier of Manitoba, would be lecturing some other leader about their commitment to health care, when, in fact, we have seen in Manitoba under this Premier really the sort of crisis in many respects and the difficulty that we see in the development of health care in the province of Manitoba.

We know full well that the spending and the administrative costs, the regional health authorities, we know that spending is going through the roof, going up exponentially. The unfortunate part about that is that, as the expenditures go up on the administrative side, that takes away valuable dollars, valuable resources, that could be put into front-line services to make sure that there is more timely access to care for Manitoba patients.

*(15:20)

So, again, we say on this side of the House, why do we not open up the regional health authorities? Why do we not have a look and see how it is that they are working? We think that they are obviously doing some good things, Mr. Speaker. But, clearly, when costs continue to go up and up and up, I think it should send up a flag to say that it is time for us to

go in and have a look around and see why it is that our administrative costs are going up, because we need to put that money and direct it toward front-line workers and front-line services.

I know that when we say that, the First Minister always says, "You are attacking your old boss. Why are you attacking your former boss?" The fact of life is this is not about attacking anybody. Surely, we should want to do what is right for better access to care for Manitoba patients. That is why we should do it. Again, I say and believe, I cannot quote the Premier specifically, but I do know he was very clear in the 1999 election. I think he mentioned it in 2003. I may be mistaken on that, but I know he has said to Manitobans that one of his priorities is to ensure administrative costs do not rise because, as they rise, that means scarce dollars, precious dollars that should be going to front-line workers in fact are going to be taken away. That was something he was concerned about.

So I ask the question on behalf of moms and dads and grandmothers and aunts and uncles who are waiting on long waiting lists under the Doer government. Why is it he will not do as he said he was going to do, as he challenged the Prime Minister of Canada to do, to live up to what he said in the election campaign? Why does he not go in and have a look at the regional health authorities, have a look and see where the money is going and why the expenditures continue to climb?

The other issue is very clear, Mr. Speaker. I know that when we were in Brandon just a couple of weekends ago, it became very clear when I talked to a number of young mothers who have a real concern, a real issue about the shortage of pediatric doctors in Brandon. I thought it was very unfortunate.

We heard in the House today that the new Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) said, when asked by the Health critic, the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), about why this Doer government is not doing anything to help the young mothers, the young children in Brandon in an emergency situation. His comeback, I thought, was very clever. It is sort of new math on the government benches, but what he said was, "I spent a full half day in Brandon." I am glad he spent a full half day rather than a half, half day, because on that full half day I am sure that he made a huge difference. I say that with all the amount of cynicism I can muster, because it has done

nothing. It has done nothing to help those moms and children who need pediatric care in Brandon.

In fact, what we see under the Doer government now with health care, particularly those in the Westman region, and I know my colleague, and I am going to be delighted to hear his words, my colleague the new member from Turtle Mountain is going to be speaking about this issue because it is an issue that is very important to Westman.

Under the Doer government, they were all worried about hallway medicine. They said they were going to solve that, and they had a plan which was six months and \$15 million. That was their plan. Now we are sort of six years and \$1 billion later. Of course, hallway medicine is, unfortunately, still alive and well in Manitoba.

But those moms and children in Brandon and in that Westman region who need pediatric doctors do not have to be concerned about hallway medicine. What is existing under the Doer government is highway medicine. It is highway medicine in the sense that they will put a young child or a mother who needs a pediatric surgeon or a pediatric doctor's attention, that they will send them via an ambulance from Brandon all the way to Winnipeg. Now we have highway medicine in Manitoba.

I know the minister of highways is here in the House today, and I hope what the current Minister of Health did when they tried to fudge the numbers around hallway medicine was to get rid of the hallways. I sure hope the minister of highways does not somehow have some way of trying to get rid of the highways. We need more not less, and I know that minister agrees with it.

We continually see the fact that in Brandon—I know the Brandon Regional Health Centre is there, but the Doer government will stand up and crow and talk bravado about this wonderful health facility. Mr. Speaker, it is great to have a wonderful health facility. Nobody would argue with that. But what is, I think, most unfortunate, and the new Minister of Health clearly does not get it, I am not sure. We miss the old Minister of Health, by the way, but the point is that when moms and children have to be forced to take an ambulance to go into Winnipeg, I have one word, and I think I speak on behalf of moms that are

frustrated in the Brandon area, and that is shame on the Doer government for not living up to what they said they would do. Shame on them for not having the kind of service that young mothers and young children need in the Brandon regional hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Doer government that they made commitments that they would not close one rural hospital. That, by the way, was during an election campaign, the time when you are trying to convince people to vote for you. Well, that is what they said. I find it fascinating that about a year ago the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority basically sent a message to a number of communities that there was maybe a different approach to what they were going to do with the rural hospitals in that region, and this is kind of a hallmark of the Doer government: when you are not happy, when things are not going your way, in the sense that there is nobody listening to you, as we hear with the Doer government, then those people from those communities have to take time off from work, take time off from looking after their children and their families, they have to then find ways to come into Winnipeg because that is the only way, and maybe the only way, that they are going to get any kind of attention from the Doer government.

All the Doer government has to do is live up to what they promised Manitobans, that they would not close one rural hospital. They said that, and the people from Rivers that came in, I thought, made a very, very passionate plea on behalf of all of that community. Their plea was quite simple. They said that at that time the Premier, it was during the election campaign, he went in with the New Democratic Party candidate from the Minnedosa constituency, and they went into the Rivers community hospital and what they said in front of 45 councillors, reeves, leaders of the community, they said, and it was the Premier that said, very clearly, that there would be no change to the acute or emergency services in your hospital. That was a promise from the Premier of Manitoba.

Now, the people of Rivers are very concerned because they are getting the message from the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority that they might have some changes to their hospital. I think the question that the people from Rivers are asking is how is it possible that the Premier of the province of Manitoba would stand in front of 45 members of our community, make a promise, and now the

Assiniboine Regional Health Authority is somehow coming behind that and they are going to make a change. I understand the frustration of the people in Rivers, because if the Premier made a promise in front of a group of people you would think that you could take that to the bank, that that would be what was going to happen, because the Premier of the province of Manitoba has said it, he has promised it.

But we have seen a bit of a connect-the-dots issue here in this Legislature with this Premier that he will say one thing to a group, hopefully, to try to put out a fire because it is important. I will give you a couple of examples. The Manitoba Métis Federation annual meeting, my honourable colleague from Springfield is quite aware of this situation, but we see from this Premier that he will say one thing to try to appease a group and then they will do something quite different. At the Manitoba Métis Federation annual meeting, the Premier stood up in front of them, "We are going to ensure that we honour the harvester cards of the Manitoba Métis Federation." That was the announcement he made and he got a standing ovation. The president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, Mr. Chartrand, was elated. The Manitoba Métis Federation then encouraged their members, based on what the Premier of the province of Manitoba said, to go out and purchase their harvester cards. It was days, not even weeks, but days after the Manitoba Métis Federation annual meeting that a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation was arrested by this government for using the harvester card. Quite rightly so, the president of the Manitoba Métis Federation, Mr. Chartrand, is saying that who do I believe? You know, the minister is charging us; the Premier (Mr. Doer) has told our assembly that we are quite fine to use our harvester cards.

*(15:30)

Of course, I love it over from the loge. I do not even know who the member is. What is our position? This government has maybe two, maybe now there is a third position, and we should try and hear what it is. I will tell you what our position is. We will never mislead the people of Manitoba the way that this government continually does, whether it is the Manitoba Métis Federation, whether it is the people of Rivers. What we have heard today, Mr. Speaker, with this First Minister saying on Hydra House that I have given all of the information that they have asked for.

Mr. Speaker, that is just a blatant misleading of the truth. It is unfortunate that the First Minister is starting to go down that path because I think, and I said this, and I mean this sincerely, regardless of the political stripe of the Premier of the day, I think Manitobans want to be proud of their Premier. They want to be proud of what the Premier does for the province. But how is it that you can be proud of a Premier who says one thing to a group, and then does something completely different behind their backs? What kind of a Premier is that for the province of Manitoba?

I think that there are some real serious issues when we talk about health care. Wait lists continue to grow. This Premier is absolutely so ideologically driven that he will not even consider innovation in health care. He will not consider looking at different opportunities if the goal is to provide timely access to care for Manitoba patients under a publicly funded system.

Why would people care who owned the bricks and mortar, Mr. Speaker? Why does that have to be the issue? If the issue simply is to provide more timely access to care, I would think that everybody would be in favour of that, as long as it is under the publicly funded system. But, when ideology gets in front of children, in front of sick parents, in front of sick grandmothers, that is unfortunate for Manitoba.

We have heard many times from the members in the government benches that when pressed on health care, I think, although I am not 100 percent sure, but I think after getting on six years in government, even members opposite are having a little bit of trouble trying to continually blame the other government. I know it is still there, and I know it is such an easy thing to do. When you have no idea and no clue what to do, you blame this person; you blame the federal government; you blame the previous government. You blame somebody else rather than standing up and saying, "Here is what I am going to do. You can take my word to the bank because when I say I am going to deliver, you bet I am going to deliver."

Of course, that is almost like foreign policy. If there was foreign policy being developed, that would be foreign policy to the Doer government, Mr. Speaker.

They all like to say if there is a doctor or nurse shortage, one which they promised Manitobans they

would deal with and fix, but when we asked questions why it is that we continually have such a strong nursing shortage in the province of Manitoba, the answer, of course, comes back that you cannot just add water, stir and get a nurse. Really? Fascinating. I do not think that is anything on this side of the House that we are surprised to hear. What is unfortunate, however, is that is not the commitment that they made to the people of Manitoba. They never once sort of said we will get more doctors, we will get more nurses. You know how? We got a plan. We got some magic water. We are going to stir it all up and out comes a bunch of nurses and doctors.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, of course, would not have believed that. So now they try to convince them that it is kind of tough. We just cannot add water, stir and get a doctor or get a nurse. That is the kind of misleading and misconception and, sometimes, I would have to say it is deceptive when you go in front of Manitobans and you ask for their vote based on what you say you are going to do and that is the best you can come up with in that situation.

I do think that we see a lot of issues in the Throne Speech. I thought it was unfortunate that, for a 60-minute Throne Speech, this Doer government spent 60 seconds, one minute, on justice. With respect, it is a known fact that the Hells Angels moved into Manitoba under Premier Doer's watch. That is a known fact, Mr. Speaker. We have seen growing gang activity under the Doer government. We have seen the number of grow ops increase under the Doer government. We have seen the unfortunate part, and I think this is unfortunate for Manitoba, because under the previous NDP government, at that time it was Premier Pawley, the record number of murders in the city of Winnipeg regrettably was 30. Premier Doer's record—

Mr. Speaker: I am going to have to remind the honourable member. I let it go a few times, and I thought you might remember our rule of addressing members in this House by the portfolios they hold or constituencies, and not by their name.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you, I apologize to the House for that. I will refer properly to the First Minister.

The First Minister's record in Manitoba is that under his government we have now exceeded 31 murders in the province of Manitoba in the city of

Winnipeg. So that is a cry out for justice. That is a cry out for the Doer government to finally get serious about this and do something about it. Yes, in the Throne Speech they talk about 40 more police officers, but as I said when I started, this is déjà vu all over again. We have heard that before. We have heard that kind of a commitment, but what have they done? They have whiffed at the plate; they have done nothing. So, again, lots of window dressing, lots of rhetoric, but very little in terms of specifics and follow-up.

We do know that the RCMP, for example, they are responsible for policing a lot of the rural areas in Manitoba. We have seen that, again, under the Doer government lots and lots of rhetoric about policing in the province of Manitoba. Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I always think that facts are an interesting place to start a debate, and the facts are simple, that in Steinbach and in Selkirk those RCMP detachments are no longer. Why is that? Where have they gone? Where have they gone?

Mr. Speaker, that is unfortunate, because this First Minister (Mr. Doer), as the Premier, working with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), they are responsible for setting the level of policing in the province of Manitoba. That is their constitutional responsibility. That is what they have to do. But is that the level of policing that the Doer government thinks is appropriate, that we have 31 murders in the city of Winnipeg setting an all-time record, that we see municipalities having to resort to Prairie By-Law Service Enforcement agencies because the Doer government refuses to fund a level of policing across this province.

Mr. Speaker, these are very serious issues, and rather than deal with the issue, we hear a lot more announcements. I would suggest that I know there were some discussions about the boreal forest. Well, with the amount of press releases that come out of the Minister of Justice's office, I would be worried for the boreal forest. They put out press release after press release after press release, and of course, I know that plays well to their caucus and probably to their party members.

But to the public, the people that are out there that are suffering because of the amount of gang activities that we see, the people that are out there that are victims of the kind of crime that we see in Manitoba, those people, those press releases do

nothing to support those victims. I think that is unfortunate, because I think that the Doer government had an opportunity some six years ago to take issues very seriously and particularly when the Hells Angels moved into this province of Manitoba, I would have thought that they would have ramped up the number of police officers immediately because our police are doing a wonderful job but they have got one hand behind their back because the Doer government is soft on crime. People know that. They understand that this government is soft on crime, and they are looking for something that will ensure that there is a sense of safety in their community. I can tell you they got nothing from the Doer government on that issue.

*(15:40)

Mr. Speaker, on BSE, I know that the First Minister likes to say, "Well, you know, you're in Brandon and you didn't bring a resolution forward to do with the BSE issue." Well, no, of course, because we have a plan. We have a five-point plan, unlike the government members. We have a five-point plan. Again, I would say, and I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is here, and I know she is delighted to listen to what I have to say, and I would be thrilled, unlike the Premier (Mr. Doer) who wants to turn a deaf ear and turn his back on rural Manitoba, if the Minister of Agriculture would just say, "Look, why don't we sit down and work together? Why do we not sit down and work together as legislatures, because that will be the right signal to send to Manitoba families, those that are in crisis, those that need help." That is the kind of co-operation, I think, that Manitobans are looking for. But, no, they want to skip along in their own merry way, 555 days after this crisis started. At that point, the Premier stands up in the Speech from the Throne and says, "Wow, I think there is a problem in rural Manitoba. I think we better try and do something about it." So what do they do? Thirty-three percent on the special levy on education.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite would actually travel around Manitoba, if they would absolutely travel around and meet with those families, they would understand why we have to eliminate the education tax off of residential property and farmland, and make that commitment that it will be done by the end of 2007. That is the kind of signal that not only rural Manitobans are looking for, but people that live in the cities. All Manitobans want to see that kind of a situation.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of other points I would like to make. Number one is, we have heard, and it comes back down to the credibility of this First Minister, all parties in this House agree that we should have a smoking ban in public places. We thought it was the right thing to do. Why? To protect workers from second-hand smoke. It was debated in this House, and an all-party committee was struck. The honourable member from Fort Whyte, the honourable member from Carman, on our side, were part of that committee. What they debated was to ensure that if the belief is that you are going to protect all workers in public places from second-hand smoke, that means all workers, whether you work in a restaurant in Winnipeg, whether you work at a restaurant in Thompson, or whether you work in an environment on one of our First Nations reserves.

All Manitobans should be respected and treated equally, but, no, this Premier says, "Well, I do not have jurisdiction on First Nations. I cannot do anything about that." That is just totally false, because he is the one that gives the gaming licences for those casinos. He is the one that has the ability to ensure that all Manitobans are being treated equally. No wonder there is frustration out there in the province of Manitoba over this issue. This government does not have a clear position. They will not take a position on it. We have. They will not, and it is unfortunate that Manitobans are getting very frustrated in that issue.

I want to also say that today we saw the Child Poverty Report Card on Manitoba brought forward.

An Honourable Member: An embarrassment.

Mr. Murray: It is truly an embarrassment that the Doer government, after six years, has done nothing to address this issue. Again, we will hear a lot of platitudes and a lot of bravado, but again, I am sure they will go back into their caucus offices and slap each other on the back and say, "Wow, we are doing a great job. Well, really, look at this press release. No, look at this press release. No, hey, mine is bigger. Well, I got two pages."

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, this is a very serious issue about children in Manitoba that are suffering. For six years, this government has had a chance to have an impact, and they have done zero. That is unfortunate for children in Manitoba, because I look around on our side of the House, on government's side of the House, a lot of parents over

there, a lot of parents that understand how difficult it is, and how fortunate we are that we are able to feed our children, and how we should be dealing with an issue to ensure that governments are there to help those that are most needy. That is something important.

I just wanted to make a comment on the member from Burrows, who said in his seat, in Hansard, that the best thing for the self-esteem of a family is to try to ensure that you break that cycle of poverty by ensuring that there are more opportunities and more work for people. I take it from the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) that he was sincere about his comments, and we agree with that. The idea is to get more people working so that child poverty can be broken, and that is something that I think that all governments should be working on. I can tell you it is an issue that we take very, very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have gotten up in the House to make some comments on the record on the Throne Speech. I would like to say that I would like to move a motion, and I would like that motion to be seconded by the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), and I would like to read that. I know that I have got in a little bit of hot water on this, so I hope I do it in the right order, but I would like to read,

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

But this House regrets

- (a) the government's failure to commit to elimination of all education tax off of residential property and farmland; and
- (b) the government's failure to commit to not closing or converting rural hospitals; and
- (c) the government's failure to commit to addressing the pediatric doctor shortage in Brandon; and
- (d) the government's failure to provide any strategy to address growing wait lists throughout Manitoba; and
- (e) the government's failure to initiate a review of health care regionalization; and
- (f) the government's failure to meaningfully address the growing concerns related to organized crime,

including the fact that since November 2000, Manitoba has been the scene of 37 biker-related murders and attempted murders; and

(g) the government's failure to develop a long-term economic strategy to address anemic job growth and make Manitoba a "have" province; and

(h) the government's failure to adequately address the BSE crisis and to provide any plan to increase slaughter capacity in Manitoba, thereby threatening not only the stability of the livestock sector but all of those other sectors in Manitoba's economic that are so reliant on its well-being; and

(i) the government's failure to recognize and encourage the important role private-sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy; and

(j) the government's failure to acknowledge that balanced budgets have only been achieved through significant raids on Manitoba Hydro and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund; and

(k) the government's failure to acknowledge their raid on Manitoba Hydro contributed to a 10% increase in Hydro rates; and

(l) the government's failure to commit to calling an independent public inquiry into the spending of taxpayer money at Hydra House; and

(m) the government's failure to commit to strengthening the role and function of the Public Accounts Committee.

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), seconded by the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen),

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? No. Okay.

But this House regrets:

(a) the government's failure to commit to elimination of all education tax off of residential property and farmland; and

(b) the government's failure to commit to not closing or converting rural hospitals; and

(c) the government's failure—[*interjection*]

Order. I heard the members wishing me to read it and I ask the co-operation so the members can hear the motion.

(c) the government's failure to commit to addressing the pediatric doctor shortage in Brandon; and

(d) the government's failure to provide any strategy to address growing wait lists throughout Manitoba; and

(e) the government's failure to initiate a review of health care regionalization; and

(f) the government's failure to meaningfully address the growing concerns related to organized crime, including the fact that since November 2000, Manitoba has been the scene of 37 biker-related murders and attempted murders; and

(g) the government's failure to develop a long-term economic strategy to address anemic job growth and make Manitoba a "have" province; and

(h) the government's failure to adequately address the BSE crisis and to provide any plan to increase slaughter capacity in Manitoba, thereby threatening not only the stability of the livestock sector but all those other sectors in Manitoba's economic that are so relevant on its well-being; and

(i) the government's failure to recognize and encourage the important role private-sector involvement has in growing Manitoba's economy; and

(j) the government's failure to acknowledge that balanced budgets have only been achieved through significant raids on Manitoba Hydro and the Fiscal Stabilization Fund; and

(k) the government's failure to acknowledge their raid on Manitoba Hydro contributed to a 10% increase in Hydro rates; and

(l) the government's failure to commit to calling an independent public inquiry into the spending of taxpayer money at Hydra House; and

(m) the government's failure to commit to strengthening the role and function of the Public Accounts Committee.

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

I advise the House that this motion is in order.

* (15:50)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): It is really quite interesting to hear that amendment and to realize that the opposition members do not support the steps that we have taken to address the issues facing rural Manitoba, particularly a tax cut that is unprecedented in the history of Manitoba. To have that kind of a reduction is really very significant.

I want to begin first of all, Mr. Speaker, by welcoming the pages to this Legislature. I know that it will be a very interesting experience and I hope that it is a rewarding experience. I would also like to welcome the MLA for Minto (Mr. Swan), who has his first opportunity to sit in the House, as well as the MLA for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), and wish both of you well. This will be a rewarding experience because, indeed, to have the opportunity to represent the people of Manitoba is a privilege and an honour and we should all treat it in that way.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the amendment of the member opposite and I do not think he is listening. I do not think he understands what is happening here in Manitoba. He is not recognizing what people of Manitoba are contributing; in fact he is really out of touch with what is happening in Manitoba because Manitoba is first in growth in earnings. The weekly average earning growth, more than twice the national rate, and provides an average pay income increase of \$1560.

Manitoba is the third in growth in capital investment. Population growth is at a higher level than it has been since the 1980s. Young people are staying in Manitoba at a higher level than they have, younger people are staying longer.

An Honourable Member: I stumble over that, too.

Ms. Wowchuk: I thank the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for his comments. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that I am proud of the fact that more people, more young people are staying in this province. Home construction is at an all-time high in this province, something that opposition members will not acknowledge. In fact they want to paint doom and gloom in this province and that is not true.

The university level and college level is up by one third. More people are going into university, Mr. Speaker, more people are going to college and job creation is averaging 6600 in this province. There is a tremendous growth in this province and members opposite refuse to recognize that. Members opposite refuse to recognize that this government, indeed, does have a plan, and a seven-point plan that has been laid out in our Throne Speech is one that we have been building on, and one that we will continue to build on because we are involving people through the Premier's Economic Development Committee, through our Aboriginal summit, we are involving the public in developing a plan that is working for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I want to focus a bit on the rural issues and I want to say that I am quite disappointed that members opposite would say that a 33% cut in farm land education property tax credit is not good, and the fact that that will go to 50 percent next year. They are going to vote against it.

I would like to read a letter into the record from Keystone Agricultural Producers. "On behalf of Keystone Agricultural Producers, I would like to thank you for your government's recent commitment to cut education taxes on farmland by 50 percent. As you are no doubt aware, this has been a long-standing issue for KAP and Manitoba farmers, and we are pleased that steps have been taken to address the current inequity in education financing.

"KAP continues to believe that education financing must be a key provincial priority and that the current property base system is unsustainable. The recent announcements will certainly provide assistance to farm families in Manitoba. We have been shouldering a significant financial burden under the current tax system. On behalf of the farm members, we certainly will welcome any opportunity to work with government to find new and sustainable

ways to invest in education, but certainly we thank you for your support to farm families on this important commitment."

Mr. Speaker, they say we are out of touch. It is the members opposite who do not understand the farming community and are turning their backs on the farming community by voting against this budget. I want to tell you a little bit about what the Conservatives did in their time in office with regard to taxes.

Ms. Kerri Irvin-Ross, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Let us look at what happened to education tax under the Conservatives. In the Winnipeg School Division the change from 1990 to '99 was an increase of 53.2% increase under the Conservatives; since 1999 to 2004, a decrease of 5.9 percent.

Let us look at a rural constituency. The member from Turtle Mountain will speak in a few minutes, I understand. In Turtle Mountain, from 1990 to 1999 there was an increase of 49.4 percent under the Conservatives. Shame on you. Under the New Democrats, between 1999 and 2004, a decrease of 11.1 percent. The member from Turtle Mountain should think about that in his comments and should tell the people of Turtle Mountain what, indeed, Conservatives did to education tax, what New Democrats are doing, and should be supporting the change that we have made to reduce education taxes by 33 percent this term, rebating the taxes that have been paid, and in the next year have a reduction of 50 percent.

They would still turn their backs as kids, as my colleague says, Madam Acting Speaker. This is an important issue. It has been on the agenda of AMM for many, many years. In fact, the resolution that was being read into the record the other day was very similar to the resolution that was read into the record somewhere back in 1939. So the issue has been there for a long time. Conservatives have been in power. They have not addressed the issue. If they really believed in rural Manitoba, they would stand up, they would vote for this budget because they know that it is the right step that we are taking to reduce education tax on farmlands, particularly at a time when there are huge difficulties in rural Manitoba.

I want to say that this has been a very difficult time. The BSE crisis that we thought would be gone

continues to put tremendous pressure on our farming community, and we all hope that the border will open soon. But we all have to work toward developing new markets. We all have to work in developing slaughter capacity. On top of that, we had an unprecedented weather situation this year in Manitoba that has put tremendous burden on our grain producers. Along with that, the new tariff that has been applied to the export of hogs across Canada will also put pressure on our producers. That is why it is very important that we take every possible step that we can, and reducing the taxes is one that is significant.

But, Madam Acting Speaker, I want to talk about the BSE situation and the fact that members opposite keep talking about having this five-point plan that they have but, in reality, they have done nothing. I think it is quite amazing that they came through a convention, a party that represents rural Manitoba—they say they speak for rural Manitoba—at their convention, they did not even give the time of day to address the issue that is facing the farm community in this province. No time. No, they did not even put forward a resolution, did not debate a resolution on the crisis facing the farm community. Can you imagine that?

* (16:00)

Well, I want just to quote. I have been looking at a newspaper article here where we keep hearing about the members opposite talking about Rancher's Choice. The member from Emerson said that we were putting roadblocks in the way of the slaughter industry. I can tell you that there have been many groups that have come forward. There was an article in the paper about a new proposal that will move forward in Neepawa. There is Rancher's Choice that is moving forward in Dauphin. There are others that are looking at where we might be able to increase slaughter capacity, Madam Acting Speaker, because people recognize that we never want to be in that same kind of situation where we were before, where we were completely dependent on a U.S. market.

But do you know how we got into the situation we are? It was under the Conservatives during the nineties that we lost the slaughter industry in this province. They did nothing. It was declining. There were opportunities to invest and they did nothing. They talk about us investing in the slaughter industry. They talk about us doing that now. Where

were they in the nineties when they would have had the opportunity to invest, to ensure that we had slaughter capacity in this province? They did nothing. You ask people in rural Manitoba about who lost the slaughter industry in this province. They were in government when they let it slip away to Alberta. They all let it slip away.

I want to quote from an editorial in the *Independent Weekly*, where the article begins about Rancher's Choice, and I quote, "The provincial opposition party has been equally unhelpful, using the ups and downs of Rancher's Choice only as an excuse to issue press releases criticizing the government when it should have been taking a non-partisan position to encourage the producers' commitment to make the plant viable for lenders." As we noted last week, the Agriculture critic, the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), last year said investing in processing plants was not a good idea, but when the Province announced additional funding for Rancher's Choice this month, he fired out a press release saying that it was a year and a half too late.

The members opposite cannot get their stories straight. On one hand, they say, "Do not invest in slaughter capacity"; on the other hand, when we support the producers, they say, "Oh, it is a year and a half too late, you should have done it sooner." The members opposite really do not have a commitment. They talk the talk about being there to support the cattle industry. They talk the talk about making investments, but if you read the quotes of what the members opposite said a year and a half ago, they said investing in slaughter capacity was not a good idea. It is on the record. They said that it was not a good idea.

Madam Acting Speaker, it has been a challenging year, and we are there. We are standing with the producers. We are making an investment in Rancher's Choice, and we hope that the members opposite will be there to support them. Rather than be critical to them they should be out there supporting producers. We have also been there in a lot of other ways. By putting over \$200 million in BSE-related supports, over \$105 million in BSE support has gone in direct payments to producers, and certainly we put together the BSE task force, which came up with recommendations and one that we can build on to improve the industry.

Madam Acting Speaker, I want to say to you that when I look at this Throne Speech there is definitely a plan. There is a commitment to the province of Manitoba. We have seen growth in this province and we will continue to see growth in this province, but it is unfortunate that the members opposite will not recognize what is happening in this province. They will not show their support. I wanted to specifically talk about what is happening with the slaughter capacity, and I can tell you that a tremendous amount of work has been done by our government and by the federal government to look at new markets because certainly it is new markets that we need for the industry.

Madam Acting Speaker, the issue of education taxation has been a significant issue for all of us that we have been looking at addressing. We made a reduction. Unfortunately, the Conservatives did not see it in the same way as it has been related to farmland, because I am not sure whether the members opposite will admit it or not, but when they were in office, they actually raised the level of the portioning on farmland so that, indeed, farmers were paying a greater portion. When we came into office, we reduced that portioning of farmland to lighten the load on farmers, but we now have taken a much more significant step in reducing the burden on farmers.

When you look at the impact that this will be, I have looked at some people in my constituency. A farmer with about 980 acres in the Swan River area will get a refund in the range of \$900. That is a significant amount of money. It does not address all of the issues, but every bit of money that you can get back into farmers' hands at this point is very, very helpful.

I want to recognize the farm groups as well for the work that they have done on this issue. They have certainly brought forward the issue of education taxation, and we have listened to farm producers and to people of rural Manitoba. Certainly, we have listened to the people at AMM. I heard someone talking earlier about not listening to the people at AMM. I got a very different response. I talked to the people that were running for the chairman of AMM, people from different communities who said this is good. This is what we are looking for. Certainly, they want to see more movement, but 50 percent is very significant, Madam Acting Speaker.

I want to also say that, as we look at the agriculture industry and changes that are happening, I was very pleased that we were able to put into the Throne Speech that we are creating a new position of the chief veterinarian here in this province. As our industry changes, and we deal more with issues of food safety, it is important that we put in place the additional staff that will address these issues. I am very pleased that our government has been able to recognize that there is a need and that we are able to work with the industry, not only by putting in place a chief veterinarian, but also looking at the other needs that producers have, and looking at ways that we might be able to address those issues, Madam Acting Speaker.

As well, I wanted to also say, Madam Acting Speaker, I had mentioned earlier that there was another facility, and it was a very interesting article that we saw that came out of the *Brandon Sun*, where Neepawa is looking like it is going to be the site of another slaughter facility.

Madam Acting Speaker, those are the kinds of things that we have been working at. Although we have faced very serious challenges through the last little while in the industry, there are people that are looking at this as a real opportunity. I want to say that I also feel very optimistic about the other areas of agriculture when I look at companies such as the one that just indicated they are interested in a processing facility for soybeans in Portage la Prairie. That is a good step because that was what we have to look at. We have to look at how we can add value. Rather than just growing agriculture products, we have to also look at how we can add value to them. Rather than just be exporters of raw material, we have to look at how we can also add value. Certainly, those kinds of investments are significant to the province of Manitoba.

* (16:10)

Madam Acting Speaker, one of the other announcements that came in this Throne Speech was in the area of new energy. It was quite an exciting announcement that the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology (Mr. Chomiak) and others made today where Manitoba's first wind farm is going to be established in St. Leon. We have an investment of \$190 million, and an opportunity for farmers to earn in the range of \$10 million by having these towers built on their land.

As we look at these things, we have to look at many alternatives for energy, and certainly wind energy is one of the ones that I look at as a very forward vision and one that I hope will result in further wind farms being built throughout Manitoba, Madam Acting Speaker, because there are many opportunities for that to happen.

As well, I just want to take a minute to talk about the new MTS Centre. I know that members opposite were not in support of the facility. I know that there was discussion in rural Manitoba about whether this was the right kind of thing to do. Madam Acting Speaker, it has proven to be a very successful venture, it has made a difference in downtown Winnipeg, and all of us as legislators have to think about all areas of the province, not only the area that we represent.

I certainly made a few comments about rural Manitoba that I represent. I want to say that I am very excited about what is happening in downtown Winnipeg, and I am also very excited with the commitment that we have made to northern Manitoba, the first dialysis unit that has ever been established in northern Manitoba under this administration. Of course, members opposite would not really care about that. When they were in elections or when they were in government, they very seldom visited northern Manitoba. Our government is quite different. Our government recognizes that we are a government for all people, and we look to provide services throughout the province.

When we look at what is happening in Brandon, the investment that we have made in Brandon into a hospital that was promised, I believe, seven times by the Conservatives when they were in power, never delivered on it. We delivered that hospital. A hospital in Swan River that is going to open in a few months time, early in '05, a hospital that the Conservatives talked about but never put into the budget, never put into the budget. Swan River was going to have the temporary hospital. Swan River now will have a wonderful facility. Swan River will have dialysis treatment.

We are very proud of how we are treating people right across the province, whether it is in Brandon, whether it is northern Manitoba, Steinbach, other areas. We treat all people equally, Madam Acting Speaker, and the investment that we are making is one that we should be very proud of.

So, Madam Acting Speaker, Manitoba is growing. We have a strong economic plan, and we are going to continue to build on Manitoba's infrastructure. We are going to continue to work with rural Manitobans to look for ways to have growth there.

Certainly, I want to mention the immigration program. It is this government that has put in place an immigration investment program and has expanded it to allow for farmers to settle in rural areas. This is very important. When we look at our loss in population in rural areas, it is important that we look for new investors

Our investment in research and development and in food processing is also very exciting, and I am very pleased that in the new year we will be opening the new Food Development Centre in Portage la Prairie where we have invested over \$10 million because we recognize the value of food processing. *[interjection]* But the members say that they recognize it, too. Well, I can tell you I believe it was under their administration that that facility lost its federally inspected status. They lost it. We have brought it back, and there will be new opportunities in meat processing in that facility as well, as well as packaging which never was even considered under the previous administration.

So I want to just say that I am very proud of what our government has done. I am very proud of the plan that we have put in place and the things that we are doing. Are there still challenges? Yes, there are still many challenges. Are there challenges that we have to deal with? Yes, there are. Will we deal with them? Yes, we will. We will continue to build on the basis that we have been working on; we will continue to work to have our population growth and create new opportunities in education. We will build on the plan that has been put forward by the Premier's Advisory Council. We will continue to work on issues such as expanding on Manitoba's first ever bursary program that was introduced for post-graduate students with special emphasis on advance studies in agriculture. We will continue to work on all of those. I have to say that when I listen to the comments that the members opposite made with regard to not seeing any vision in this, I have to say that it is they that have no vision.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I just want to talk a bit on one more program that we talked about. Members opposite have questioned the various programs. One of the programs that is very important for our producers is the CAIS program, and it was through Manitoba's initiative that we are able to get an advance on 2004 payments. Those are payments that normally do not come until next year, but recognizing that there was a serious cash flow shortage in the farmers' hands, we put forward a proposal to have a cash flow program come out of 2004 payments, and that is working very well for us, Mr. Speaker, because it is working to get cash into producers' hands.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the federal government to develop new markets. There is hope on the horizon now that Mr. Bush has said that they are moving along with the rule-making process and there is hope that that border will be open soon. Ultimately, there are other issues that we have to address, such as slaughter capacity in this province. We will work with all people who are interested, but we will also continue to work on issues such as reducing taxation which is very much appreciated by our producers.

I would ask the members opposite to think very carefully as they talk about voting against tax cuts. Think about their record, they did not reduce taxes, they increased taxes. They have an opportunity now to stand up for farmers and say that, yes, 33% reduction is good; 50% is even better. Let us vote for this Throne Speech.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Thank you, honourable colleagues. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great privilege to rise in the House today on behalf of the constituents of Turtle Mountain. I extend a special thank you to the people of Turtle Mountain for providing me the opportunity to represent them. I was fortunate to have a very supportive team working on my behalf. I would like to pass on my heartfelt thank you for all their efforts. I appreciate the positive comments I received from all corners of the riding over the last several months.

I would like to point out that I was raised on a farm. I have an agriculture background. I worked in the environment field, and in business as well. I do feel I have a pretty good sense of the agriculture business. The encouragement from my home community has been overwhelming. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my immediate and

extended family for their dedication and commitment. All members will realize the commitment required. This ongoing support has made this endeavour possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the new member opposite from Minto and wish him continued success in his years to come. At this time, I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor Merv Tweed. Mr. Tweed has moved on successfully to the federal arena. I would like to recognize his nine years of dedicated service to the constituency of Turtle Mountain. Merv always made himself available to the constituents and was very approachable. I trust his experience as a member of the Legislative Assembly will serve him well in his new capacity as member of Parliament for Brandon-Souris.

* (16:20)

I have had the opportunity to get to know the leader of our party in the by-election process. I would like to thank him for his insight over the last several months. I would also be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to wish him happy birthday.

My leader has assigned me to the Healthy Kids', Healthy Futures Task Force. I look forward to visiting communities throughout Manitoba over the next several months. My wife, Marilyn, and I are fortunate to have three healthy and active boys, and they are currently involved with three hockey teams. We realize the benefits of making healthy choices.

I look forward to assessing the criteria which hold back children from becoming active. We will also be looking at nutritional issues as it relates to the health of children. This is an important issue for the future of Manitoba.

It is an honour to represent the constituency of Turtle Mountain, although the title, Turtle Mountain, is really a misnomer. With a constituency realignment in 1999, my colleague from Virden has the monopoly on the Turtle Mountains. However, the constituency of Turtle Mountain remains primarily an agriculturally based economy.

Mr. Speaker, our rural communities live and die with the success or failure of agriculture producers. As such, our residents have recognized the importance of diversification.

Our government must also recognize the importance of diversification. We require a strategy to assist in value-added processing and marketing. We also require assistance in developing industry.

In Turtle Mountain we are fortunate that recreational activities are bountiful. Our numerous lakes, rivers and wildlife provide us with great opportunities. As a side note, Turtle Mountain is home to Manitoba's only desert, Spruce Woods Provincial Park, one of Manitoba's finest and Manitoba's newest provincial park, the Criddle/Vane Homestead.

We must strive to protect and enhance our valuable resources, not only in the short term, but for the future of our children and grandchildren. Management of Manitoba's resources is one of the greatest responsibilities we have as a government.

The people of Turtle Mountain are hardworking and determined to succeed, even in the face of tremendous adversity. I am honoured to represent these forward-thinking and innovative people. Constituents of Turtle Mountain maintain strong social values. Dedication to family and a strong commitment to community are an integral part of our moral fibre.

I am always impressed by the way our communities pull together when a project is undertaken. We as communities share and celebrate the good times. When times are tough, we all share the burden.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is the cornerstone of the economy of Turtle Mountain and the province of Manitoba. The agriculture industry has always faced challenges. However, this past year and a half the challenges have become catastrophic. We have seen a dramatic reduction in the PMU industry. Hog producers also face uncertainty with new pork tariffs. Clearly, our largest trading partner has a protectionist attitude which greatly affects our ability to do business on a level playing field.

This has been a difficult year for grain producers as they have struggled against adverse weather conditions. Furthermore, almost all commodity prices remain at historic lows. I believe we should support our current producers. We should also encourage our young producers to continue their

involvement in this important industry. We cannot rely solely on immigrant investors.

Mr. Speaker, no single issue has hurt the agriculture industry and our economy more than BSE. This issue has affected not only beef, but all ruminant livestock. Bison, sheep, goat and elk sectors have all been devastated. During my recent campaign, this was and continues to be the No. 1 issue for my constituents.

This crisis continues to have dramatic consequences on our economy. Many farmers face bankruptcy and foreclosure. The business community, who have extended friends and neighbours credit, also face uncertainty. The retail stores in our communities, who have seen a reduction in business, also face bleak futures. The loss of two three businesses in our smaller communities is having significant consequences.

The rosy economic picture painted in the Speech from the Throne is not the reality in rural Manitoba. There has been some optimism, given the recent U.S. election; however, the border still remains closed. Adding more uncertainty is the most recent case of BSE reported last week. Mr. Speaker, we have become too dependent on the U.S. market and U.S.-owned slaughter facilities. We have been guilty of exporting our raw materials and our jobs. It is essential we establish processing facilities in Manitoba. It is imperative that government support producers in the short term. These programs must be effective in addressing producer needs. The CAIS program has proven ineffective for most cattle producers.

Over the long term, the industry can grow and prosper as processing facilities and markets are developed. The number of cattle is increasing in Manitoba. The world population is increasing, and many countries are developing both the wealth and desire to purchase our products. There is tremendous opportunity for the livestock industry in Manitoba. However, it will take a commitment on behalf of government to make this happen and, unfortunately, we have not seen this to date. There has been great talk about groups that have come forward to the government, but at this point in time, we have no bricks and mortar in place in Manitoba for a processing facility. I strongly urge the current government to look at the five-point plan put forward by our caucus. I believe this plan addresses both the

short- and long-term solutions to deal with this significant issue.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have to debate the BSE issue within our party. We know what the issues are, and we have put forth constructive solutions. In order for Manitoba to be a "have" province, we need to encourage free enterprise and allow business to develop opportunities. These opportunities will encourage and allow our youth to stay and work in Manitoba. We must take down the barriers which restrict economic activity in Manitoba. I believe the role of government should be to foster development. Manitobans require local expertise for guidance and support with their economic development initiatives. In rural Manitoba, extension services for agriculture and education must be, at the least, maintained at the current levels. Effective extension services will enhance economic activity throughout Manitoba. Furthermore, development must take place in an organized and sustainable manner and with respect to our pristine environment.

Government should provide quality infrastructure. Manitoba faces a serious infrastructure deficit. We must put in place a long-term development plan to address the situation. Rural highways and bridges have deteriorated. Highways have become the main source of grain transportation. Turtle Mountain itself has numerous miles which require immediate attention.

Health care is a very important issue for all Manitobans. Our health care professionals provide tremendous service. However, the issue today is timely access to health care. We know many wait lists and wait times are increasing. We know examples of emergency rooms being temporarily closed. We know of a new phenomenon in Manitoba health, highway medicine. Simply throwing money at the problem is not the solution. We have to look at how we deliver health care. It has to be both effective and efficient.

Closing health facilities in rural Manitoba is simply not an alternative. Health care will continue to be a major concern for residents of Manitoba. It is indeed a key issue for all of those, and those of us in the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority. We are threatened with emergency room closures on a weekly basis. Rural Manitobans are being treated as second-class citizens.

Mr. Speaker, many Manitobans have lost their faith in our judicial system. Homicides are at an all-time high in Winnipeg. Auto theft is a major concern throughout Manitoba. Gang activity and the drug trade are reported daily in the media. Vandalism and theft have spread to our rural communities. We need to do more to address the safety of our families and their property. I hope the current government's gamble on public safety pays off.

Mr. Speaker, we must also be cognizant of one of the fastest-growing sectors of our society, our seniors. I believe it is important we listen to their views and allow them to share their knowledge. I also believe it is important to allow them access to their hard-earned retirement savings plans.

* (16:30)

Our children are our future. We must provide our youth every possible opportunity to develop and, in return, become active members of our society. Money invested in education today will prove to enhance Manitoba's economy. In this respect, it is time for a fair and equitable method to fund education.

Mr. Speaker, the current government has a lack of vision for Manitoba. What they have done over the last number of years has increased our provincial debt to the tune of \$1 billion. There is no legacy. It leaves a very bad legacy for our children.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more to do in Manitoba. In closing, I look forward to serving the constituents of Turtle Mountain. It is indeed a privilege and a pleasure to represent their views. Clearly, my comments today are reflective of the discussions I have had with my constituents over the last several months. I thank the people of Turtle Mountain for instilling their trust in me. I look forward to working on their behalf. Thank you very much.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, the debates in the Chamber on the Throne Speech are the proper visible forum for the formulation of governmental public policies. Public policies are the theoretical framework which put forth the commonly desired goals as well as the economically feasible as well as politically feasible means to achieve those goals for the good of all the people in the community.

The honourable member, the new Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen), had stated, and I am trying to paraphrase what he said, that what has been painted as a rosy picture is not the reality that is being experienced in rural Manitoba. That is a statement.

So I want to talk today about reality and illusions of reality as well as should it be by choice over compromise when we deal with either reality or illusions of reality. We, as elected people of this province sitting in Legislative Assembly, whether we are in majority government or in minority opposition parties, we are always confronted with conflicting demands, conflicting claims coming from groups and individuals purportedly speaking for some specific groups with many, many demands conflicting in themselves.

Confronted by such demands conflicting, how do we deal with such demands? Are we dealing with reality or are we dealing with illusions of reality?

Let me give you an example. When the United States government just across the border closed that border, banned the importation of beef from Canada on the basis only of one mad cow from Alberta, and it lasted for almost a year or so—

An Honourable Member: It is still going on.

Mr. Santos: More than a year? Are they dealing with reality, or illusions of reality?

How do we distinguish facts from fiction? How do we distinguish reality from illusions of reality? When we look at something in the material world, using our senses, our sight, hearing, when we perceive things, are we perceiving things the way they are, or are we perceiving things as they appear to us given our biases, our emotions, our likes, our objectives, our dislikes?

Perception is a reconstruction of reality, but our perceptions are not automatically perfect or accurate. Are we making assumptions when we look at the real world? Those assumptions certainly influence and bias our reconstruction of reality.

According to the poet William Blake, if the doors or windows of perception are cleansed, if it is clean, without these biases and emotions and desires and assumptions, then man can see reality as it is,

infinite. But we do not see them because of our barriers, barriers in our perceptions, in our senses. Sometimes it is in the environment.

We also have to try to see reality, not only from our own perspective, but from the perspective of people who are not like us. Someone with the opposite belief, opposite attitude may look at the same thing and see something different. Reality check, therefore, is not merely the comparing of perception of people who are like us, but comparing perceptions with people who are unlike us, who are not like us. Even in our legal system, in order to approximate what they call natural justice, you have to look at this doctrine in Latin called *Audi alteram partem*, which means "you must hear the other side." This is one good reason why in this Legislative Assembly, as any other legislative assembly in the world, right from the Mother of Parliaments, there is the organizational arrangement of representatives of the people, one side the majority party in government, the other side the opposition parties or parties in opposition.

An Honourable Member: But is that fact or fiction? Are you really on the majority side, though, or the illusionary? Is it illusion? Illusion or reality?

Mr. Santos: I am trying to explain the institutional arrangement, why it is so.

According to the cultural anthropologists, our totality of knowledge, what we call generally as culture, this is more visible among the human species than any other animal species in the world.

An Honourable Member: But is there a Canadian culture?

Mr. Santos: Culture, although unique for every group, unique for every nation, unique for every nationality, has a certain commonality that we have to observe. First of all, there are stable patterns of behaviour of people. Secondly, they are conservative in outlook. They want to preserve what exists by flexible means.

* (16:40)

Cultures are generally more enduring than the beliefs or attitudes of people constituting any particular group. They are transmissible through symbolisms: form of language, myth, religion, art,

literature, similar symbolic form. They transmit from generation to generation in a stable, predictable manner.

Now, human beings as we are, the question is, is it part of our nature that we have an innate ability to make a choice?

On the basis of the Holy Scripture, the Lord of Israel, reminding Moses of the covenant between the divine and the human, said, "J'en prends comme témoin aujourd'hui / contre vous le ciel et la terre. / C'est la vie et la mort / que j'ai mises devant vous, / c'est la bénédiction et la malédiction. / Tu choisiras la vie / pour que tu vives / toi et ta descendance."

Translation

I call Heaven and Earth / to record this day against you / that I have set before you life and death, / blessing and cursing. / Therefore, choose life / that both you and thy descendants / may live.

English

Therefore, we can say that the human capacity to make a choice is an innate, born part of our human nature. You cannot be deprived of that ability to make a choice. It is inalienable. If a person is deprived of the choice under certain circumstances, that individual who is deprived of the basic human right to make a choice is less than a human being. Because that is part of human nature.

In fact, one of the patriots during the American Revolution—his name is Thomas Paine—said, "Give me liberty or give me death." That is the liberty to make a choice.

If any member of this Legislative Assembly is deprived of such a choice, is he any less than a full member of this Legislative Assembly? He cannot be deprived. But, if he is deprived, it will be unacceptable to the rest of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

I want to ask this question: If the members of the judiciary in Manitoba can still accumulate pensionable services beyond the age of 69, certainly we can argue that at least the same privilege should be accorded to the members of this Legislative Assembly.

Despite a doctrine well established in Canada that there is a primacy of federal statutes over provincial statutes, that is part and parcel. The members of this Legislative Assembly should be treated no less than the members of the judiciary, because the Parliament is the highest court there is ever in the British system. All other courts are the offspring of the Mother of Parliaments.

The choice, therefore, should not be removed. It is there. Morally, it is still there, even if it is removed by the existing system. Choice continually takes place in everyday life. When we wake up we say: Should I wake up right now or shall I stay in bed? Should I take the bus? Should I take the car? All these activities of human life is a matter of choice, and sometimes a choice is rational and sometimes it is not.

When the choice is linked to the goal or objective, desire in a physical way, then we say it is rational choice. When there is no link between the means and the desired goals we say it is a non-rational choice. But whether rational or irrational or non-rational, whatever term you use, there is always the human choice.

The decision making usually takes place under conditions of uncertainty. There is always uncertainty about the completeness of information. There is always uncertainty about the consequences that will logically flow from any given alternative that you prefer to make a choice. There is always the uncertainty that the probability that has consequences you anticipated may or may not happen. Finally, there is the uncertainty of what ranking you will assign to all these alternative choices, alternatives that you would like to make a pick, at least one preferred choice.

An Honourable Member: But how do we get the pension? Just cut to the chase.

An Honourable Member: You actually said we have the pension.

Mr. Santos: It was removed from us in 1996.

An Honourable Member: How do we get it back, Conrad? That is where we want you to go.

Mr. Santos: That is within the prerogative of this Legislature, but this is the legislative body acting as

an institution, and in dealing with all these processes of decision making we should not forget what they call strategy. Strategy is the act of overall planning by delineating the most advantageous sequence of tactical moves that will guarantee the achievement of desired ends, desired outcomes, regardless of what the adversary does.

In a political contest between two political candidates in a two-party system, electoral party system like in the United States, that contest is called two-person, zero-sum political game. The contest is basically between the Republicans and the Democrats. You could see that in the U.S. presidential election they are, just looking at the electoral college vote, you could see that a win for one is automatically a loss for the other. However, in other political systems where more than two legitimate candidates can enter this is called the n-person, non-zero sum game where the winnings and the losses do not cancel out. There is especially one electoral office involved at stake. The result will be a plus one for the winner and a minus one for all the other losers in an n-person, non-zero sum game.

* (16:50)

Whether we are dealing with reality or with illusions of reality, the question is, do we compromise or do we make a choice? President Kuchma of Ukraine in the paper today said he pleads for compromise, so it might be wiser to initially compromise in search of reconciliation and peace rather than confront and fight because can you imagine how many lives would be lost if there is civil war in the country? That is why there is a moral quality in the leadership role in every country. If Oliver Wendell Holmes is correct when he said that "a word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged: it is the skin of a living thought, and may vary in color and content, according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used." That is in *Town v. Eisner* 245 U. S. report. The word to "compromise," because it is a matter of words, it may be expected that we have more than one meaning in this word "compromise."

If we analyze it carefully, "compromise" may mean mutual agreement on the part of two parties to give up part of what is initially desired or demanded. For example, when the seller or a buyer of a house, if the seller said, "I want a hundred thousand for this house." The buyer said, "No, I can only give you up

to \$80,000." So there is a difference of \$20,000. Maybe they should split the difference and compromise and sell the house for \$90,000. Then both of them will be happy.

To compromise may have another meaning which is negative in nature. For example, in a social gathering, let us say there is a wedding, there is an aspiring leader to be a leader of a political party, and there is a gang leader who offers his hand in the wedding to the potential leader. Would the leader compromise, risk his name, his reputation, by taking the hand? That is another compromise.

Another meaning of the word "compromise" is to weaken or to give up one's moral position—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: To what?

Mr. Santos: Weaken, make it weak, or give it up in order just to go ahead for some short-term benefit. In order to please someone, some kind of self-serving reason, regardless of basic principles, if we do such a thing like that, then we are operating in what we call expediency. This is the achievement of what you want regardless of your basic beliefs and basic principles, you give them up. For example, we are all honourable members of this Assembly, the moral rule is that we should not promise anything that we know we cannot fulfil.

Winston Churchill, in his writings, entitled *The Gathering Storm*, chapter 17, page 320, stated, and I quote, "Those who are prone by temperament and character to seek sharp and clear-cut solutions to difficult and obscure problems, who are ready to fight whenever some challenge comes, have not always been right. On the other hand, those whose inclination is to bow their heads, to seek patiently and faithfully for peaceful compromise, are not always wrong. On the contrary, in the majority of instances they may be right, not only morally but from a practical standpoint. Religion and virtue alike lend their sanctions to meekness and humility, not only between men but between nations."

If compromise means the reconciliation of conflicting demands and conflicting claims, what does the Judaeo-Christian religion teach about it? It is written, therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift at the altar. Go thy

way. Reconcile first with thy brother and then come and offer thy gift. You agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way to the courts lest at any time the adversary may deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, thou will not come out of there until thou hast spent the last partings.

King Solomon said, "Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself. Discover not a secret to another, lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not now away."

An Honourable Member: This is King James, right? King James version?

Mr. Santos: Well, whatever version it is, that is the Bible. That is the Scripture.

If perception is not in accordance with factual reality, there is a gap between perception and factual reality as agreed to by virtually every observer around you. Then we have what we call misleading, incorrect, mistaken perception. That is called illusion. For example, if you are driving a truck, and you are facing the mirror of a store, and you see the glare of your own light, immediately you react. There is a direct car coming towards me, and so, you move quickly to avoid what you perceive to be a direct collision. That is illusion.

Now, let us go to the oldest writing ever discovered, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. That is the available Sanskrit writings of the ancient world. The *Bhagavad-Gita* described our material world, the world of ours, as simply a reflection of the non-visible spiritual world which is the true reality.

An Honourable Member: How old is that?

Mr. Santos: About 6000 years, that confirms Plato's assertion.

If you read *The Republic*, that we are dealing in this world with only illusions, reflections, the question is what are the scientific explanations available to explain all these illusions around us. If I have eyeglasses and they are defective, they are out of date, you see, it can distort my vision. I thought

that was near, and it was not as near as I thought it was.

An Honourable Member: I think that might be happening, Conrad.

Mr. Santos: That may be happening now. It could happen to anybody with an apparatus to see. So the defective eyeglasses means the eyeball is distorted, it does not reflect the true reality. You have what you call illusion. Now you may have perfect eyesight, let us say your eyesight is 20-20. It is perfect, you do not need glasses. You look at things, but then there is poor lighting or illumination, it was so dark and dreary you could hardly see what you are trying to look at. So it is outside of you, there will be mistaken perception of what you are looking at.

* (17:00)

Have you ever been in a desert or on a highway? Some day you look at the highway as if you are seeing it full of water reflecting the telephone poles in the highway. That is called a mirage. You know how we describe it, scientifically speaking? There are layers of air at the top of the asphalt. These are heated; therefore, they are less dense than the cool air surrounding them. The rays of the sun hit this and are bended or refracted as we look at it. So we are seeing the pool of water when, in fact, there was no water.

An Honourable Member: Illusionary.

Mr. Santos: An illusion.

Again, our brain functions in a very systematic way in the direction of movement that we expect, creating a complete picture when the picture is really incomplete. For example, have you ever been watching movies, you know the movies, yes, you know those are still pictures, they just move them, flip them fast, and so it gives an illusion of uninterrupted movement. That is illusion.

So, in the words of that great philosopher Plato in *The Republic*, there are two types of realities in the world, he said, the visible one, apprehended by the eye where there are things and objects that you see around you, and the non-visible, intellectual, spiritual world, ranging from, in both cases, the knowledge of this world, from the most uncertain to the most certain. In the non-visible, intellectual, spiritual

world of true reality, we simply assume the premises and then out of the premises we make conclusions.

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

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet tomorrow evening at 6:30 p.m. in order to consider the matter of Hydra House.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order? On House business?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes. Just a question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, a question on House business.

Mr. Derkach: The question is on House business, Mr. Speaker.

I am wondering whether the House Leader could advise that the Auditor General will be available for the Public Accounts meeting tomorrow night.

Mr. Mackintosh: I am advised that he is available.

Mr. Speaker: The House has been advised that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet tomorrow evening at 6:30 p.m. in order to consider the matter of Hydra House.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will go back to debating the Throne Speech.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I first of all would like to start by congratulating our new pages to the Legislature for this session. I wish them well and, certainly, I know that they will find their experience in this Chamber to be, well, an experience, but a really good one nonetheless. So good luck to you all. We look forward to working with you.

I also want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to welcome the new two members to this Legislature.

The Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) on our side, and I just want to welcome him to our caucus and to this side of the House, and the Member for Minto (Mr. Swan) as well. We wish them both all the best.

It has been almost four years to the day that I was first elected as the Member for Tuxedo in the Manitoba Legislature. In some ways, it seems like yesterday, but in many other ways, it has been a very long experience, one, however, that I would not give up for anything. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because each and every member in this Chamber represents the very freedom that we are so privileged to have in our society, the freedom of democracy. One can only refer to the current activities in Ukraine to see how fortunate we truly are to have the freedom to live in a democratic society. I think sometimes we tend to lose perspective on how lucky we truly are to be free from oppression and be free to live as we see fit, and free to debate in chambers like this, and, indeed, out in the community, freedom of speech, et cetera. I think it is truly something. I am very proud to be a part of, as an elected member of this Legislature, and indeed have the opportunity to have debates on several issues of public policy that will affect changes in our society.

So, today, I have the opportunity to put a few words on the record about the recent Throne Speech and exercise my right to debate in this free and democratic society. Unfortunately, once again I can tell you that there is very little in this Throne Speech that truly offers hope to the people of Manitoba. I believe it actually was a bit of a snoozer, I have to say. There really was nothing in there that offers hope for young people, that indeed offers hope for many people at all in our province. I think it is somewhat unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, when Manitobans are so desperately looking for hope to keep their children here in Manitoba, I believe this government really had an opportunity to do the right thing here but they dropped the ball, and I think it is a very unfortunate message to send to the citizens of this province, that really there is not a lot of hope that they offered in this Throne Speech for the future of young people and the true growth in our province. Why did they drop the ball? The Doer government had the opportunity to provide a real economic plan and vision for this province, but, unfortunately, they chose not to.

Mr. Speaker, the last Throne Speech had a theme, and the theme they said all throughout the Throne Speech was, welcome back to Manitoba. Well, I do not see people rushing our borders to come in. As a matter of fact, people are fleeing this province, and why? Let us look at the track record, let us look at the facts of what Manitobans are faced with on a day-to-day basis in this province. Let us look at justice. The Hells Angels moved into our province under this government's watch. We are the Hells Angels capital of Canada. Well, welcome home to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to be the homicide capital of Canada, 31 murders this year alone as compared to the larger city of Calgary where there are 18 homicides this year. As a matter of fact, if you take Calgary, Ottawa and Québec City and add all of those up, I believe you would even have less homicides, certainly a much greater population in those three cities, and yet we have more homicides in this city than ever. That is extremely, extremely alarming to members on this side of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, our province has been open for crime rather than being open for business. Under this government's watch not only have the Hells Angels moved in, but also regrettably not only is Manitoba first in homicide rates, but Manitoba is first in robbery, first in motor vehicle theft, first in mischief, second in offensive weapons violations, second in sexual assaults, second in assaults, second in violent crimes. I think you get the idea of where we are going. Welcome home to Manitoba, and, unfortunately, what we are seeing is that these numbers are getting considerably worse.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Madam Acting Speaker, how did this government address this very, very serious issue of rising crime rates in this province? Well, they made it such a priority that they spoke for 60 seconds of a 60-minute speech and did not actually address the important issues at all that are reflective of the increasing crime rates in our province. I think it is absolutely shameful.

* (17:10)

Madam Acting Speaker, let us look at the economy. This is a tax-and-spend government. There

is absolutely no plan to rein in the Premier's out-of-control spending habit. The Premier has found \$1.5 billion in increased revenues to this province since he took office in 1999. According to a recent article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, it says that the province is about to see annual revenues grow by an extraordinary \$500 million a year. That is almost \$2 billion more to our province. Bigger government, smaller service, perhaps that should be the true theme of this Throne Speech. Again, extremely unfortunate. I have to say that maybe it is the broker in me, but I do not see good value in that. Buy high, sell low. I do not see good value in that theme at all.

As if that was not enough to spend, the Premier decided that he would also raid funds from Manitoba Hydro. That is not even included in the \$2 billion that I am talking about in increase in the size of government in this province. They also felt that they had to go and raid Manitoba Hydro as well to pay for their spending habits.

Madam Acting Speaker, the spending by this government is absolutely out of control and rather than choosing to take some of that money, the hard-earned tax dollars of people of our province and give it back to those in the communities, they chose to spend it and instead create a larger government because they feel they know how to spend the taxpayers' money better than the taxpayers. That is the difference between them and us: a tax-and-spend socialist government, and a hardworking capitalist Conservative opposition.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I will tell you that that is unfortunate and I think that Manitobans will see fit in the next election to make some changes in that direction. In all, Mr. Speaker, welcome home to the tax-and-spend philosophy of this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us look at health care. This government has put more than a billion dollars of extra taxpayer dollars into our health care system in our province since they took office, yet, what are we getting for it? Well, let us look again at the facts. Let us not look at the rhetoric, the political rhetoric, of what we hear across the way from the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) and from his colleagues where they say we are spending more here, we are spending more there. Well, the only area that is really

increasing over there in the area of health is actually the bureaucracy.

I think it is unfortunate when there are people sitting in hallways and people are dying on waiting lists and so on, that the money for the health care bureaucracy seems to be increasing, when that money could be spent elsewhere into, you know, put in towards reducing our waiting lists and so on. So it is the mismanagement of the health care system. It is not so much the money that is going into it, but it is the mismanagement of our health care system. So patients continue to line our hallways in our hospitals, waiting lists for key diagnostic procedures continue to rise, the nursing shortage has doubled. Again, Mr. Speaker, what do we say but welcome home to Manitoba. I mean, if it really comes down to getting quality health care in this province, it is absolutely scary to so many people to see where this province is going.

I will say one thing, though, that I am pleased that did take place, and it is something that I lobbied for and members on this side of the House lobbied this government for. We were very happy to see that the vaccinations were finally offered after much lobbying from families in the communities and from members of this side of the House, that the vaccinations for chicken pox and pneumococcus were finally offered to children in Manitoba to prevent those very serious illnesses.

So perhaps there is one thing in the area of health care that this government has done a good thing and gone in the right direction, but that is \$10 million out of a billion new dollars spent. I do not see a lot else. When we are looking at waiting lists that are increasing, when we are looking at bureaucracies increasing, and we are looking at how the money is spent in pretty much most other areas, I can say it is pretty bleak in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave health care now. Perhaps let us look at education. Where do I begin? This, as the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) knows, is a very passionate area for me. We both have young children. I know his children are probably in the school system. Mine soon will be, so certainly I want to be sure we are creating the best quality of education we can for kids in our province regardless of your social or economic background and so on. We need to ensure that no child is left behind. I will steal that phrase from one of the

campaigns from the recent presidential debates in the United States because I truly believe no child should be left behind in our system, and everyone should have the right to a quality of education in our province. I do not think we dispute those facts. Everyone wants to have good quality of education for their children, but it is how we go about creating that quality of education for our kids.

I think sometimes it is difficult because there is a difference in philosophy between them and us. When we look at standards tests, we brought in standards tests in this province and they have made some changes. They changed the standards tests in 6 and 9 to not be compulsory. They are spending all this money on testing, but it is not compulsory. So what are these tests really telling you, Mr. Speaker? Maybe that is why the minister agreed, and certainly if I was looking at my notes from the last Throne Speech, it said that; I think the minister then had talked about reviewing the standards tests in our province and the assessments and so on, but nothing has taken place. Really, the only true tests that we can tell out there are with the results that we get from Grade 12 testing. That is too late. It is too late to catch the problems with some of our kids when they are in Grade 12 and they are about to graduate. It is too late to find out they are illiterate, they cannot do basic math skills.

I can go back to the Grade 3 assessments from last time where the numbers were absolutely dismal. I think it was 64 percent of kids in Grade 3 could not subtract to ten and do their subtraction facts to ten. That is just one example, Mr. Speaker, of why I feel it is so, so important to understand where our children are at so we are not just letting them go on to the next grade without these basic skills they need. We cannot afford as a society to have people continue to move forward through our education system without having the basic facts covered.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the direction this government is taking as I understand. I have heard from people in the community that there is talk of moving to an assessment-based system. I really hope the minister is out there consulting people because what we have seen, what I have heard, and I believe parents play a huge role in the education of their children. Maybe that is again another difference between them and us. We believe the role of parents in the education of our children is paramount and absolutely first and foremost. We

believe parents know exactly what their children need. I would just encourage this government, when they are going through a consultation process, not just to listen to the union and the other stakeholders, but also to pay a great deal of attention to the parents out there, because what we hear from the parents is that some eight out of ten parents believe very significantly in the standards tests that will tell their children where they stand.

* (17:20)

Mr. Speaker, again, we have seen a theme in the past with this government where they have chosen not to have a very inclusive consultative process. What we see is a lot of legislation that comes forward and then what is going to be decided in regulations way down the road. They put these fancy titles that look great on legislation, but everything will be decided in regulations down the road. Regulations will affect the amount of money that is spent in different areas of our education system.

I think what that does is bring me to my next point, which is that legislation is passed, there are ramifications to the regulations that go with that legislation, and it is offloading the responsibility for the payment of that legislation that is enforced on those school divisions, onto the backs of the taxpayers in the local community. I think I would be remiss today, Mr. Speaker, to stand here and to talk about education, although I prefer to talk on and on about the quality of education. But we cannot talk about the quality of education without talking about how education is funded in our province. More and more money has been spent in education over the years, yet the provincial government's portion of that spending has declined significantly since this government took office, effectively offloading the responsibility for education funding off onto the taxpayers in the local communities.

Mr. Speaker, this does nothing to add to the quality of education for our kids, one of the most important issues facing the future of our province. If we look at the portion of funding that this provincial government has spent since they took office, when they took office, their portion of spending on education was 60.9 percent, and it has now been reduced to 56.7 percent. It continues to decline today. I think that it is extremely unfortunate. What it does is it just offloads the responsibility for funding education, the education and the future of these kids

who are the future of our province onto the backs of the taxpayers in the local community.

Let us look at the education tax on property that has skyrocketed since 1999. Let us look at the facts here. Let us look at this special levy that was collected overall in 1999 versus today. It is up some 65 percent. Now, if this government was truly funding education the way they should be funding it, those numbers would not be increasing to the level that they are. But let us look beyond that. Let us look at more numbers out there, because these are the facts. These are their numbers, factual numbers. Let us look at the special levy collected in Winnipeg back in 1999 versus what it is today. It is up some 33 percent. That is an unbelievable number. But it gets worse. Let us look at Brandon. It is up 73 percent since this government came to power. In rural Manitoba outside of Brandon and Winnipeg, it is up some 162 percent, and up some almost 60 percent in the division of the home riding the Minister of Education (Mr. Bjornson) currently represents.

I think that is unbelievably bad. It is not the direction that we on this side of the House feel that we should be taking in the area of education funding. We have been clear. Our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), the leader of our party, has been very clear about the direction we should be taking this province. We are encouraging this government to do the right thing, to remove education taxes off of residential property and farmland and to do it by 2007.

This is a very doable thing, Mr. Speaker. We have got \$500 million in increased revenues, in increased transfer payments from the federal government. This is a doable thing. It is only \$381 million, that is all it is, of a \$500-million increase. They have already seen, a \$1.5-billion increase in revenues to this province in the last 5 years. What we see is that this is very doable thing.

The only unfortunate thing that I see here, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has the ability to do it. He has the money, but does he have the political will? I think it is unfortunate what we are seeing is that he does not. I mean, yes, he did. He did a little thing for farmers. What he did was he offered this 33% tax reduction, but that does not go far enough. Farmers need help. They are in crisis in rural Manitoba. It does not go far enough, and it is absolutely deplorable that this government obviously

saw it was a popular thing out there, reducing education taxes off property. So they gave them a little nugget, but I tell you it is unbelievably, it is just—what is the word I am looking for? It is unacceptable, and we believe it did not go far enough and should go much further. That is why we are calling for this government to do the right thing and remove the education taxes from residential property and farmland by the year 2007.

Mr. Speaker, we need fundamental change in the way education is funded in our province. Our leader has offered a plan, yet this government continues not to have a plan. We just hope they will somehow come up with the political will to follow through with some of the things we are hearing people want both in the rural community and in the city of Winnipeg and the removal of these taxes from residential property and farmlands.

I think it is also unfortunate that if we look back at the report on the Minister's Working Group on Education Finance that came out earlier this year, in July of this year, this was a group that worked on this report for two years. When it finally came out, the minister rejected it immediately on the basis of the fact that it called for a 1% increase in PST to pay for the changes they recommended. Now we applaud the members opposite for rejecting that aspect of it, but what we do not applaud is that they had the opportunity to tell the working group before they even got started on this that we will not accept an answer of any kind of tax increase at all. They spent two years working on this. They essentially wasted this working group's time, and now the document is shelved. We will not see anything in the way of education finance reform from this government, and I think that is extremely unfortunate. Again, Mr. Speaker, welcome to Manitoba.

I think this is a government that has no plan, no vision, no hope for the future of young people in our province. There is a recurring theme from Throne Speech to Throne Speech that we see. There is weak leadership and a lack of hope for economic prosperity for the future of our citizens, and I think it is unfortunate that is what we continue to see from this government.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I am truly honoured to have been chosen to represent our community and look forward very much to continuing to work with the people of Tuxedo to

ensure our voice is heard loud and clear in this Manitoba Legislature. Tuxedo is a wonderful place in which to work, live and raise our families. Over the past four years I have gone through a by-election in the 2000 election campaign and a general election in June of last year. I have had the opportunity of meeting so many truly dynamic individuals, all of whom in their own unique way play a vital role in the betterment of our community. Our community stretches from Charleswood to the west which represents about one third of the riding to River Heights in the east, as far north as the Assiniboine River and as far south as Wilkes. We are very much looking forward to getting our Kenaston underpass, which we have waited for and lobbied this government for so long.

Mr. Speaker, Tuxedo is a diverse constituency, both physically and culturally. It is comprised of people who represent many different ethnic backgrounds. There are a number of small businesses there, and there are also a number of single-family dwellings. There is a vibrant tennis club and golf course. There are two community centres and parklands which cover about one third of the geographical space known as Assiniboine Park and Assiniboine Forest. We are fortunate enough to have a conservatory, a zoo, the Winnie the Pooh museum, the Leo Mol gardens, the Lyric outdoor theatre, and

endless bike and nature paths, to name but a few attractions in the Tuxedo community.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to represent such a vibrant community, and want to thank once again all of the constituents of Tuxedo for giving me the honour of representing them in the Manitoba Legislature. I know that together we will continue to ensure that our community remains strong. So thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Conservation): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to just be standing here in the House to put some positive comments on the record about a very good Throne Speech that we heard just the other day.

Mr. Speaker, I always look forward to the return and the reopening of this House. It is something I think most of us here look forward to. I very much always look forward to coming back into this House because—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Conservation will have 29 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 24, 2004

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Petitions		Annual Report – Assiniboine Community College for the year ending June 30, 2004 McGifford	64
Highway 200 Taillieu	63	Annual Report – Keewatin Community College for the year ending June 30, 2004 McGifford	64
Pension Benefits Driedger	63	Annual Report – Collège de Saint-Boniface for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64
Minimum Sitting Days for Legislative Assembly Lamoureux	64		
Tabling of Reports		Introduction of Bills	
Auditor General's Report – Investigation of Maintenance Branch of the Manitoba Housing Authority dated November 2004 Hickes	64	Bill 6–The Real Property Amendment Act Sale	64
Annual Report – Department of Advanced Education and Training for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64	Speaker's Statement Hickes	64
Annual Report – Council on Post-Secondary Education for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64	Oral Questions	
Annual Report – University of Manitoba for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64	Child Poverty Murray; Doer	65
Annual Report – University of Winnipeg for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64	Physician Resources Driedger; Sale	67
Annual Report – Brandon University for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 McGifford	64	Health Care Services Driedger; Sale	67
Annual Report – Red River College for the year ending June 30, 2004 McGifford	64	Livestock Slaughter Facility Penner; Wowchuk	68
		Hydra House Murray; Doer	69
		Loewen; Melnick	72
		Cummings; Melnick	73
		Matter of Privilege	
		Cummings	74
		Mackintosh	75
		Derkach	75
		Penner	77
		Loewen	78
		Lamoureux	79
		Faurschou	80

Members' Statements		Physician Resources	
		Gerrard	82
Philippine-Canadian Centre Aglugub	81		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Ukrainian Election Derkach	81	Adjourned Debate (Second Day of Debate)	
		Murray	83
Kiwanis Club of St. James Korzeniowski	82	Wowchuk	90
		Cullen	94
		Santos	97
St. Leon Wind Farm Rocan	82	Stefanson	101
		Struthers	106