

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	NDP
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
	Kirkfield Park	
	St. Norbert	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 27, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Newborn Universal Hearing Screening Program

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

More than one in—or more than three in 1,000 newborns are born with educationally significant hearing loss, but Manitoba's current hearing screening program does not allow for every child to be screened.

Without early detection, children are more likely to develop poor speech and language skills and also encounter social and emotional difficulties, which lead to poor academic performance.

Early diagnosis of hearing loss in newborns can make a considerable difference in a child's development because newborns can be provided with effective programs and support that foster developmental success.

While most other developed countries and many Canadian provinces have a newborn screening—hearing screening program, Manitoba is lagging behind. There are only a handful of screening programs in the province, while all other newborns can only be tested if they have risk factors of hearing loss or if a parent specifically requests the test.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors to consider implementing a universal

hearing screening program accessible to parents of all newborns in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by W. Yamamoto, M. Ruck, S. Ruck and many, many other concerned Manitobans.

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

Mount Agassiz Ski Area

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened, and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in the local and provincial economies.

And to request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable, multiseason recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

This petition is signed by R. Zastre, T. Casavant, S. Bouchard and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Coulter Bridge

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

During the record flood of 2011, the increased volume of water flowing through the Souris River caused the Coulter bridge on Highway 251 to buckle and become unusable in late June.

The Coulter bridge is used by agricultural producers, local businesses and area residents. It is especially important to the region's multi-million-dollar oil industry.

Motorists are now forced to use the lengthy detour on a gravel road not meant for heavy vehicle traffic. The increased presence of industrial vehicles on this gravel road has created considerable safety concerns, especially for school buses. The detour also results in increased costs and lost time for motorists.

The provincial government has indicated it has no plans to establish a temporary bridge, and construction of a new bridge is expected to take several years.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the serious safety concerns and adverse socio-economic impact caused by the loss of the Coulter bridge and to consider making it an urgent priority to restore traffic across the Souris River either via a temporary or a permanent bridge.

And this petition is signed by T. Currie, B. Bird, P. Spencer and many, many other Manitobans.

Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

During early October 2011, parts of southeastern Manitoba were hit hard by wildfires. Thanks to the swift action of provincial and municipal officials, including 27 different fire departments and countless

volunteers, no lives were lost and property damage was limited.

However, the fight against the wildfires reinforced the shortcomings with the communications system in the region, specifically the gaps in cellular phone service.

These gaps made it difficult to co-ordinate firefighting efforts and to notify people that they had to be evacuated. The situation also would have made it difficult for people to call for immediate medical assistance if it had been required.

Local governments, businesses, industries and area residents have for years sought a solution to this very serious communications challenge.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the appropriate provincial government departments to consider working with all stakeholders to develop a strategy to swiftly address the serious challenges posed by limited cellular phone service in southeastern Manitoba in order to ensure that people and property can be better protected in the future.

The following three names, M. Goertzen, B. Faskerti, E. Jasket, have signed this petition.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Sorry, just one moment, please. The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines. I have to put it on the record.

Mr. Chomiak: Je suis très *[inaudible]* donner le rapport de la Innovation, Énergie et Mines pour l'année 2011–2010 à 2011, rapport annuel.

Translation

I am very [inaudible] to submit the report of Innovation, Energy and Mines for 2011, 2010-2011, the annual report.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have with us today 75 grade 4 and 5 students from Samuel Burland School under the direction of Angela Power. This group is located in

the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here to your Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, as Manitobans know, we continue to have hallway medicine in our hospitals here in Winnipeg and throughout the province of Manitoba, and that, in fact, in many cases, hallway medicine has been transformed into the phenomenon known as parking lot medicine where ambulances are often waiting hours to discharge patients.

New information obtained under freedom of information shows that ambulances are waiting thousands and thousands of hours—the equivalent of more than four years of waiting between September of 2010 and August of 2011.

Will the Premier admit his government's failure in this area? Will he listen to front-line workers, such as paramedics, and will he adopt changes to improve this situation for Manitobans who are waiting thousands of hours in the parking lots of Manitoba hospitals?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I'd like to thank the member for a question on health care. It is a very important subject, and as the member knows, there's, for the first time in the history of the province now, there's a fleet of 160 new ambulances that serve every part of Manitoba—173—and that number has now grown to 173 ambulances. And these ambulances provide modern, efficient means to get close to people with a modern co-ordinating centre out of Brandon, Manitoba.

And with respect to the issue of people having to wait in an ambulance to get access to an emergency room, that is why we have moved in the spring budget on what we call QuickCare clinics to provide a resource staffed by a nurse practitioner and other health-care professionals that will allow people that would otherwise have to wait in an emergency room to go to the QuickCare clinic and get their medical need attended to in a rapid and an efficient fashion. This is a new approach which will relieve pressure on emergency rooms and it'll go along with other investments that we're going to make, including in advanced training for paramedics which allow them

to provide more service right where they encounter the patient in the community when they attend to them in an ambulance.

Mr. McFadyen: The Premier's answer touches on many points but it doesn't address the issue of the time that ambulances spend waiting in parking lots, waiting to discharge patients. The—after raising the issue a number of times, the most recent FIPPA number is showing more than four years of waiting in total between September 2010 and August 2011—shows that there's still an unacceptably high amount of time that people spend waiting in parking lots.

One of the ideas that has come forward from our front-line health-care workers is to consider expansion in the scope of practice for paramedics as a way of providing more health care with the health professionals that we now have to begin the process of tackling both hallway and parking lot medicine.

I want to ask the Premier: Will his government entertain this recommendation to expand the scope of practice for our front-line paramedics or is he going to continue to allow this practice of parking lot medicine to persist?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for that question. That is a constructive question, and he might note that I answered it in part in my first answer when I said we would have an advanced paramedic training program which would allow paramedics to provide services where they encounter the patient as they go to meet them with the ambulances. And I have to say that this notion of scope of practice, shifting the scope of practice of all health-care professionals to allow them to do more services closer to where people live in the community, is something that we very much support.

And we've seen some changes with respect to that with pharmacists. We've seen changes with that by our introduction and dramatic expansion of the nurse practitioner role in Manitoba and we committed in this election to double the number of people that are trained to be nurse practitioners in Manitoba. And, of course, paramedics—we'd like to see them play a stronger role in our health-care system as well and they will do that. And we will provide that additional training to allow paramedics to have additional scope of practice responsibilities which will allow them to meet the needs of patients and people in need of medical care in a more timely fashion closer to where they live or closer to where they're encountering a medical difficulty.

Mr. McFadyen: I want to thank the Premier for some of the constructive points in that response.

One of the steps that has to be taken is expanded training, and he's touched on that. What paramedics and other health professionals are looking for is something specific in terms of reviewing scope of practice and expanding it. The Premier has quite rightly touched on other areas where that has been done with some benefit. There's obviously a significant problem which remains in terms of parking lot medicine and ongoing hallway medicine.

The Premier has said in his response that he very much supports expanded scope of practice, and the question is: What is the timeline for acting, from moving from words to action in terms of this improvement to health care?

Mr. Selinger: And again I thank the member for the question because it does focus on some of the reforms that we need to continue to make in our health-care system. Paramedics now can take patients to the Urgent Care Centre at the Misericordia Hospital. That is something they weren't able to do just even two or three years ago. So we can do these things.

We can look at how we can expand scope of practice to allow people with the kind of training that they will receive under the \$24 million that we committed to training. One of the first announcements we made in this election, and we did it with all the health professionals around the table. We talked to them about how we can make very targeted investments in training of medical professionals to allow them to do things to relieve stress on things like emergency rooms, to relieve stress on our hospital system and to provide more care closer to where people need it in a more timely fashion. These are some of the innovations we can move forward on.

So in answer to the member's question we've already made changes in scope of practice, and we will continue to look at other changes we can make which will allow these innovations to relieve stress on our system and provide more timely, quality care to Manitobans.

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, our paramedics are on the front care or front line of the health-care system, yet their skills are grossly underutilized. Their time isn't well-spent, and they

are understandably frustrated that they are not able to give Manitobans the care that they want to give them. Over the past year paramedics trained in saving lives have sat in their ambulance, waiting for more than 36,000 hours as their patients were waited to be seen. These paramedics, they rush to a home, they rush to give critical care, then they rush them to a hospital, and then they wait and they wait and they wait and they wait because of this government's health-care system. They can't wait any longer.

When will the Minister of Health ensure that there are changes so that the waiting stops and the care begins?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): This morning would be the answer to that, in part. Certainly this morning I'm sure the member, on his way from Steinbach, was listening to the radio and heard that we announced that we would be providing an air ambulance interfacility transport program for areas in the province where we know that these interfacility transports have indeed been somewhat uncomfortable and lengthy for patients. We're going to, for the first time in Manitoba's history, be providing those transports by air, allowing more ambulances to be available in the home regional health authorities, improving response times, and, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the member would also like to note that there is no cost for the interfacility transfer as there was under the Conservatives. We took that fee away in 2006.

Emergency Health-Care Services Patient Wait Times

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've heard many things from this Minister of Health. We've heard how hallway medicine has ended; we've heard how it was Brian Sinclair's own fault that he didn't get treatment. That was this minister's original spin on that tragedy. So we've heard many things and they haven't been the truth from this Minister of Health.

We also now—and we've learned today under freedom of information, Mr. Speaker, that there are more than 20,000 patients over the last year who went to an ER and left before they saw a doctor. One thousand, one hundred and forty of these were children who went to the Health Sciences Centre and left without seeing a doctor. It's symptomatic of a system, a hit-and-miss system in our ERs, where people go to the ER but they're not sure if they're ever going to get service.

When will this Minister of Health acknowledge that she hasn't fixed the problem? The problem only gets worse. Why doesn't she have any solutions? Why are people going to the ER and just leaving out of frustration because they're not getting the care they deserve?

*(13:50)

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It is absolutely true that we see, in relation to paramedics, for example, that we share a different view than members opposite. We know as recently as the election campaign that the Conservatives' definition of community paramedicine was allowing a paramedic to drop off a patient wherever it is that they felt like doing that.

We know that community paramedicine goes so much deeper than that. We know that it's about preventative care; we know that it's about the kind of care that we're investing in at the Main Street Project, Mr. Speaker, where we've now stationed paramedics 24-7 to enable some of the most complex issues in our society to have that front-line care. We are working every day with our paramedics to extend their scope of practice. We are working on renovating and rebuilding emergency rooms all across Winnipeg, and we're working on investing in further education for paramedics, which, by the way, is not something you do when you feel like cutting a half a billion dollars from a budget.

Mr. Goertzen: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we do have a very different view. We don't think it was Brian Sinclair's fault that he died in a hospital after not getting treatment for 34 hours. The minister thinks it was his fault; we have a very different view.

We have a view that paramedics should not be waiting more than 30,000 hours in an ambulance in a parking lot at a hospital, waiting to get treatment for those that they've transported to the hospital. We have a different view, that 20,000 Manitobans shouldn't have to leave an ER out of frustration that they weren't able to get service. That is our view; their view is that those are acceptable.

I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) whether or not he thinks that those statistics are acceptable or whether or not he is considering a leadership change at the head of the Department of Health.

Ms. Oswald: Any day that the member opposite would like to stand up and offer our contrasting views on health care, I welcome it.

I can tell the member opposite that when we make a commitment to have more paramedics, we're going to have more paramedics and we're going to fund them in full. When we say we're going to talk about doctors, we're going to have more doctors and fund them in full. When we say we're going to add more nurses, we're going to have more nurses and fund them in full, not try to look for them in the 50 per cent off discount bin as they promised in the election.

Medical Professionals

Scope of Practice Legislation Proclamation

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, over three years ago this House voted to give Manitoba pharmacists and optometrists the power to prescribe therapeutic medications. Many pharmacists and optometrists have upgraded their training and prepared their facilities to meet the requirements of this legislation. Unfortunately, the legislation has yet to be proclaimed.

Can the Minister of Health tell us what—tell this House what is preventing this legislation from taking effect?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. These advances and broadening of scope of practice for our medical professionals will be very, very important for patients.

We know that in working together our pharmacists have had some challenges in coming to conclusions about regulations. We provided support to the pharmacists by way of a mediator to work through some of the issues in developing the regulations. They have come to the conclusion and are under review right now. We believe that it will be in very short order that we'll be able to 'proclaim'—proclaim that, and we do extend our thanks to the pharmacists for coming together on some very profound and entrenched differences and seeing the best way forward for the patients of Manitoba.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, the delay in proclaiming this legislation is putting Manitobans at risk by not having timely prescriptions available for therapeutic medications. This places additional burdens on Manitoba taxpayers as they must see their optometrist and then schedule an appointment with their doctor to obtain a prescription.

We were among the first provinces to start this process 17 years ago, and we will now be among the last to implement it.

Will this minister make this issue a priority and give this House a date for when she will implement this legislation?

Ms. Oswald: Again, in working with our ophthalmologists and working with our pharmacists in pushing forward in coming to a conclusion with these regulations, I can assure the member that we want to do this as swiftly as possible.

East View Lodge (Neepawa) Redevelopment Status and Costs

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, East View Lodge, the former personal care home in Neepawa, closed in April 2009. Since that time, the building has sat empty. Maintenance costs are now in the neighbourhood of \$600,000. In June of 2009, the town found a developer to turn the PCH into a housing project. The Assiniboine Regional Health Authority agreed. The Health Minister vetoed it and the developer was lost.

Would the minister admit today she took poor advice, advice that cost Manitoba taxpayers \$600,000?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. There was some work that went on concerning East View Lodge and an offer that came forward very early on in the process. We are required, of course, to ensure that we go through appropriate notification to potential proprietors. We did say to the original offer that we needed to take that time. We took that time. Those original—that original offer was taken back, Mr. Speaker. It hasn't been re-offered.

And we know that we're working with the regional health authority to ensure that any additional costs in the maintenance of that building, until it is dispatched, will be taken care of very carefully, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: I just remind the minister, we're getting close to three years since the building closed.

Neepawa has a huge housing shortage. The RHA has said that it would—won't be heating the building this winter, which will lead to severe deterioration of the building. Estimates for demolition of the building are \$800,000 to a million dollars. The cost to the province on converting the PCH to housing are approximately \$23,000 per unit. The costs of new Manitoba housing are roughly \$200,000 per unit.

Why isn't the minister contacting her counterpart in Housing, taking advantage of this situation to provide much needed affordable housing in the town of Neepawa?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, and I know the member and I have had a conversation or three about this issue, and he would well know that there have been a variety of discussions about the use of East View Lodge. There have been some issues concerning asbestos mitigation, which have taken very careful consideration. And so, while there have been a variety of ideas presented, there hasn't been a satisfactory landing for any of the parties on how that building might be used. We don't want the regional health authority, and by extension the taxpayers of Manitoba, to be paying any undue costs, and so there is a lot of work going on now to ensure that that building is taken care of appropriately as swiftly as possible.

Mr. Briese: The town of Neepawa did everything right in this process. The Assiniboine RHA did everything right. The Province has refused to co-operate; \$600,000 has been wasted because of their stonewalling.

At present, there are at least four developers interested in developing the building into much needed housing units. The building is structurally sound, but if it's not heated this winter it will deteriorate to being unusable, and another million dollars will have to be spent on demolition. This is a gross mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars.

Will the minister commit today to working with other departments to facilitate the conversion of the old PCH into affordable housing units?

Ms. Oswald: And again, I'll say to the member, if there are indeed four proponents that are very interested in this property and in transforming this property in a desired fashion, I welcome this news. I want to hear more about it from him, and we'll do what we always do, Mr. Speaker. We'll have a conversation about these business cases, drill down into the details for feasibility, and we really hope that indeed the ones that are cited in the House today come to fruition. Absolutely, I will work with him—any member of our government—to find an appropriate use for this facility in the same way that we wanted to ensure that we brought a fantastic personal care home to Neepawa, which, indeed, we opened. We want Neepawa to flourish, personal care home, housing and otherwise.

Stroke Specialized Medical Units Government Support

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, stroke is the leading cause of adult disability and the third leading cause of death in Manitoba. Evidence suggests that if you have a stroke and are treated in a specialized stroke unit, you could reduce your chance of disability or death by 30 per cent. A specialized stroke unit is geographically defined hospital unit dedicated to the management of stroke patients. Alberta, Newfoundland, PEI and Ontario all have implemented stroke units in their provinces because they know stroke units save lives. Currently, there are no specialized stroke units in Manitoba.

* (14:00)

Can the Minister of Health explain to us why she refuses to look at the evidence that clearly shows strokes units save lives?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, indeed, we are working with our professionals in cardiac care and with the Heart and Stroke Foundation on this very issue.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, when a stroke patient is admitted to hospital, it is vital that he or she receive immediate care focused on recovery, prevention and—of complications and prevention of recurring stroke. Stroke units are staffed by specialized teams of nurses, neurologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech language specialists and dietitians with expertise in stroke care.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health not consider stroke—specialized stroke units a health priority with her government?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, we think that not only should patients get excellent cardiac care when they arrive at a facility, but we believe that they should have the most excellent pre-hospital care as possible, which is why we support the STEMI protocol with our paramedics, which is why, of course, we invested \$40 million into the Cardiac Centre of Excellence at St. Boniface Hospital. Indeed, it's why we've invested in the STARS ambulance helicopter program so that people can get the most rapid care possible.

Again, I would say to the member that we've been in dialogue with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and with our cardiac specialists about developing a stroke centre of excellence and a stroke

program, and, of course, we're working on it as we speak.

Mrs. Rowat: Cost in the health-care system could be avoided due to earlier discharge and fewer severe disabilities if care is provided in a stroke unit. Alberta, Newfoundland, PEI and Ontario get it. Once again, Manitoba is lagging behind when it comes to health-care initiatives that are saving people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Minister of Health dragging her feet on a specialized stroke unit that would provide dedicated, acute care for stroke victims in our province?

Ms. Oswald: I would remind the member that, indeed, when we began our journey in 1999, we had among the worst records for cardiac care in the nation. Now the Canadian Institute for Health Information ranks us as having among the lowest, if not the lowest, wait time for cardiac surgery here in Manitoba.

We've listened to advice from Dr. Koshal; we've consolidated our programs; we've helped fund the STEMI protocol. We've introduced the air ambulance, and we've built the Cardiac Centre of Excellence, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't say exactly that that's us taking our eye off the ball.

Highway 32 South Upgrade Requirements

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, Winkler is a key economic engine for southern Manitoba. Provincial Highway 32 south is the major north-south route within the city. It links Winkler to nearby communities. It connects the region to the United States via a major border crossing, and thousands of vehicles use this busy highway daily. Safety concerns are growing.

It was first recommended 11 years ago that this busy two-lane highway be upgraded to four lanes, and since then there have been studies, reports, engineering reports, minister's meetings with the minister responsible for highways, but still no upgrades.

The City of Winkler has shown good faith by going ahead and completing the design and engineering work for this important project.

Mr. Speaker, in the interest of public safety, will the minister responsible finally consider making the four-laning of Highway 32 south an urgent priority?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I certainly welcome the member to the House. And I know, certainly in debate the other day, I did put on the record that we're working very hard in terms of our highways in this province. We've taken our capital budget from \$85 million in 1999 to where it's \$363 million this year.

I want to stress as well that unlike members opposite, we're actually concerned about our highways in all parts of the province. In fact, one of the first announcements that we made when we came to government, actually in the year 2000, was when we repaved the Main Street in Winkler. And I do want to put that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to indicate that I have, indeed, met with the mayor and council. I—you know, I think that's one of the hallmarks of this government. We do meet with people, we do listen to their concerns, and I certainly hope that when it comes to the vote, the member's vote in this House, he will vote to support highway spending because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, time after time members get up and they argue for more money for highways in their local area and then they vote against the highways budget when it comes to a vote.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, a recent Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation traffic assessment measured average daily traffic on Highway 32 south at more than 17,500 vehicles per day. Ten years ago it would have cost \$5 million to upgrade this busy highway to four lanes. Today, upgraded estimates put the cost at 25 to 30 million dollars. Stakeholders, including the City of Winkler, believe that in the interest of community safety and for the continued economic viability of the region, it's the time now for the Province to finally make the four-laning of this roadway an urgent priority.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to meet with me and community stakeholders as soon as possible to revisit the urgent need to upgrade Highway 32 south to four lanes?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to certainly put on the record that we, in this government, also acknowledge the tremendous economic growth that's taking place in the member's area.

You know, I want to mark the contrast between the very positive comments the member has put on the record about the economic growth in his area, and some of his other colleagues who I think don't

recognize that something big is happening in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And I do want to acknowledge that we have some challenges to deal with that economic growth. We're certain of—invested a lot of money in southern Manitoba. I'm very proud, by the way, of the work we did—and I realize it's not in the Winkler area, but certainly the work that's been on Highway 75. It was a disgrace when we came into office. We're bringing it up to interstate standards. We just went through Morris this year, Mr. Speaker.

And again, we are a government that's committed to improving highways throughout the province. And I want to indicate to the member that every time we go to AMM, we meet as ministers with municipalities. I'll be more than happy to meet with the community again, the City of Winkler. We represent all Manitobans. We're building a better Manitoba for everyone.

Child and Family Services Agencies Annual Report Release Timeline

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, when the current minister of Child and Family Services was charged with the duty of protecting Manitoba's children, the departmental annual report has been released in September, and yet we're now in late October, and there's no such report been tabled.

Mr. Speaker, as I raised yesterday, there are pressing issues that need solutions in the best interests of children in Manitoba. And I might add that we don't need just blaming the children as the minister did yesterday. Every day that the public is not provided with accurate statistics of what's happening in the minister's department, more children suffer and even die in care.

When, Mr. Speaker, will the minister release his 2010-2011 annual report?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well I'd like to release it on the understanding that the member for the first time will actually read it.

But I also would prompt the member, when he's asking for real statistics, Mr. Speaker, to actually use them in the House, not do what he did yesterday by skewing numbers and making efforts to bend what are the realities facing, unfortunately, too many Manitoba children.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, those numbers were provided from carefully done reports and the minister shouldn't slang those efforts.

At last count, in 2009, 2010, there were 9,120 children in the care of Child and Family Services, and that number has been rising dramatically under this minister.

I should remind the minister that every child taken into care represents a family which has been broken up on the minister's-of-watch because he's failed in his duty to support families well. Thousands and thousands of families have been broken up. The minister's reluctance to release the report shows that he's not caring, he's not able to do his job.

I ask the minister: If he won't release the report, will he at least give us the number of children in care in the 2010-2011 fiscal year?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I understand that annual reports for many divisions are—and boards and agencies and commissions—are all under way and, of course, with the election, those are going to flow now.

* (14:10)

I understand that the number of children coming into care in the '09-10 year declined. I understand it declined by about 50 per cent, which may be a positive indication, but I think the member, having raised this question repeatedly, appears to be basing it on an assumption that it's a good thing to leave abused children in their home.

And, Mr. Speaker, we leave it to professionals to measure the risk that children too often in this province have to face in their families. And that is why there are apprehensions and that's why there's been increased apprehensions because of professional assessment that there are children that are in need of protection in Manitoba that child welfare services can assist with.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I have the numbers here. From '99-2000 to 2006, when the minister became the minister, there was an increase of about 1,000 children in care, from five and a half thousand to six and a half thousand. And then in the years that the minister has been responsible, in the last five years, it went up by two and a half thousand. The increase in care more than doubled over the previous five years and, indeed, we're waiting for the current, most recent fiscal year and are quite concerned that

the number may actually have reached close to 10,000.

Indeed, last year, as the minister well knows, the Children's Advocate was reaching out for help because of the chaos in his department. Child after child, family after family, are being hurt by the policies of this minister. Indeed, as we talked about yesterday, there's an increased risk of sexual exploitation of these children.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister not competent in delivering his report on time, or is he deliberately delaying the release of the report to avoid answering questions about drastically more children in care than before?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, as I have said, and I've had to say this more times than I would like, is there are indeed too many children in need of protection in this province and which is why we have begun to significantly—[interjection] Well, he asked a question; I'm giving an answer, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps he could allow me to conclude.

It's very important that we continue this effort that we have launched as a government collectively to move towards more preventative services early on when there are early signs of difficulties in the family. That is why, for example, we are bringing in what's called a differential response to child welfare in the family enhancement model, where we can get involved with addiction services, housing, child care and employment services early on, to avoid actual abuse then, so a child has to be taken into care.

But as well, there are so many other efforts and whether it's the efforts of Healthy Child and the home visiting program that we have that has been looked at and, indeed, just last week a study from the University of Manitoba demonstrated that when children are brought into care with child welfare, the incidents of suicide and attempted suicide decline significantly.

Air Ambulance Interfacility Transfer Services

Mr. Ron Kostyshyn (Swan River): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has been focusing on bringing health care closer to rural families with more CT scanners, MIRs, cancer services dialysis units and other health services in rural communities. There are times that a patient may need to go to Winnipeg for specializing testing of medical care not available in their community and in this situation, patients can

face long and uncomfortable trips, sometimes for hours in ambulance on a highway.

Can the Minister of Health please update the House on what this government is doing to improve health care for the patients in these difficult situations?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'm very pleased to inform the House and, clearly, so everyone can hear, that indeed we have been able to, as of this morning, announce that we will begin a new air ambulance interfacility transfer program for those individuals that in the past have had to travel for specialized tests and procedures to Winnipeg in ambulance for two and a half, three, even four hours sometimes, Mr. Speaker.

We know that by enabling scheduled flights with our air ambulance, we will be able to take as many as four patients at one time under the care of two paramedics into Winnipeg for these specialized tests and procedures and return them to their home communities where they wish to be, enabling our ambulances in our rural RHA's to provide even faster response times, Mr. Speaker and, most importantly, to enable these patients to have the greatest possible comfort when they're getting this care.

PR 530 Bridge Reconstruction Update

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): On June 11th of this year, high water on the Souris River destroyed the bridge located on Provincial Road 530. Since that time, area residents in the local municipalities have been seeking answers from this government in terms of whether the bridge will be repaired. They have not received any assurance from this government, and we have no commitment from the government to rebuild this bridge.

I'm going to ask the minister today: Is he committed today to replacing the bridge on Provincial Road 530, which is locally known as the Treesbank bridge?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): As I think the member is aware from a similar question that was asked by his colleague a few days ago, we have been concurrently both dealing with the flood in this province and beginning the very challenging process of reconstructing our infrastructure.

And nothing is more challenging—a lot of the situations we're dealing with are bridges. We've had bridges that have been destroyed, we have bridges that have been significantly compromised, and what we are doing in each and every case, as is the case with this bridge, we start with an immediate engineering assessment, Mr. Speaker. Following that, it gives us the ability to determine whether we can repair or we need to look at replacing the bridge.

But I can assure the member that our diligent staff, our very hard-working staff, is working on this and many other bridges around the province. And our commitment, again, is not only to fight the flood but to rebuild our infrastructure in this province.

Mr. Cullen: On June 17th, area residents met to discuss the impacts to the various individuals in the area. Many businesses and agriculture producers are directly impacted. A local school board also raised concerns regarding its ability to transport students. And given that the emergency room is actually closed in Wawanesa, that means that area residents will be seeing even longer trips to emergency treatment.

I table for the minister impact statements and petitions from area residents that have put forth this information. As you can see, there's quite a number here.

I ask the minister: Will this structure be replaced under Manitoba's claim to the federal government under this disaster financial assistance program?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and before we—the short answer is yes. We will make it a DFA item and we'll put it on the list for recovery from the federal government.

But I'd also like to take a minute and thank the local mayor, Darryl Jackson, and his emergency measures committee in that town. They did a phenomenal job of fighting the flood in Souris, Manitoba, and all the communities along the Souris River did a phenomenal job fighting the flood. And they had hundreds of volunteers coming out there, and it was an absolute sight to behold in the middle of that flood to see volunteers rolling in from all around southern Manitoba and, actually, northern Manitoba as well; people as far as The Pas, Winkler, Brandon and local Hutterite colonies all showed up to fight the flood, to do sandbagging, to build the dikes and to have the very successful outcome of protecting the people and property in that area.

So, yes, we'll make it a DFA item, and, once again, kudos to all the local leadership for the tremendous job they did on the flood this spring.

Mr. Cullen: Well, I thank the Premier for his comments. I certainly will pass that on to the mayor of Souris, Mr. Jackson, his—your comments.

This particular structure, though, is located in the Rural Municipality of South Cypress, so it's quite a ways from the community of Souris. But I do appreciate the minister's comments.

You know, clearly there's a lot of people impacted by the destruction of this particular bridge, and people deserve answers and they want to know when and if things can be done in the near future. And possibly there could be something done here on a temporary basis to restore the ability for people to cross the river even in the winter.

So I just wondered if the minister is considering any kind of a temporary structure to cross that particular location on Provincial Road 530.

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member again. The minister gave the answer in the first question that was asked. He said there will be an assessment done and there will be a look at the rapid—the best way to restore these infrastructure projects, including bridges in southern Manitoba, and we will put these items on the list for DFA recovery, as is standard practice, and allow these projects to move forward.

And again, I just want to say that the people in the area, in all of those communities, including Souris, did a phenomenal job on fighting this flood, and the equipment that was deployed and the people that were on the equipment did an incredible job of fighting that flood, and they did it without any request for special recognition. But they do deserve special recognition for the outstanding job they did on the flood this spring in southern Manitoba.

*(14:20)

Ecological Goods and Services Programs Government Support

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, in December 2005, the provincial and federal governments and the Rural Municipality of Blanshard launched a three-year ecological goods and services pilot project. Producers received financial incentives from—for practices maintaining—like maintaining existing wetlands and riparian and natural areas on their properties, and it's a great concept and one that we wholeheartedly support.

But, in Estimates in April of 2010, the Minister of Agriculture said the ecological goods and services concept is still very much on its government's radar screen. They've even bragged about their commitment, Mr. Speaker, yet the NDP made no mention of ecological goods and services during the recent election or in the Throne Speech.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister—can the government, who has had 10 months to review this report, can they now commit today to making ecological goods and services programming a priority?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my friend from across the way that every time there's a decision made in terms of agriculture, the environment and the needs of farmers are included in that analysis, and I really appreciate meeting, whether it be in the past with former leadership of farm groups or whether they be with present leadership in farm groups we have no problem meeting and talking about an approach that makes sense, an approach that's doable, and we have no problem meeting with the federal government and including them in those discussions as well.

And I do want to say that it's an area where the federal government and our government have co-operated to growing forward environmental farm plans. There's a whole array of very progressive environmentally friendly decisions being taken out in farm country, Mr. Speaker, and I'd invite the member across the way to get on board with us and help us out.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rheanne Millet

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, there is a remarkable young girl that I would like to recognize today. Rheanne Millet is a grade 6 student at Holy Ghost School, and she and her classmates have participated in a number of cultural and artistic activities this year. Rheanne's talent and hard work make her most deserving of the distinctions she has received in past months.

Rheanne was the provincial winner of the 2011 Canada Day Poster Challenge, which invites young people to express what inspires them about their country. Her original poster was displayed alongside other winners' works at the Canadian Museum of

Civilization in Gatineau, Québec. Not only that, but as this year marks the centennial of Parks Canada, her prize included a trip to Banff and Jasper.

Manitoba Hydro also recognized Rheanne's artistic skills when she entered their 60th anniversary poster contest. Students were asked to predict where Manitoba's energy sources were to come from 60 years from now. Rheanne was declared the provincial winner and won a set of books by local authors for herself and her high school. Her entry highlighted various clean energy sources, including wind, solar and hydroelectrical power.

Somehow, Rheanne also found time to enter the Red River Regional Heritage Fair in May, an annual event that celebrates Canadian history. Rheanne won an award at the fair, as well as the opportunity to enjoy dinner with the Lieutenant-Governor and his wife.

This dedicated and creative young student has made her family and our community very proud. In the local Filipino newspaper, Rheanne explained that she is grateful for the gift of being an artist and encourages everyone—anyone with similar gifts to put them to use. Her success will no doubt inspire others of her age to do so. I would like to congratulate Rheanne on her recent accomplishments, and I look forward to seeing more from this dynamic young girl. Thank you.

Leafloor Family and Ducks Unlimited

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's my pleasure to rise today to recognize Ken and Marj Leafloor, and Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the government of Canada for helping to preserve four quarters of some of the richest migratory bird land in the prairie region.

On October 11th, 2011, I attended the official unveiling of a new waterfowl preserve on the Neelin Road, six miles east of Killarney. The land, originally purchased by the Leafloors in 1972, was part of their mixed cattle and grain operation. In 1999 they entered into a 10-year Prairie CARE lease program with Ducks Unlimited Canada for three of the quarters. The land was then restored from farmland back to a traditional wetland ecosystem.

Recently, the Leafloors offered to sell the four quarters to Ducks Unlimited. They did so with the help of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation Program, an initiative of the federal government. The Turtle Mountain Conservation District and the municipality of Killarney-Turtle Mountain also

assisted with the project. Ducks Unlimited's acquisition of this land will help ensure that wildlife and plant life will thrive in this growing wetland area.

I am very appreciative of the work that organizations like Ducks Unlimited do in helping to preserve our wetlands. Proper wetland management is an important part of environmental sustainability. Not only do wetlands foster growth of waterfall and native prairie grasses, but they also provide a natural mechanism for water filtration. In addition, wetlands help control water levels, which is especially important to a province like Manitoba that is prone to flooding.

It is unfortunate the provincial government has not developed a comprehensive water management strategy to date. Thanks to the efforts of Ducks Unlimited and generosity and foresight of Ken and Marj Leafloor, Manitobans can now enjoy the natural beauty of this wetland ecosystem for years to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ReWild Alliance Community Group

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Speaker, in ideal situations, community groups and businesses come together to build spaces that work for all of us. Recently, there was a great example of this in Wildwood Park, a unique neighbourhood in my constituency where residents share a central green space with no front roads and only back alleys. Community members were concerned about plans to build a cellphone tower in the area. The 60-foot tower would have been erected on the north side of the hockey rink, in the park behind the Wildwood Community Centre. This area is beloved by surrounding residents, and many of them have helped raise thousands of dollars over the years for trees and shrubs to help beautify it.

The ReWild Alliance, the local group that first formed in 2010, decided to take up this cause. They were concerned about the tower's effects on the gorgeous natural landscape, as well as the nearby residents' safety. Alliance members did research, knocked on doors, and ultimately collected over 500 signatures on a petition opposing the tower's installation in the heart of their children's playground. They presented this to MTS officials and urged the company to reconsider.

MTS was trying to improve the service to the area, but soon realized that their initial proposal

would not be in the community's best interests. They have since cancelled plans to build a tower in the parkland, demonstrating the value of meaningful community consultation. Community organizing can be a powerful force for change, or in some important cases, for preserving and protecting what is important. Everyone involved showed respect for the natural beauty of the area, and I would like to congratulate all of the residents, and particularly the members of the ReWild Alliance on their successful efforts. Thank you.

Pembina Valley Amazing Race

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): On the September long weekend of this year, the community of Manitou hosted the fourth annual Pembina Valley Amazing Race. Penny Schoonbaert, the Community Services Manager from Pembina-Manitou Development Corporation, was one of the main organizers within the town of Manitou.

The Amazing Race was conceived as a tool to showcase local attractions, businesses and facilities in the Pembina Valley region. The Amazing Race included communities from as far west as La Riviere, east to Dominion City, north to Miami and south to United States border. The event began on September—on Saturday, September 3rd and concluded Sunday, September 4th.

Participating organizations, businesses and local attractions provided a challenge for each team of racers to attempt. Teams headed out early Saturday morning with a map of the communities, the goal, to participate in as many challenges as possible before nightfall. For every challenge completed, points were awarded. Bonus points were also awarded for doing an act of kindness for someone or the community as a whole. The team with the most number of points was awarded the grand prize of \$1,000.

I would like to commend Manitou and the surrounding area for hosting the Pembina Valley Amazing Race. Three hundred and seventy people from throughout Manitoba converged on Manitou to participate in this event, and it took 300 volunteers to ensure that all participants were fed, challenged and directed around the different communities. This kind of event took leadership, co-operation and dedication from everyone in the community.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the community of Manitou on hosting a

successful event. I encourage my fellow colleagues and Manitobans all—all Manitobans to participate in the fifth annual Pembina Valley Amazing Race next September long weekend, and discover the amazing attractions that Manitou and the Pembina Valley have to offer. Thank you.

Merchants Hotel Community Coalition Purchase

Mr. Kevin Chief (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to have grown up in our historic North End. Selkirk Avenue, in particular, has played an important role in the history of our community. Though the neighbourhood has faced challenges, a growing group of community members have breathed new life into the area.

This fall a community coalition announced that they will purchase the Merchants Hotel, along with nearby parking lots located on the corner of Selkirk and Andrews Street. The coalition hopes to transform the site into a multi-use resource centre that may include mixed housing, educational activities, social and commercial enterprises and more green space.

* (14:30)

I applaud the community consultation process that is already under way, which will allow others to participate in this exciting project. This community-based coalition wants to make sure that the new development truly reflects local needs and local dreams.

I want to congratulate North End renewal corporation, Urban Circle Training Centre, the Selkirk BIZ, Ma Mawi, Andrews Street Family Centre, Ndinawemaaganag and the University of Winnipeg, along with many passionate, local residents, for the work that has already been done. I was lucky enough to be part of these discussions this summer. I am so grateful to everyone involved. This will be a place to build on the hope and momentum travelling through our neighbourhoods. As Robert Neufeld, executive director of North End renewal corporation said: North End residents value this prime location and wish to see it reimagined as an asset for the whole community. There is an energy in Point Douglas right now, a sense that we appreciate our history, but we want to keep moving forward. The redevelopment of the Merchants Hotel is an important step in this direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH
(Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us in this First Session of the Fortieth Legislature of Manitoba, and the amendment thereto, stand in the name of the honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, who has 24 minutes remaining.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Yes, now, where was I now, Mr. Speaker? Oh, that's right: advice that we get from our kids in the middle of election campaigns. I—at the end of yesterday I did say that I had got a piece of advice from my nine-year-old son that said: Dad, should those Conservatives beat you here in the Dauphin constituency, you can always go run the scrambler at Tinkertown. And I laughed about that, but at the same time, when you think about it, when you—sometimes we shouldn't just dismiss the advice you get from your nine-year-old son. You see, I've always thought that kids automatically take a glass is half full kind of an approach. I think we can all learn from that approach, especially our friends across the way, who tend to see the glass as half empty, the sky is falling approach, the doom and gloom approach to politics that I see so often emanating.

Not always. There are times when we do get along and we work together. I'm one of the first to admit that. And again, as I did yesterday, pay particular attention to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) for bringing, in a positive, constructive way, issues forward from time to time. That, I think is—could be—should be and could be more often employed in this House, Mr. Speaker. In particular, the member from Springfield could probably learn a few things about that.

But the—one of the things, one of the main areas in which I think members opposite should maybe take a bit more of a broader view on or more of a glass is half full view on, comes to our economy, Mr. Speaker. We've come out of a political event in this—we've come out of a political event in this province

where we received a very strong endorsement of our approach, including our approach when it comes to the finances and to the economics of this province of Manitoba. And let's start from some of the basics. We have a very diverse, very strong province. We have a diverse, strong economy. We're different than other provinces that see more the boom and bust cycles, and quite frankly, I prefer Manitoba's approach. I prefer what we have here in Manitoba. I—might be nice, I suppose, in some instances to have that feeling of the boom and how great things are going, but I don't like, when I look around at other provinces, to see how far they've fallen over the last number of years, and up and down. And from that perspective, I'll take Manitoba's situation any day of the week.

But that, Mr. Speaker, isn't enough to make a successful economy here in Manitoba. We have to have a government who understands that. We have to have a government who acts accordingly and makes decisions in keeping with the broad diversity that we have in Manitoba, the broad historic diversity that we have, the understanding that we're not going to load up in one area at the expense of others, that we're going to govern for all Manitobans in every region of our province, whether you talk about health care or education, or highways and transportation, or whether you talk about the economy across the board.

Mr. Speaker, there's—in my view, there's no point in setting out one sector of our economy against the other like I've seen members opposite do from time to time. I think we have to have an understanding that all of our sectors contribute to a strong GDP. All of our sectors contribute to a very good quality of life that is enjoyed by Manitobans in our province.

That, I think, is part of our strength, and I think it has been part of our strength, and to a certain degree, that's not a partisan statement. I think we've had premiers and cabinets from different political parties in government who understand that and make decisions accordingly, and that is a commitment that this government has made. That is a mandate that we've received in the election just a few short weeks ago, and that is the approach, that fair and moderate balanced approach, that we'll continue to take from this side of the House, especially when it comes to the finances and to the economy of our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a five-year plan. We're in the second year of that five-year plan

and we—a plan that is well thought out. It is based on the realities of our province. A plan that we've shown our commitment to. And we've been recognized for the validity and we've been recognized for the efficiency of that plan, maybe not from members opposite, but certainly from the international community.

Just this week, we've seen Standard & Poor's reaffirming our double A standard that members opposite might like to laugh about, but that's very important. That's very important because that impacts the amount of money that we have to spend in servicing things like debts and deficits and all the rest of that.

The key word that—in my mind, at least, the key word that Standard & Poor's used to describe their double A standard, was the word “stable.” And what they understand at Standard & Poor's and the other bond rating agencies is that we have a stable government with a stable plan and it's well thought out and we've got the commitment to seeing that plan through.

But I can only imagine, Mr. Speaker, what Standard & Poor's would have thought of when they looked at the members opposite who, in one instance, were saying that they were going to cut a half a billion dollars out of the '10 budget, how they were going to cut that. And then in the election, night before the election was called, they're not going to balance the budget to 2018, dragging that deficit, dragging that debt out for another 11—sorry—another seven years.

Now they can flip-flop back and forth all they like, and they can play the little political games, and we all know that story from members opposite. But the international community, who actually works with us in terms of providing stability for our province, would look at that and they would say the furthest thing—the furthest thing—from their minds would be that that would be a stable group of people making economic decisions and financial decisions in this province. Which plan would you do? Way over here or way over there?

And, you know, it's so out of whack with what's—not just with what we're doing here on this side of the House but their approach across the way is just completely out of whack with what you see at the federal level, Conservatives at the federal level, with a six-year plan to pay off their debt that they've accumulated, a plan in place, I'll give them that. I mean, some talk now about just when it is that they

would come into balance. But at least they have a plan; they're sticking to it, unlike members opposite who've—well, you know, both sides of the fence on that one.

*(14:40)

Mr. Speaker, every other province is working on a multi-year plan to bring themselves back into balance at some date, which is exactly what our plan is about. This is a plan that recognizes—it recognizes—that as you're making these good, sound, stable financial decisions you're not going to throw the lever, stomp on the brakes of the economy and start cutting front-line services like nurses and teachers and doctors. The list goes—the list goes on—like members opposite would have done.

Mr. Speaker, it's a good plan; it's a good way forward for this province. It's an approach that satisfies the international community when it comes to finances. It's a plan, as well, that does not hurt the stimulation of our economy that we've worked on, and I will say worked on in co-operation with our federal partners—many of the infrastructure programs we did together. I can think of some around my community, my constituency of Dauphin, where we worked together and stimulated that local economy and left behind infrastructure and buildings and projects that normally temporarily stimulated our economy and helped us when the world was going through a recession. But at the same time left there for future generations, those facilities that can attract young families to our area, left behind those facilities that can assist us in our local communities in hosting events and bringing the rest of the world into our communities, because in Manitoba we have some of the best communities going and we have some of the best folks working to make sure that those communities receive the kind of attention that they deserve.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, and congratulations to all of us here who have—who are returning and participating in the debates over the course of this year, I welcome back and I say, again, congratulations to yourself on your election to the post that you're in. And I look forward to hearing more debate from my colleagues around the Legislature.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak and make some comments on the Speech from the Throne.

But, first of all, I want to say that I'm honoured to have the opportunity to speak today and to be here, and I want to publicly thank the voters in River Heights who have returned me to this position. And I want to thank the volunteers and, in particular, my campaign manager, Lacey Sanders, and the many, many others who worked so hard in the period up to and during the election in order to allow me to come back here.

I want to also acknowledge the important role that was played not just in River Heights, but by our Liberal campaign team in the central party and the effort that was made day after day to make sure that we're presenting a solid and forward-thinking vision for the people of Manitoba.

In serving in this Legislature, I want to acknowledge the important role of many people here—of course, the Lieutenant-Governor, the Clerk, all the staff here, the staff at Hansard and the many, many others who work in the Legislative Assembly and enable us to do the work that we do on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

At the same time, I want to talk a little bit about where we're going in Manitoba, the need for a vision for the future which is a different vision from what the NDP have presented and delivered over the last 12 years. It's a vision in which we have a health-care system where you can actually get high-quality care when you need it, a vision for a health-care system where we're—have a focus on keeping people healthy.

I have talked for many years about the importance of preventing FASD. And here we are now 12 years later, and there's no evidence that the incidence of FASD in Manitoba has decreased at all and it continues to be a major issue for our children in our schools and on our streets and it continues to be one which we should be dealing much better with.

We should be focusing on wellness and prevention in areas like diabetes. Diabetes, as we all know, is epidemic in Manitoba at the moment. It has been known to be an epidemic since 1996. So that's going back now some 15 years when it was first declared an epidemic by the then-minister of Health, and in that period since then, the numbers of people who've developed diabetes have continued to rise, the number of people who have been impacted with the loss of their eyesight, the loss of their heart function, the loss of their kidney function, the loss of their limbs. Diabetes is the primary cause in Manitoba today of amputation of legs and limbs, and

certainly it is something that we could do with a real focus on to decrease the incidence of diabetes instead of letting it climb and climb.

It is has been particularly saddening to see the lack of any mention of diabetes in Throne Speech after Throne Speech and budget speech after budget speech. Indeed, as those who've looked at the public health issues that are detailed on the government's website, an A to Z list of the 98 most important public health issues, which covers everything from flu epidemics and pandemics to swimming pool safety, that diabetes, which is a raging epidemic in this province, is not even mentioned among the top 98 public health issues in Manitoba.

It's a sad testament to the lack of focus in the current government, and it's a sad testament to the importance that we need to have in focusing on areas which are so important, because they are important to people and to the lives of people and their families. And, of course, they have—diabetes has a huge impact on the cost of health care in Manitoba. And if we're going to have a sustainable health-care system, one of the things that we need to do is to keep people healthier, so that we don't have increasing costs and increasing costs just because we have more and more people being sick from preventable conditions.

Another example of a preventable condition, which I highlighted in our report in 2005, dealing with healthy children and the health of children, and the need to address these issues in a substantive way was the approach to dental caries. Dental caries are very preventable. And yet, we have an extraordinary number of kids who are requiring surgery in their first two, three, four, five years of life because of the fact that the dental caries in this province are not being adequately prevented.

I remember to this day one of the people who presented at the Healthy Kids task force, and she talked about her experience with a child who had a need for major surgery on the child's teeth. And the child was in pain. The child was refusing to eat very much because of all the pain in the child's teeth and so the child was not growing adequately. The child was not doing nearly as well as the child could have done. And it was a very, very sad and sorry time to be hearing about children like that in Manitoba.

And, interestingly, one of the first comments that I made at the time that the NDP government was first elected in '99, dealt specifically with this issue of dental caries. And the question of whether the

government, which was elected in '99–1999, would be any different than the government before. And I gave, as an example, if the government really was going to be different, it would need to focus on things like dental caries and making sure that we didn't have kids in pain and kids in their first few years of life needing extensive dental surgery.

And, sadly, this problem has continued. The number of children requiring surgery, in fact, has gone up instead of down. And I talked quite recently to a pediatric dental surgeon, and he said this problem just goes on and on and it hasn't changed in its extent over the course of the last 12 years. And it's an example of where there's tremendous ability to prevent a problem with a systematic and effective approach, and yet that systematic and effective approach has never been given. And it's very sad, and it's a sad commentary, in terms of what's happening with children in this province, but it's also a sad commentary on the direction that this government has taken this province in the last 12 years, and how our Liberal vision is a very different vision of how we focus on preventing these problems and making sure that children don't have the pain and the suffering and the need for dental surgery like they do today.

*(14:50)

We need—in our vision of the future for Manitoba and for health, we want to focus on making sure that there's much better communication among people in the health-care area. There has been remarkably little progress, in fact, in the last 12 years in terms of the use of electronic records and electronic communications. It's not that there hasn't been any; there has been some. But compared to what many other jurisdictions have achieved and what has happened in many other places, we could be so far—much further ahead. There's very few family doctors who are connected in electronically to what's happening with their patients in hospitals in Manitoba. Indeed, the sad part has been that all too often family doctors have had to learn about a patient dying in a hospital in the obituary column rather than in some quick communication from the hospital because, in fact, we don't have the kind of system that would enable that and facilitate that anywhere near the way it should be.

Of course, we saw that with what happened with Brian Sinclair, that one of the major problems was communication between a clinic and a hospital emergency room. And then, that case with Brian

Sinclair, he waited some 34 hours in the emergency room and sadly died waiting without getting the treatment that probably should have been provided in the clinic in the first place, because unblocking a catheter is something that is done in homes and in clinics all over Manitoba and doesn't necessarily need an emergency room.

We are—after a number of years, we've seen some improvements in the approach to health-care research, but we're still far away from what we really need to be. There has been talk recently about multiple sclerosis trials and funding, but to my knowledge not a single patient has yet been enrolled in any of the trials which the government has talked about. And it's example of the slow pace of this government when it comes to ensuring that we are on the leading edge, at the front edge, at the forefront of research and innovation and introduction of new approaches that we really should have.

And, of course, we should be developing much better ways of screening children early on so that the problems can be detected in this area. After I have brought it up many times in the Legislature, we're finally starting to see some progress with the mass spectrometry approaches. And we hope that we will see in the not too distant future the universal newborn hearing screening that I've been talking about for many years. We still need better approaches to FASD screening. The government talked about it, but, in fact, it really just introduced a screen to look for which mothers had been drinking alcohol during pregnancy, and it's not enough or sufficient in terms of identifying whether a baby, a child has FASD or not.

So a vision for health care is what is badly needed, an up-to-date vision which incorporates the many facets and addresses the sustainability of health care by making sure we are not wasting dollars to the extent that is happening now on procedures which are not necessary, on things which sometimes do more harm than good and on medical errors. Certainly, we should be doing far better in not only picking up and identifying the medical errors and investigating them and making sure the processes are put in place so they don't occur again in the future.

And, of course, our vision, not just in health care, but in education is one that is different from this government. Instead of an incremental ad hoc sort of a bit-by-bit approach that we've had, which has left us with long wait times in early childhood education, we should have had a much more

systematic approach to ensure that every child has the opportunity to have early childhood education where they need it at—without having to wait a year or two or five, as I had a woman—a family in River Heights tell me that they had had to wait to get early childhood education in an area near them.

I ran into an extraordinary family, a case where the parents had had to send their child to Jamaica because there wasn't any early childhood education nearby. And that should never have to happen here in Manitoba, but sadly, under this government, it has.

I've talked in terms of education, of our vision, where we have much improvement and much higher graduation rates, much lower dropout rates. As the Speaker himself, and the government members know, the dropout rates in the inner city, and inner Winnipeg, are still extraordinarily high with reports as high as 45 per cent in many schools. And in talking with many teachers who teach in inner Winnipeg, they have been very frustrated with the lack of progress and the lack of improvement over the many years that this government has been in power.

And, of course, this also applies to areas in rural Manitoba, whether it be parts of southeast Manitoba, areas like Camperville, areas like the east side of Lake Winnipeg where the dropout rates are also very, very high and contributing, not only to problems locally, in that the kids are not able to have the advantages and the opportunities that they should be having, but also contributes to the problems systemically in Manitoba, because when kids are dropping out, when kids are not in school, they're in the streets, then you will continually run into problems. And you continually run into problems of kids who are getting into trouble, kids who are getting into gangs and causing problems, not just for themselves, but for all of us. And we should be doing much better.

It is striking for those children who are not doing well in a standard classroom. We should have much better availability for alternative learning environments.

Several years ago I ran across an example in Treherne, where Donna Cuddy was teaching and she was teaching in this wonderful classroom in which she had kids who were having trouble in the standard classroom. And she was able to take these kids and give them individual learning programs that adapted to exactly where the kids were. And the kids that were enabled then to be able to get through high

school, to graduate, and to go on and to achieve success.

But, of course, this program was so good and it worked so well, that guess what this government did? It cancelled the program and so it is no more. And so that's the sort of thing, and a different approach, I suggest, for a Liberal government, would have been to make sure that where you have very successful programs like this, in alternative learning environments which are working very well, that you don't cancel them, you enhance them and make sure they're working even better.

And, of course, when it comes to a post-secondary education, getting better access for students, making sure that young people who have financial challenges are able to get to post-secondary education without having to work two or three or four jobs in order to stay in school.

And, certainly, one of the things that we see—and I gather we're going to have a report tomorrow on the *Maclean's* ranking. And, of course, there's a tendency by this government to dish all over the *Maclean's* ranking rather than accepting the *Maclean's* ranking as having a certain level of validity that we should, in fact, use as a benchmark to make changes. Not that we would accept all of it but there are many elements of it where we could usefully make major improvements in post-secondary education and improve the rankings of our school, and the recognition, and the profile of our post-secondary education institutions across the country.

But, of course, that's not the focus of this government. The focus of this government has been on saying, well, the ranking is no good in the first place, rather than striving to have the improvements that we should be having and having a better system.

* (15:00)

When it comes to addressing and a vision for the future of our streets, safer streets, streets where there is less problems with crime, it is a sad testament to the last 12 years that Winnipeg today is the violent crime capital of Canada, and as we saw just very recently this week, has the highest rate of homicides in all of Canada.

You know, this is a sad testament to the failure of 12 years of policies under this government which has led us to this juncture. And it is a failure in many, many respects, and particularly in the inner parts of Winnipeg, where we have such high dropout

rates, where we have problems with FASD which are not being addressed, and many other issues which are not being effectively looked after to make sure that kids are staying in school, that we, in fact, are identifying kids with learning disorders problems early on and providing the kind of learning environment for them that really works.

It has been 12 years of this government, and after 12 years in Winnipeg we have a rapid transit system which has 3.7 kilometres under construction, not yet completed; that's .3 kilometres a year. At this rate it would probably take about a century to get rapid transit for all of Winnipeg, and our vision is different. Our vision is different: that we should have a rapid transit system for all of Winnipeg by 2020 and that we should make sure that we are marshalling the resources and putting in place the effort to ensure that it happens.

When it comes to water management, water management, as we've seen this year with the floods, has been a real problem. And, of course, we suffer in Manitoba with huge amounts of flooding this year, in part because there hasn't been the approach to ensure that we have a strong and effective water management system for the province.

It's quite clear from studies that have been done in western Manitoba, that the amount of water coming off the land has increased dramatically in the last 30 years. And it's increased dramatically because there has been primarily a drain-only policy under Conservative and NDP governments, and the net result is that there's approximately 30 per cent more water coming off the land than there would have been had there been a balanced policy which emphasized water retention as well as drainage. And the net result, then, if you look at what happened this last year, for example, at the water coming down the Assiniboine River at the juncture of the Assiniboine River and the Portage Diversion, we had flow rates that were just a little bit more than 50,000 cubic feet per second at times. Well, if that water coming off the land was 30 per cent less, we'd have flow rates which were in the order of about 35,000 cubic feet per second, and what a huge and extraordinary difference that would have made in terms of the Assiniboine River flooding. There would never have needed to be a Hoop and Holler cut in terms of the Lake Manitoba flooding, because around Lake Manitoba we've had, and continue to have, extensive, extensive flooding.

And, of course, Lake St. Martin, where we've had people turned out of their communities because they've been unliveable because of the high level of water in the community of Lake St. Martin, and so on, and if there had been, over the last 30 years, a balanced water management system which emphasized retention as well as drainage, then we would have had much less of a problem this year than we had.

The impact on a small area, as illustrated by what's happened in South Tobacco Creek near Miami, where 27 small dams—we're not talking a—big dams, we're talking small dams, like big beaver dams—have in fact reduced the amount of peak water coming off by 25 per cent. They have also had a positive impact on phosphorous, and that 25 per cent has dramatically reduced the flooding of farmland, the damage to roads and culverts, to municipal infrastructure, and it can be done.

But in Manitoba it has been difficult enough even to get funding just to maintain the effort at South Tobacco Creek, and that's the approach that this government is taking. Instead of welcoming that effort, enhancing that effort, making sure it's strongly supported and make sure it's reproduced at many other areas, this government has made it even difficult to continue to continue to mount that effort on a year-to-year basis.

And, indeed, I would recommend that the Minister for Infrastructure investigate at the moment, because I understand that some of the basic elements of the support program that's needed to make sure that the South Tobacco Creek environment can have that ongoing support which is adequate to monitor the dams, to make sure that things are being well looked after, is there. Because I understand that even today, because of the lack of support, of adequate support by this government, that the future of that effort is to some extent under threat. And that's not the way it should be. Important efforts like that should be well supported—should not be threatened to their very future as is happening under this government.

Let me move on to environmental challenges, and, of course, there are many, from climate change to the big one, Lake Winnipeg, and the future of Lake Winnipeg. And we have seen, of course, some attention to phosphorous, thankfully. I have led the way in arguing for approaches that would reduce the phosphorous going into Lake Winnipeg, and there has

been some progress as a result, but we still have a long way to go.

I mean, we saw this just this last year with the government recognizing that the reduction by 10 per cent in the phosphorus, which was the goal of this government for so many years, was hopelessly inadequate, and that a goal of 50 per cent reduction of phosphorus, or something of that order, was going to be needed. But the government, in bringing forth that understanding, that they had come to a realization that 50 per cent reduction of phosphorus which was—is what's needed, that, in fact, the problem is that there isn't a plan in place that would produce anywhere near that kind of reduction. And so there is a lot of work yet to be done. And we should have had that plan presented in a way that it was understandable, that you could see how the 50 per cent reduction was going to happen, and the elements that were going to make the difference that's actually needed to make sure that Lake Winnipeg is in good shape.

And, of course, there are many other elements to that and there are a lot of concerns about erosion around Lake Winnipeg and one of the interesting things is that when you get erosion around the lake, as is happening in Lake Winnipeg, that the sediment that comes into the lake as a result brings with it attached to the sediment, attached to the eroded sediment, is phosphorus. And so one of the sources of phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg is actually the erosion that's happening, and it's happening significantly this year with the very high water levels.

And I believe that when people see the extent of the erosion that's happened this year and fully understand it, there will be a lot of surprise and a lot of people who will come to a better understanding that this is something that needs to be much better addressed than we have, and that there needs to be approaches, as we have suggested, like putting in place a Lake Winnipeg authority to look after and make sure that things are on a better track. That these approaches are the sorts of things that are needed to make sure that we have a strong future for our province.

*(15:10)

There are many other areas that I could talk about—the need to address poverty in a much more effective way. We introduced an antipoverty and social inclusion act; the NDP followed suit with a

much watered-down and very timid concept, instead of the robust concept which we had presented.

The need for much better financial management that we've seen in the last number of years is—ending the pattern of over expending every year, addressing the major deficit that we had two years ago and last year and which we now have this year building up. Improving the situation of people who are living in Manitoba Housing; addressing the needs of immigrants and improving the Provincial Nominee Program, making it easier for people who are coming, who want to come on visas, to come to Manitoba where they have family members, instead of as it is now—sometimes very hard; improving the role of innovation and research in a more structured and more effective way; having a social sciences and engineering and natural sciences research council so that, in fact, we address much more effectively than we are at the moment, research as it applies to social areas and research as it applies to physical structures, engineering, improving the quality of our roads which, all too often, deteriorate far too fast.

There is much, much more to do to put in place the kind of vision that we have for Manitoba, which is a vision with a much better health system; a much better education system; much reduction in crime; with a rapid transit system which works for all of Winnipeg; with a much better water management system; and an environmental stewardship approach which is very effective.

These are the elements, Mr. Speaker, that I wanted to talk about, the need for this approach and as we have argued in the last election, the urgent need to change the direction that is happening at the moment. And I will continue to argue and to bring forward these ideas and to argue for improvements and for changes that will make for a better Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, before I proceed in my written speech, I want to congratulate you on your election and, of course, we're very happy with the way that you have ruled on most of the things that we tried to put forward.

And I thank the member from The Maples and the member from Thompson and the member from Wolseley for helping me out during the election of October the 4th.

Mr. Speaker, fellow members of the Legislative Assembly, as I was grappling with the proper words and phrases to use in my first address to this

honourable House, I was notified that one of the volunteers who worked in my campaign, his name is Manny Dillena, D-i-l-l-e-n-a, was taken to the Asper Institute at the St. Boniface General Hospital. I was told that he was clinging to life.

Throughout the campaign, Manny always came across as a strong and solid supporter of the health-care system, saying it would take care of him. He told me he had triple bypass surgery in the past and that without the operation he would have died a long time ago. Without our universal health-care system, Manny said his family would have been devastated by the enormous costs associated with heart surgery. Without our philosophy of caring and sharing, Manny said he would much rather simply die instead of asking his family to sell their home and all their possessions to finance his surgery.

He said something else to me during the campaign that I remembered very well all throughout the days and nights that we were knocking on doors. He said: The people of Tyndall Park will be voting for you, but only if you can show them that you are sincere in your desire to serve them.

Mr. Speaker, the voters of Tyndall Park, Brooklands and Weston have spoken loudly and clearly. The people have put their collective trust on my shoulders and the New Democrats. I hope I will serve them well.

Sadly, Manny passed away on October 20th, surrounded by family and lots and lots of friends. I want to extend to his family my deepest sympathies.

How sincere am I in my intention to serve the people of my constituency? Let me tell you my story. My family and I arrived in Canada from the Philippines approximately 32 years ago. Like so many immigrant men before me, I came in first, ahead of my wife and children, and while I was staying with friends in Toronto, my cousin Alfredo Marcelino, a long-time Winnipeg resident, tried to convince me to move to Winnipeg. He said it was the perfect place for me to raise my family in relative ease and comfort. He told me that Manitoba was right smack in the middle of the North American continent and that from Winnipeg, a city of endless possibilities—that's his word—I could fly to virtually anywhere in North America at virtually the same price. He told me that Winnipeg was the only place where a person could drive from one end of the city to the other in 30 minutes or less, without suffering the endless subway rides in Toronto. I believed my cousin and became determined to move to Winnipeg.

The date was February 24th, 1980. Flying into Winnipeg on an Air Canada flight, I was sitting in my favourite spot on the plane where, from an altitude of 3,000 feet, I saw seemingly endless ribbons of black set against white criss-crossing on the ground. I thought to myself, the white stuff must be ice, but what could those ribbons of black be? After landing safely, it turns out my suspicions were correct: tire tracks on asphalt and concrete made black by the contrast. Civilization. As the airport door swung open, a blast of cold, frigid air struck my exposed skin. I almost turned around, breath knocked out of me, with the idea that it was not too late to head back to Manila.

I just might have gone through with it had it not been for the people who were right behind me pushing me forward. It was too late. I was thinking to myself and asking, did I do the right thing in moving to Manitoba from the relatively milder weather of Toronto? How the heck do people in Winnipeg survive this cold weather? How do they manage to make a living? What do they eat? Did they have refrigerators? And if they did, why would they need them? Ushered into a van by my cousin, I felt the cold slowly envelop me and I was shivering. Even the warm air coming from the vents of the vehicle was not enough to stop my shivering. As we wound our way through the streets from the airport to Tyndall Park, I saw some people walking steadily against the cold wind making their way towards the bus stop on Burrows. How could they possibly survive outside like this, I asked myself. I thought, but quickly put those thoughts out of my mind and focused on staying warm.

Arriving at my cousin's place, I walked into the welcoming arms of about 30 friends and neighbours. I found myself unable to speak but glad I was still alive.

* (15:20)

A former police officer from Pasig, Metro Manila, Ador Rivera, was among those who welcomed me. He was a fellow police officer. With a question of how the heck people survive in this crazy, cold weather lingering in my mind, my cousin looked at me strangely, and said that it was only minus 28, and that the only reason I felt really frozen was because of the wind chill. I knew he was talking in a language that was uniquely Manitoban. I did not have a concept of understanding what minus 28 meant. Wind chill was a word that was

foreign to me. I thought he was referring to a condition that could kill me.

My first night in Winnipeg was spent in the relative warmth and comfort of the house on Currie Crescent, right in Tyndall Park, owned by my cousin, Alfredo and the wife, Antonia. My cousin, in his infinite wisdom, offered me a bottle of beer, Molson Canadian. He says that it will usually take the sting out of the cold; it did.

Waking up in the middle of the night, I stood by a window and looked out. My teary eyes focused on the grey smoke coming from the tops of the neighbourhood homes. I was getting homesick. I told myself, oh, people warming up their homes and protecting their families from some of the harshest weather on earth. I told myself I better start looking for a job at daybreak. I was always a go-getter, hard-working and never afraid to face up to the new challenges. I knew I would survive.

Mr. Speaker, the Winnipeg Transit bus was half empty when I got on board. I paid my fare in coins. I think it was only 25 cents. My fellow passengers were not talking, and I just hunkered down. I chose a seat near the front where the driver was, near an elderly woman who threw a smile at me as if trying to say hello. As we headed towards downtown I saw apartment buildings on Notre Dame and I thought, that would be the perfect location of a home for my family.

From the bus, I got a cup of coffee and I walked across Notre Dame towards Ingersoll. I chanced upon a house with a For Rent sign on it. Making a call to the number given at the bottom of the sign, I was told to ask for Mrs. Lee Wing at the corner store. She owned the place. I moved in March and this became my first home in Winnipeg, right on Ingersoll. Right across from my home on Ingersoll, where today the Salisbury House restaurant is located, stood a house where the New Democratic Party had its local constituency office.

It was at my home on Ingersoll Street that my family and I met former MLA Maureen Hemphill. She was canvassing the area for persons qualified to be members of the NDP. She said she was seeking the nomination for the Logan constituency. She also asked for help. I volunteered and soon became involved in the recruitment of members to the party. In time she became a close family friend, having shared a few meals with her and a few laughs together.

We later bought a house on Keewatin Street, right on the corner of Gallagher, behind the building that once was the Safeway store, right across from Lucy, the Ukrainian lady. Two doors down, towards the back of the CIBC building was old man Joe's place. Across the place where a 7-Eleven store now provides convenience to local residents, there used to be served up one of the best hamburgers prepared by a Greek family who owned The Burger Factory.

These faces, and many more, stay with me until today. It was through the warmth of Tyndall Park residents that I came to understand how people survive the Winnipeg winters. It was the welcoming hearts of the people of Tyndall Park, Brooklands, and Weston that saw us through those times. After settling into the community, I worked as a tire retreader for two years, sold life insurance for 17 years, and worked for the federal government for another 10. I don't know how that worked. I have come to a stage in my life that I feel that I should give back to my community. While I still have the energy in me, I want to truly pay back this great community and province for what it has given to me and my family.

As an immigrant to this province, I feel uniquely prepared to represent my riding of Tyndall Park. Our government has committed to the opening of a satellite office to assist provincial nominee applicants and their families by providing immigration services that are convenient and accessible right in the heart of my constituency. Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program is a national leader and has helped Manitoba grow and thrive in this challenging and changing economy. Because this program is so important to families in Tyndall Park and to the future of Manitoba, we will fulfill this commitment and we will continue to work to expand this successful program which the federal government has unfortunately capped at 5,000 nominees this year. We continue, with the assistance of many groups and individuals, to lobby the federal minister to lift this cap on our successful program so that we can continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Tyndall Park is more than just a combination of Weston, Brooklands, and Tyndall Park. It is also a unique combination of peoples and places glued together by a common history of friendships and memories. This history dates back to the first immigrants and settlers who came here and laid the building blocks of home and community. I would not be standing here today without the support of this unique community. I feel

I am able to represent this community because of the immigrant experience that I share in solidarity with so many of my neighbours. Our government's commitment to immigration is strong and ongoing. Strengthening the Provincial Nominee Program and lobbying the federal government to increase the immigration cap, are among our top priorities.

Health care will remain the cornerstone of our philosophy of caring and sharing. During the campaign I emphasized how important our continuing support for the health-care system is. It sets us apart. Our universal health-care system is like a bank account that all can draw from when we are sick or dying. It is everyone's ultimate, eternal rainy day fund. We will keep it that way.

Alongside this commitment is the commitment I make to the residents of Tyndall Park. I will deliver on my promises to you. I will not forsake your trust. This I promise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*(15:30)

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I certainly welcome the opportunity to enter debate today in terms of this new government's Speech from the Throne, and certainly our response to that Speech from the Throne.

And I do want to acknowledge the member for Tyndall Park for his presentation here. You know, we can take some points from his presentation. I think, first of all, we as members here, we're purview to a lot of great speeches throughout the course, and it's always good to hear some of the history and the—and some of the family connections there.

And I guess we take that, that we here in Manitoba have tremendous opportunities and we have tremendous opportunities from wherever we come from across this great world of ours. And I think what I also take from that, it's important that we also make sure we look after those that, you know, we care about in terms of our family and friends as well.

So I do want to, Mr. Speaker, welcome all the new members to the Chamber, hopefully that their stay here is enjoyable. I'm sure it will be a learning experience, as it has been for me along the way. And I also want to, of course, welcome all the returning members to the Chamber, as well, and congratulate them on their success over this past election.

And I do want to wish you the best in your future career here as Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election. It's quite impressive to win two elections that close together, not many people have that opportunity.

I certainly also want to welcome the staff in the Chamber here that make sure that things are running orderly, and thanks to the Clerk and Clerk staff for all the work that they do to keep things running smoothly, and keep us in tune with what's going on, and hopefully on the straight and narrow. I also want to welcome all the pages for this particular session, as well, and hopefully that, although this being a fairly short session, you will learn some things from it and take those into the future with you.

I also want to welcome the interns. I think we have a great bunch of interns here through our intern program this year, and I've heard nothing but positive comments from our side of the House in terms of the ability of the three that we have in our caucus. We certainly welcome them here. I hope they as well enjoy their time, and I know they've learned some things as well. Being in kind of a unique situation with the election being held as the interns were starting, the interns did have to spend some times at different offices—some of the independent offices. And I know they actually learned some things spending that time in those particular offices. So even though they weren't spending their time here at the Legislature and the building itself, they do have other opportunities to get a real understanding on—some of those independent offices do and how the independent offices work under the purview of the Legislative Building.

Certainly, I believe that program is a tremendous opportunity for the youth of our province. Being on the committee the last couple of years, the selection committee, it's amazing the quality of individuals that come forward through that particular program. And we're certainly happy to have the group that we have here this year and I look forward to working with them over the next several months as they spend their time here.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the constituents of the new riding of Spruce Woods for providing me the ability here to serve as their MLA, and I really view that as my important role here is to serve as their representative here in the Legislature. You know, obviously, over the course of the campaign we talk a lot about policy, we talk about different views

and different parties and where they want to go down the road, and we really talk a lot about policy.

But sometimes we don't talk as much about the actual job of the MLA. You know, I think that's something that the constituents want to make sure that when they elect a person, that person has also the responsibility for the legislative side of it, the aspect, but also is there for them to serve them as a constituent, because, Mr. Speaker, our constituents have a lot of different issues that come forward. And that's probably the—one of the fun parts about being an MLA; you never really know what the issue's going to be when the phone rings. Or if you're walking down the street, if you go to get the mail, if you're out at a public event, if you're out at a fall supper, you never know what the issue's going to be that the public is going to bring to you.

I think sometimes we're there as their—almost their last resort. Quite often these people, these individuals, have tried almost every avenue to get their issue resolved, you know, whether it be a health-care issue, an education issue, an issue with their roads. They've tried all the avenues and quite often we are the—their last resort. So they do come to us hoping that we can resolve their issue for them.

And those are the kind of things that you don't see in the paper. You don't hear that in media. You don't hear that on the radio, that we actually are able to resolve some of our constituents' issues. And those are the kind of things that we do behind the scenes that I think, for me in particular as a member, is very rewarding. If we can resolve those issues that our constituents bring forward, it's very rewarding for me as an MLA, and I really believe that's the critical part of our job as an MLA.

So, Mr. Speaker, I—obviously, I used to represent the old riding of Turtle Mountain, and this time around there was quite a significant change in terms of the riding, both in terms of the structure and, of course, the new name, Spruce Woods. As far as the Turtle Mountain was concerned, I lost the two and a half municipalities on the east side of the old riding, which included the municipality of Louise, the municipality of North Norfolk and half of the municipality of North Cypress—which is an interesting situation, where you represent half of a municipality—but also in addition to that, the new Spruce Woods takes in five other additional municipalities around the city of Brandon and located on the west side of the riding, so I now have five additional municipalities: Oakland municipality,

Glenwood municipality, Whitehead municipality, Cornwallis municipality and Elton municipality.

So for us as MLAs, we usually get quite familiar with our particular riding and we get used to the issues in each of those communities, so when we're faced with a change—and in this case, the population change was about 45 per cent—it prevents significant challenges for us to get to know not only the people in those areas but also the issues within those particular communities. So that's a bit of a challenge for us to get to do that, but we—that's part of the job, so that's what we have to do.

I was fortunate in my situation. I took over part of the old Minnedosa riding, so with the assistance of the previous member for Minnedosa, I was able to get around and visit some of those new communities, new to my situation as well.

But at the same time, you know, those constituents that you lose that you've developed relationships with over, in my case, the last seven years, you have to pass them on to different members. And I know my colleagues from Midland and my colleague from Agassiz are, you know, very happy to pick up those good constituents, those great constituents on the east side of the old Turtle Mountain riding. And I know those members will be very appreciative of the support they get for the constituents of the old Turtle Mountain.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say, as well, I was fortunate enough to pick up some of my home riding, if you will, home area, in the Wawanesa area. So that's kind of refreshing, to pick up some of the people that I was—I've known for many years and also associated with and done business with. So that is—that's when it sometimes it works out that well—that way in terms of a benefit.

I do want to acknowledge all the people that worked so hard on our campaign. You know, we, I guess, are the face of the campaign, but there's a lot of people, a big team, that are working behind the scenes that actually get things done. And, you know, we have to pass on our thanks for them for their ability and, you know, for their vision in terms of what we're trying to do as well. And we really appreciate their support. And to have people actually get their chequebook out or get their wallets out and actually write a cheque or donate to a party or to a cause is very impressive.

* (15:40)

You know, obviously those people are dedicated to what you're trying to accomplish, the goals that your party has put forward. So I really appreciate and respect those people that, you know, put their name on that cheque or dig in there and hand out whatever dollar figure it is. It's certainly well appreciated and, you know, we don't take those things for granted.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a minute about some of the actions, the activities across the riding here this past summer. You know, as we talked a little bit about it in the House in the last few days, we had a very significant high water situation this spring, carried on into the summer in western Manitoba. It was a very significant flood event. And I was able to do some touring in the southwest part of the province and there is still significant issues out there in terms of the water issues in southwestern Manitoba. And I hope the government and some of their ministers will have the opportunity to visit those areas over the next few months, because I think it's very important that you see some of the effects of that water situation first-hand. You know, we can come into the House here and tell you about the situation, but unless you see it first-hand and the implications that it has for individual constituents, it's very significant.

You know, on a bus tour I had we started in Souris and we went down to Whitewater Lake. Whitewater Lake is now as high as it's ever been, and we travelled west from there over to Deloraine country and then up through Pipestone and up north of Souris, and it was amazing to see. This would normally have been first of September, just the height of harvest season, and it was amazing to see on a six-hour tour, we saw one combine out in the fields. So that tells you the extent of the water situation in that part of the province. The amount of unseeded acres there was just unbelievable. And clearly this will have a lasting effect for—particularly that region of the province, but I think it would also impact the economy of Manitoba for some time to come. So it is a very significant event.

In the—I want to talk a little bit about the infrastructure that was impacted as well in that part of the province. We do have challenges with some of the highways there, the provincial roads, infrastructure there. Certainly this extra water this year seemed to exacerbate the problem. The highways department is still dealing with serious issues out there on some of our roads and I think it's significant to mention, you know, Highway No. 10, which is major highway, north-south highway into

the United States, is impacted quite severely and it still is in disrepair. Highway 23, again another east-west road, but I know that the Province has been trying to fix up some of those holes, those potholes, but I still have—getting complaints about that particular road. No. 5, that particular highway, was—has been beat-up again. It's an older road. It's probably 50 years old, this particular road, and hasn't had any real serious work done to it. And again, we have very few good north-south roads for transporting goods north and south.

Also, I have to mention Provincial Road 253. I get—recently just a tremendous amount of calls on Provincial Road 253, which certainly will need some work and, hopefully, we'll get a little more time before winter sets in that they can make those repairs.

Also, I mentioned earlier in question period, we're having some issues with Spruce Woods Provincial Park, which faced significantly flooding by the Assiniboine River this spring. And, unfortunately, this government hasn't taken any decisions in terms of cleaning up that provincial park, and my fear and the fear of neighbouring communities is that that park will not be reopened for camping and for day use in 2012. Now, if that is the case, Mr. Speaker, it's going to have a significant impact on those communities, those neighbouring communities, that rely on the economic spin-off from the provincial park there.

And, in addition, I've indicated to both the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister responsible for EMO (Mr. Ashton), some of the businesses that have been directly impact because of the flooding in Spruce Woods Provincial Park, and those particular businesses are not being looked after and we hope that the government will work its way through these files and make sure that those particular individuals get looked after.

And I'm also hearing, in terms of EMO, quite a bit of concern for some areas where their claims are not being dealt with, and I guess it's going to be incumbent on us as representatives for those particular areas to make sure that the minister and his staff are brought up to speed, and we indicate to them that those particular issues aren't being dealt with. And, hopefully, we can move through those files, you know, as quickly as possible, Mr. Speaker.

In question period today, I asked the minister responsible for infrastructure in the province about the bridge that was washed out on

Provincial Road 530, otherwise known as the Treesbank bridge, and obviously that impacts a lot of people. And there's quite a number of areas where people are being impacted there. You know, obviously, we have a lot of agriculture producers in that area. They're having a difficult time getting from one side of the river to the other to either transport bees and honey or just transport their farm machinery from one field to the other, or, it may be a matter of moving livestock as well. So these producers are encountering considerable expense because that particular structure is out of commission at this point in time.

And the frustration that we're hearing from the municipalities and the residents there is that, you know, we go to the government and we say, what's your plan? Do you have a plan to rebuild this particular structure? And, unfortunately, we're not getting any kind of answer from the government, either yes or no. So, again, it's incumbent on us, as representatives for those constituents, to bring these issues forward to the minister, make sure that he understands the ramifications for the individuals there.

Mr. Speaker, I've got quite a list here of the impacts, the financial, the emotional, the health impacts that people are feeling, because that particular structure is out of commission at this point in time. And there's quite a number that have signed the petition here as well. So, that's why we bring these issues forward to the government and hope that they will have a very serious look at rebuilding that particular structure. And, hopefully, in the short term, they can look at something that might work for people in the area to get across, in terms of a winter road or winter access across the—that particular river. It is a very important structure for a lot of people in that particular area.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about agriculture and rural development. Obviously, that's an important and integral part of our constituency and it was very unfortunate for us that rely on agriculture, to see the absence of agriculture and rural development in the Speech from the Throne. We firmly believe that agriculture and rural development can play a really important part in developing Manitoba, you know, and it's unfortunate that it wasn't mentioned.

And we know this government has a somewhat suspect relationship with agriculture in the province of Manitoba. And I can refer to the Public Accounts

that—go back to the Public Accounts and the volume ending March 31st of this year. And, I guess the way I look at it is the proof is in the pudding.

And if we look at the budget for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives here in the province of Manitoba, that department makes up 1.7 per cent of the entire budget in the province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, we feel if the government was serious about agriculture and rural development, there would be more money allotted to that particular department.

And we know we have great people working in that particular department. The problem is, their hands are being tied by the management at the top, Mr. Speaker. And we believe there's opportunities there for development of industry in rural Manitoba. And we're hoping that the government will take a very serious look at that over the next term of their office.

And this government really—is actually blaming agriculture producers for some of the issues here in the province of Manitoba, and we don't feel that's the approach the government should be taking. The government should be working with producers and industry to try to develop solutions and actually move business forward instead of taking the antagonistic approach that they have here in Manitoba. So we're hoping there'll be some changes in terms of the relationship with this government and the people in the agricultural industry.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about Water Stewardship as well. Significant issues with water this year and it's pretty clear that this government has not had a significant and a comprehensive water management strategy here in Manitoba. And, I think, by the words in the Speech from the Throne today, or pardon me, this past week, there's a mission there that the government has not developed an adequate program. So we're going to be watching closely to see what the government comes forward in terms of their water management strategy here in Manitoba.

For example, Mr. Speaker, I gave a private member's statement today on some of the work that Ducks Unlimited has been doing in some projects in the Killarney area. And those projects that Ducks Unlimited have been successful at have been funded primarily through—with the federal government assistance. And they're very important projects to promote and conserve wetlands. Now we think if the

government should be at the table, working with these private industries and the federal government in ways to develop better water management strategies. And, if we had better 'waterment'—water management strategies in Manitoba, we probably wouldn't have the significant issues we've had with water this particular year.

And I look at Rock Lake as a classic example of the issues we're having with Water Stewardship. Rock Lake has seen significant, significant high water situations in the last seven years since I've been elected. Each and every year they set new bars in terms of high water levels in Rock Lake. And the other significant problem that we're having in Rock Lake is that the water stays in the lake longer and longer every year. For some reason the water is not getting out of Rock Lake. And what it does, Mr. Speaker, it causes considerable erosion around the lake. And it causes considerable disruption in cottages and the cottagers' activities there around the lake.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have asked the province for information relative to the hydrological information around Rock Lake. And we know there's water that's being led out of Pelican Lake, ends up going into Rock Lake. We've asked the government to provide information about water levels coming in out of Pelican Lake, into Rock Lake, what other waters' bodies are coming into Rock Lake, what are the impacts of those particular streams. And the government has not been able to provide those answers. And we've been asking for those for two and three years now. We're not sure what the Water Stewardship Department's been up to, but they certainly haven't been providing answers that constituents have been looking for. It's pretty clear that there's a lot of those issues that have been addressed.

But I do want to commend the communities of Souris and Wawanesa. The mayors there, Darryl Jackson and Bruce Gullett, who really did a tremendous job this past spring in managing the flood situations along the Souris River there. It was quite impressive to see the people that were there to volunteer, the machinery that was put together to build dikes and provide sandbags. It was just amazing to see the action there that was done in a fairly compressed amount of time. So my hat's off to the mayors and to their communities and to all the volunteers that came out to do that work there when it was so needed.

And as a result, you know, very little actual damage was done in the community. There certainly is some cleanup work that has to be addressed yet. We're hoping that the government will be there to help those communities and to address some of those needs that are still out there in terms of cleanup around those dikes.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about schools and education, as the Progressive Conservative critic for Education. You—clearly we believe education is very important for Manitoba and for the future of Manitoba, and for the youth of our province. And what we've seen by—from this government over the last few years, is a top-down approach to education. They've refused to go out and consult with the stakeholders that we have in the province. They come up with their own ideas and then they put them out forward as policies, and then they expect the stakeholders to come up and make them work.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we believe that's not the right approach. We believe the right approach is have consultations beforehand so that the implementation stages can be worked out in advance. You know, we have an announcement here yesterday where they're going to cap the class sizes in K to 3. You say, well, you know, might be a novel idea but, you know, how are we going to make it work? And that's the problem, they've announced—made announcements before in Education, but never sure how it's all going to work. So now we have this announcement and a time frame of possibly five years before it's going to be implemented. I think it would be incumbent upon government to have the implementation strategy worked out in advance of making these announcements. But that's not the direction this government's in.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk a little bit about finance, you know, and the Speech from the Throne didn't really talk about the financial aspects of where they're going to be and where we are now. So I think it's important that, you know, we have a look at where we're at in the province of Manitoba, what kind of debt we're carrying here in Manitoba, and then how we're going to pay for that particular debt. And again I reference Public Accounts back at the end of March, and we're looking at a budget here of about ten and a half billion dollars in revenue. We're looking at an expense closer to \$11 billion. The government again has committed to spending more money than they're taking in, even though they're

taking in 35 per cent of their revenue from federal transfers, to the tune of \$3.7 billion.

Now we're not sure, maybe the minister—the acting Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has got some word from Ottawa that transfer payments are going to continue to roll in here at these high levels, but I expect there may be some changes forthcoming that the minister has maybe not prepared us for. So I think that's something that, you know, we as opposition have to flag for the government because the government is clearly not too concerned about finances. We know the history of the tax-and-spend government here, the NDP government here in Manitoba. In fact, they're even missing their own targets they established here, in terms of trying to restrain spending. They've missed those targets altogether, Mr. Speaker.

So, if Manitobans are paying attention and realize that they're not even matching their own targets, their spending targets, somebody's going to be on the hook for the shortfall, and that will be the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba will be on the hook for that shortfall. Unless, again, the government of the day just decides they're going to continue to borrow more money, which they have done at a rate of about 10 per cent—an increase of about 10 per cent a year. We're at a total debt now of about \$25 billion to the province, and ratepayers and constituents will know that we have to pay interest on debt.

This same document points out we're currently spending—this is of last year—\$772.7 million on servicing our current debt. That's the interest payments we're making, that includes the Crown corporations. We look at just the core government interest payments, \$233 million is what we're paying out of our revenue now that goes directly into servicing the debt. That figure is the same as the Department of Agriculture and Water Stewardship put together. That's the size of the interest we're paying on our current debt. So, unless the government has a reasonable plan to how they're going to address it, Manitobans should be skeptic about where they're headed in this particular—with this particular government, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're here as government to try to indicate to government to be careful with our money, our money as taxpayers, and we believe there's room to eliminate waste.

And, if we talk about health care for just one minute, the public will tell you they feel there's a

tremendous waste in the bureaucracy of health care, and there has to be a time, Mr. Speaker, of a day of reckoning when the government will look in the mirror and say, isn't there something better we can do in terms of managing health care here in the province of Manitoba? And they have to have a look at that and say, you know, we're spending 44 per cent of our budget on health care, and if we're spending 44 per cent of our entire budget on health care, wouldn't you think that would be a logical place to look for some savings and some efficiencies on how we're spending money?

* (16:00)

I think that's critically important, and that's what rate—the citizens in southwestern Manitoba who told me there's lots of room for improvement. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're here in opposition, is to raise those issues that our constituents bring forward, and we plan to do that as long as our constituents allow us to do that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time and my debate on this particular Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my remarks today with heartfelt congratulations to you for your election as Speaker, and I know you've worked very hard in the last 21 years. And I'm sure you're going to do a great job as Speaker in the years to come.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to congratulate all of the candidates in the recent provincial election, not just the successful ones, but all those people that ran for public office. It's quite an undertaking to knock on all those doors, put up the signs, raise the money and for those of us who actually win, it's much easier to take, I think it is, than if you're on the losing side. To put all that effort into an election and end up on the losing side is not the best outcome. On the other hand, I will say that there's a lot to be gained by losing the odd election. You sometimes learn a lot more when you lose, and I was actually referencing a long loss from many, many years ago as a learning experience, not the most recent one.

I'd also like to talk for a few minutes now about the history of the Elmwood constituency, and I know that the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) reminds me, and I already know this to be true, that his constituency has only three MLAs now since it came into existence. And we had D.L. Campbell, the

former Liberal premier there for, I believe, 47 years. And the late Harry Enns was there for, I think, 37 years and now we have the current member. Well, the constituency of Elmwood doesn't quite have that track record, so far, but we have had, in the last—in my memory anyway, Steve Peters. Now I know that Alex Turk was a Liberal member for Elmwood back in the '40s, and he was, as a matter of fact, our treasurer when I first got involved in Elmwood in 1985. But that was a different type of riding in those days. I think there were multimember elections in those days. But under the current system, we—Elmwood has been represented by Steve Peters, Russell Doern, who some of us know here for 20 years, Bill Blaikie and, of course, Bill succeeded me as the MLA in 2008 when I left the provincial scene here for—after 22 years. And he succeeded me, and now I succeed him.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family for their very hard work in the last two elections this calendar year. My wife, Clile, is in the gallery and of our sons, Jose, Kevin, and Carlos. Kevin is up in the gallery right now.

And in terms of our campaign team, we had a almost around-the-clock campaign team. I don't think we took a day off this calendar year. We had Randy Schulz, who was my official agent and campaign manager. He is also up in the gallery, and many of you remember him from the days of the Howard Pawley government when he was assistant to Len Evans and Sam Uskiw and actually worked in Vic Schroeder's department. So when—he'll be here for a while after the speech so anybody that wants to say hello to him can certainly do that. Ed Innes, many of you know him, and we had Darryl Livingstone, Murray Sinclair, Ellen Olfert and many, many other volunteers in our campaign, but it's never enough as we know in what is viewed as safer constituencies because our supporters leave for more competitive environments.

And the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I know we were—we ran a great candidate in there and I really had high hopes and I was watching TV on election night and I see the first poll comes in and he already is like a thousand votes up. But there's always hope for the future; it's a developing constituency and if we could just keep that candidate in the field for the next four years, we might just give him a run for it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Elmwood constituency, at least since 1990, runs primarily north-south over

three kilometres from the Disraeli Bridge in the south, and along the major traffic artery of Henderson Highway to Leighton Avenue in the north, in the heart of East Kildonan. Prior to that period of time, it used to run on an east-west basis and it was part of the—half of it anyway—was part of the Concordia constituency right now. Other major routes through our community include Talbot Avenue, Johnson Avenue, Munroe and Kimberly Avenue.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the City planned in May of 2008 to close the Disraeli Bridge for one year and four months to renovate an old bridge, turn it over to private ownership under the—one of the triple P proposals of the mayor and basically adding only 20 years of use to the structure—predictably the constituents of Elmwood revolted.

Over 7,000 citizens signed a petition demanding three things: No. 1, no closure during construction; a new bridge, not a old renovated bridge; and a six-lane design. Now, faced with this revolt in the northeast quadrant, and it did spill well over the constituency of Elmwood, it went out to Transcona, in fact, and north of the constituency as well. The City was forced to approach the Province to help in the financing and design of the new bridge and we now see this bridge under construction. You can drive by it, as I do several times a day, and you can see that it's well on track to completion probably next year.

So, rather than wasting money fixing up an old bridge, an extra \$43 million was put into the project and now we are going to have a brand-new structure with a 70-year lifespan and we are accommodating bicycles and the pedestrian routes as well.

So my constituents recognize, and now know, that you can actually fight city hall and win.

I would also like to take the opportunity to comment on the idea of creating a community hub in Elmwood. The Kelvin community club has a storied history in the city of Winnipeg spanning over many decades now. The current mayor, after promising in his election campaign that there'd be no community club closures in the city, decided to close Kelvin community club and make an exception.

Now, Kelvin just so happens to occupy prime Henderson Highway real estate and, in fact, in the study that the City did on its community clubs, there were at least a half a dozen clubs that came up with lower ratings than the Kelvin club did. And so we

found that very suspicious that somehow a club with a higher rating than five or six of the 61 clubs that they surveyed would in fact be subject to close-being closed.

So the City did build a megacentre at Bronx Park and we do appreciate that, but the Kelvin location was within walking distance of many of the people in the area and we know that there's a difference here of opinion on the part of a mayor who wants to set up and, I believe, Gord Steeves, if I might mention that name. They want to set up megacentres, which is great if you live in suburban areas and you have cars and can drive to those centres, but it doesn't appeal to the people in my area who don't have cars and want to be able to walk, like they've been able to do for the last hundred years, to a community club in their area.

So we've got to change the thinking on—in that area of recreation facilities and go back to the old way of thought that it doesn't—you know, the structure doesn't have to be a fancy megacentre to fulfill the functions. It has to be just basic recreation facilities, but just more of them and in the—and all over the city, not just concentrating in some of the suburban areas.

So what we have to do is to get this community facility operational again is to get it off the surplus land list of the City and make it accessible to the young people in our community.

So I do support the drive for a new building to house the community hub and to provide for a number of social and community services, including low or no-cost meetings and recreation and all these functions, Mr. Speaker, came about as a result of focus-group testing by organizations within our community.

* (16:10)

A venue for lifestyle education, including literacy, job training, financial and budget counselling, for example, I've always thought that we should be providing financial education in our high school curriculum for students, because we see people, you know, generation after generation, coming out of high school and signing up for credit cards and ending up in credit card debt and ending up going through bankruptcy when all of this could be avoided by having financial counselling in the school system.

An Honourable Member: We have it already.

Mr. Maloway: Well, that's great, I'm glad that we're doing that and I just think that it's something that's been long overdue and certainly can be improved upon.

Also, nutritional education is something that we would like to look at in a hub environment and particularly associated with community gardens. Throughout the community you see these gardens are springing up everywhere now and I did see an article recently in the paper where they talked about, and I wasn't aware of this, they were talking about community gardens, that as far back as 1919, during the war, there was a drive on for—they called them Victory Gardens, so the people would be growing their own food and it would all help in the war effort.

And so, you know, you wonder that this is what we were doing back in 1918 and we've somehow gotten away from it and now we're coming—slowly but surely coming back to this concept of community gardens, and so we'd like to see more of that activity in the area and, a matter of fact, I might point out to you that after the signing of the free trade deal, the NAFTA free trade deal, we had a large number of—and there were many, many examples, but this is just one of tomato growers in Mexico who had been growing, you know, doing farming of tomatoes and other crops for many, many years and after the free trade deal came in these little farmers were pushed off their fields and these big farms took over and for a number of years they were able to send those crops north through the trucking network and they made a go of it.

Well, now guess what happened? The price of gasoline has gone—has skyrocketed and now we're finding that it's less economical to be growing products, you know, in one place and trucking them a thousand miles to sell them somewhere else. So we've got to rethink our approach in a lot of different areas, but certainly one of them is this area of free trade and the whole issue of farming to encourage people to grow their products locally and we see that's happening too. And, by the way, there's a lot of interest in the—in that concept by young people and I'm really encouraged by that because there's a generation I think that includes probably us, most of us here, who were sort of the tail end of the gardening generation and we've kind of missed that whole period where we're used to buying everything in the stores.

So, I listened the other day with a lot of interest to the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler),

and he was complaining about the negativity of the campaigns, the NDP campaign in particular in his area, and he thought that we were negative and I thought that I hadn't heard of any of that kind of activity going on, on our side, but I certainly was aware of some of it on the Conservative side, particularly in my area where we had a—I'm now looking at a picture in one of my pamphlets where I was addressing—holding a microphone and addressing a crowd of over 500 people in front of the Kelvin Community Club when we were fighting the closure.

So you can imagine my shock when a PC opponent runs an ad in *The Herald* magazine, right through the whole—from Elmwood to Transcona area, indicating that I was too busy to be fighting the Kelvin closure and that I was actually responsible for the closure, and not only that but I was responsible for all the crime in Elmwood too, by the way. So, you know, talk about nose stretchers and so I think the member for St. Paul's might just, kind of, take a little look around there and not be too sensitive about this issue that he's complaining about because I just thought I'd bring it to his attention that it was not only him that was having a rough time with opponents in the election.

Now, I listened yesterday to the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon)—

An Honourable Member: His second mistake.

Mr. Maloway: And as the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) said, it's my second mistake, but I did note that he was talking about some economic numbers and I thought, you know, he's living in a fanciful world here, when he talks about the provincial debt being \$50 billion, and he talks as though, you know, there's no assets to back up the debt.

I'm just wondering, what kind of economic thinking these people employ because, you know, if you buy a house and you buy a house for \$200,000, you have to make a down payment on that house, and your mortgage might be \$150,000. Well, you know, you can run around and claim the sky is falling and we've got to pay down the debt, but you should at least, you know, understand that there's an asset backing up that \$150,000 debt and as a matter of fact, that asset is worth more than the debt. So they're very selective—very selective in their criticism.

And one of the statistics that you should always look at when you're looking at financial—the

financial picture is the net debt-to-GDP. And if you want to take a look at the net debt-to-GDP figures, you will see that they've actually declined in the last 10 years since the NDP took office in 1999. We were at 33.4 per cent in 1999. That has now declined to 22.4, and just so, you know, in case the Conservatives just aren't up with the—with current history, they should know that when Paul Martin took on the federal debt reduction back in whatever year that was—'93, I believe it was—and that was as a result of the Mulroney Conservatives driving up the debt, piling debt upon debt—and they were looking at—at that period of time, they were looking at around 40 per cent. That's the range they were in. Here in Manitoba, we were 33.4 ten years ago; we've reduced it to 24 per cent. What are you complaining about? What can you possibly be complaining about, that we can't handle the debt load in this province. As a matter of fact, Manitoba is the fourth lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the entire country. So, you know, I just wish the member for Emerson would, you know, spend a little more time reading these statistics and putting them a little more into perspective.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to deal with some of the issues involving the Conservatives' misrepresentation, deliberately so, of the NDP approach to crime in this province and this country. They, if they did some research, would know that as far back as 1970, the Manitoba government—the first NDP government under Ed Schreyer—in addition to—it was the Twenty-Ninth Legislature, began March the 12th, ended August 13th in 1970, was the longest and most controversial in the history of the province; 150 pieces of legislation were considered. I see the House leader wincing at that, because that would be an awful lot of bills to put before the House. But they brought in landlord tenants act, consumer protection laws, increased minimum wage, bill of rights, age of majority was reduced to 18—I liked that at the time—and the Autopac legislation was brought through. But one of the initiatives that that Schreyer government made in 1970 was to bring in The Criminal Injuries Compensation Act, which was a schedule of compensation for innocent citizens who were injured and suffered consequent economic loss as a result of the action of criminals. This was brought in by NDP government, 1970.

* (16:20)

So, if any of these Conservatives want to talk about the NDP commitment to victims, we want to ask them, where were they—where were they all those

years? They didn't bring in any victims' compensation legislation. It was the NDP under Schreyer who brought that in to Manitoba, which, I believe, would be a first. And, in terms of other crime-related issues that the Conservatives like to talk about, I can tell you that Manitoba is a beacon of hope in Ottawa, in the Parliament of Canada, when we talk about the reduction in auto theft statistics a 70 per cent reduction in auto theft. Statistics people, other members of Parliament were very interested in that statistic, and they want to find out why—how and why that happened and how we can replicate that.

The immobilizer program was another program that there was a big success here. It started off a little slow—started off a little slow. There was a reduction in the insurance premiums and people didn't take up the initiative; but, when the government made them free, made it mandatory, took the bull by the horns and dealt with the issue head on, we got results. And this is the kind of actions that we want to see. The most important initiative that we take has got to show results. And we had Gary Filmon, I remember, wanting to make the parents responsible for the children's crimes. Yes, well, how well did that work out? Right. At the end of the day, you know, things were not accomplished. It was, you know, led to a couple of good press releases, but that was about it.

We are interested in initiatives that actually work. And, for example, and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) should be paying attention to this. The proceeds of crime legislation—under those bills, we have \$9-million worth of assets, houses, cars, bikes and other assets seized. We are now giving—we are now providing money to the police force, which is what we should be doing. People should not be profiting by—from crime. So we are seizing the grow ops, we are seizing the bank accounts, we're seizing the cars, and we are now liquidating those assets and we're providing the money to the victims and to the police force.

As a matter of fact, we have donated, I think, \$68,000 to the member for Selkirk's (Mr. Dewar) riding to—for the police to buy two Zodiacs for the RCMP. And the member for Selkirk is thanking the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) for that, and I thank him too because he has done a great job as Attorney General and he's following in the footsteps for the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) that I know took a very tough line. When it was maybe unpopular to do so, he took a tough line, and it's proving—it's very—it's been a slow process. But it's getting results, and I

think that's what we have to do is we need things that will show results.

Now, you know, just by way of background, the members will know that in the United States, because it seems that a lot of ideas that percolate their way up to Canada, not always good ideas, end up becoming—start down there and end up becoming law up here. Now in the United States Ronald Reagan ushered in a new approach in the 1980s. Remember he was California governor and he brought in his three-strikes-and-you're-out legislation. And what that led to was a huge increase in prison construction, privately owned prisons. That's where they tended to go there, and that was viewed as sort of the new way of dealing with crime: three strikes and you're out. Build huge amounts of prisons; let the private sector operate them. And to that effect the Ontario government under the Conservatives, just forget his name right now but—

An Honourable Member: Mike Harris.

Mr. Maloway: Mike Harris was looking at doing the same thing there and having private prison construction. Well, what we have now is we have increasing proof that that system doesn't work. So what is happening in this country right now? Well, we have the federal government embarking on a program to build \$9 billion worth of more prisons when we find that, after 25 years, a-first-strike-and-you're-out approaches in the United States aren't working.

And so we have got a number of examples here from the United States, and I'm going to quote—give a couple of quotes here. And I'll ask if anybody here can identify, you know, who said these words. But the first one is, Mr. Speaker, that we all agree that we can keep the public safe while spending fewer tax dollars, you'll be spending them more effectively. This is related to crime. There is an urgent need to address the astronomical growth in the prison population with its huge cost in dollars, lost human potential. We spent \$68 billion—this is in the United States in—in 2010 on corrections, 300 per cent more than 25 years ago. The prison population is growing 13 times faster than the general population. These are facts that should trouble every American.

Anybody know who said that?

An Honourable Member: Newt.

Mr. Maloway: Was it the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) that said that? No, Newt Gingrich. I can't believe it. The first—I had a whole list of questions to

ask here. The member for Selkirk short-circuited the entire process and got the answer the first time. It was none other than Newt Gingrich, who's running for President at the moment and, as a matter of fact, he's, like, third place in the Republican hit parade as of last night, but he has done a total about-face, and he did it, though, looking at the actual statistics and the facts, and that is what we should be doing in government is looking at facts and doing what actually works.

So he went on to say that our prisons might be worth the current costs if half the prisoners weren't back in prison in three years. You know, we could afford to pay these billions of dollars, \$68 billion, on corrections if we're actually getting some results, but we're not. Half the prisoners are back in jail within three years. So, if our prison policies are failing half the time, we know that there's more humane, effective and other alternatives. It's time to fundamentally rethink how we treat and rehabilitate the prisoners. He says we can no longer afford business as usual with prisons.

Consider events in Texas, which is known to be tough on crime. The Republicans joined with Democrats. They adopted incentive-based funding to strengthen the state's probation system in 2005. Then, in 2007, they decided against building more prisons and instead they adopted an enhanced proven community corrections approach to drug courts. And we see we have drug courts right here, Mr. Speaker, in Canada. The reforms are forecast to save \$2 billion in prison costs over five years. So what Texas has done is they've redirected this money that they've saved into community treatment for the mentally ill and low-level drug addicts. This is what we should be doing. Not only have these reforms reduced Texas prison population, but they've also helped to deal with the budget gap which—and, by the way, there's no waiting list for drug treatment in Texas at this time.

And, Mr. Speaker, did the crime rate go up when they did this? No. The crime rate went down. And you know by how much? Ten per cent since 2004. And so Newt was encouraged by this. Smart man. So he went on, and now he's endorsed the correction reforms in South Carolina, and they're going to reserve costly prison beds for dangerous criminals while punishing low-risk offenders through lower cost community supervision. And that, too, is bipartisan legislation with strong support from liberals, conservatives. That's law enforcement—the judges, reform advocates. The state's going to save,

in South Carolina, \$175 million in prison construction this year and \$60 billion in operating costs over the next several years. Is anybody in the federal government paying attention to this? Has anybody contacted Vic Toews and suggested to him that maybe he should look at programs that work?

And, you know, I regret, Mr. Speaker, that I'm almost out of time here, and I'm only, like, halfway through, but maybe there's a kind of an encore process here. I know we don't have question and answer period. We have in Ottawa, after every speech, you have the right to ask questions, so you have to get prepared pretty good. I think that would be something that we could—we should bring in here if we could do something like that.

But, in any event, if anyone is interested in Newt Gingrich's comments, I'd be very pleased to pass them around. I think that, you know, Conservatives on this side, especially the plethora of Conservatives that are going to be running for leadership here, I would think this would be good advice. The member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), I know, has got to be concerned about his longevity in this House, right, so I'm going to pass a copy of this over to him right away because maybe he, himself, will want to run for leader. And I know the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), he's already tuning up his campaign here. He's getting, you know, getting pointers and looking for a campaign manager and donors, and so on.

Anyway, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's good to be back.

* (16:30)

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the amendment to the Speech from the Throne.

But first I want to just touch on what an honour it is to be in this building and be part of this group that is gathered here to make the rules and the laws of the province. It's something that very few people ever get the opportunity to experience. And I wish that a lot more did. They'd get a better understanding of what goes on, and some of the comments you hear out in the public wouldn't be possibly as harsh on—as they are on politicians when they actually see what it takes to be a member of this body here.

I do, indeed, consider it a huge privilege, a huge honour to have the electorate choose to have me represent them in this building.

I do want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to the Speaker's Chair. I expect it's a very daunting job to—with an awful high—fast learning curve. We'll try and go a little bit easy on you on the next three days that are left in this session, and in the spring things might heat up a little bit more. But I'm sure you'll have read all your books by then and be prepared. So, certainly, welcome to that position.

I do want to acknowledge the pages. I know they take time off from school to be in this building, and it's much appreciated by us. Sometimes I know it's probably a little bit difficult to stay involved, but other times we'll keep you pretty busy, so it's—welcome here. It's—this is part of a learning experience for you. And I hope at some point we see you back, maybe sitting in one of these chairs, in the time to come, and with your backgrounds this will certainly help you in that endeavour.

There's so much—so many people that should be acknowledged, and I do want to welcome all the colleagues in the House, both old and new members, back to this building, especially the new members. I know four and a half years ago when I was first elected it was—you really just were spinning in your spot wondering what was going to happen next. And I had, from a past life, quite a bit of familiarity with this building. I at least knew where the bathrooms were, and when you get over 60 years old that's kind of helpful.

There's a huge amount of staff in this building that in all aspects of this building that either on the government's side or on the opposition side, that work long hours to keep all of us prepared for the jobs we do in here, and they should be acknowledged. And they should be acknowledged at every point in our progress through this building.

I do want to acknowledge our leader, the leader that I have worked with for the last four and a half years. He has announced that he will be stepping down as leader of our party. It was a very close relationship I had with him through the last four years, and I learned an awful lot of things, politically, from our leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen). And I do value the lessons I've learned from him, and I hope they will help me through the next four years in this building too.

We just came through an election, as many of us have—I squeaked through again—and as many of us in this House have already mentioned, and I do want to thank a few of the people, and I won't go into too

much depth, but my campaign chair was a man named Wayne Gerrard. He was my campaign chair for the last two elections, and he knows how to run an election, and it worked very well for me. I had good staff, good volunteers working for me. We covered the constituency, and the rural constituencies are quite a bit different than the city. A lot of covering the constituency out there isn't necessarily door to door, because you can go door to door out there and you might cover four places in an afternoon because some of them are five miles apart and everybody wants to stop and talk when you get there.

So, what you do, though, you—in the rural constituencies, you make sure you're at events in the communities. And some of our smaller communities only have one event a year. You be there. That's all there is to it; you be there. They acknowledge that and they'll support you because they know that you cared enough to come to their community. And they're all very proud of their communities.

There's been a fairly significant change in the boundaries of my constituency, and, because of that change—I maintained two offices before, one in Ste. Rose and one in Neepawa, and Rita Verhaeghe ran my office in Ste. Rose. I don't have Ste. Rose in my constituency anymore, so Rita has taken, basically, an early retirement out of that office.

And my other office in Neepawa, my main office is run by—my constituency assistant is Joanne Pollock. Joanne Pollock is just entering her 25th year as the constituency assistant in Neepawa and she will be retiring in about a month or a month and a half from now. So I'm in the process of hiring a new constituency assistant. But I do want to acknowledge the years and years that Joanne has put in in that office, and always been well received by the constituents in that constituency, always gave them a good listening ear and certainly helped both myself and my predecessor, Mr. Glen Cummings, solve a lot of their problems and resolve the issues they brought to us.

The Agassiz constituency, now, with the new boundaries, they took the north end off the constituency and moved the boundary further south. So I lost communities like Ste. Rose and Laurier, Eddystone, the Ebb and Flow First Nation, the Crane River First Nation, and a number of other areas there. And I lost them to three different constituencies. I lost the Eddystone area and Ebb and Flow into the

Interlake. I lost the Crane River area in the Swan River constituency and I lost the Ste. Rose-Laurier area into the Dauphin constituency. And I'm pleased to say a number of the people in those constituencies have called me and asked me if I will still take their issues forward. I don't think they're too sure of their NDP MLAs at the moment, so they're asking me to continue to do that.

I've had Carberry, Sidney, Austin, MacGregor, Bagot, all added to my constituency along No. 1 Highway. My constituency has 17 Hutterite colonies, soon to be two more; there's two more that acquired land in my constituency. So, by the next election time, there'll be 19 colonies in my constituency. I still have one First Nation remaining, that's Sandy Bay. I also have in my constituency the Old Order Mennonites. Some would refer to them as Amish. There's about 17 families in the Plumas area of my constituency that moved here from Ontario three years ago and are adding greatly to that community, population wise, and they, trade wise, they're very talented at making furniture, harness and all those types of skills that were needed in the area. So, they're welcome. Still have in my constituency two Métis communities, the Kinosa and Reedy Creek.

In my constituency, I have three regional health authorities represented in my constituency, and three conservation districts and three school divisions.

*(16:40)

The three conservation districts are interesting in their own right. They are the White Mud, the Turtle Mountain-Turtle River and the Alonsa Conservation districts. And that is three out of the four conservation districts in this province that are charged with water management in their own area, which isn't a common thing with the conservation districts. But in those three—and that covers my whole constituency—they have responsibility for water management and looking after the third-order drains of the province.

Large industries in my area, I have the HyLife hog processing plant at Neepawa, which has been a real boon to the area. It's—they're continuing to grow. When they first took over that plant, they had around 330 employees, 320-330 employees. They are now at 650, and they're moving toward 850 employees. Keep in mind this was a town that had 3,400 people when they moved there. We've already seen about an 800-person increase in the town population, and we're growing at a very rapid pace, which brings some of the other concerns that comes

with it is lack of housing, and we really have a shortage of housing there. And you probably noticed one of the questions I asked today of the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). We're trying to develop anything we can into more housing.

I also have 10 rural municipalities in my constituency, and as I said, there's a growing population of mostly Filipino workers but also Korean and Ukrainian that have come over to work in the hog plant. Something that's really changed in our town as from a few years ago when you walked down the street, you will now see two Asian food stores. We never saw Asian food stores in small prairie towns before. It's quite a change.

I do want to touch on the Lake Manitoba flood. That is one of the most significant events that's happened in my constituency since I've been—it is the most significant event in my constituency since I became MLA. This was a man-made flood and we know that there were a number of programs announced and a lot of promises made. Some of the promises are not being kept or have not been kept so far. The forecasting and communication has been very poor on it. I have responsibility, at least in the Ste. Rose constituency, I had responsibility for approximately 200 miles of lakeshore on Lake Manitoba on the western side, all the way from Lynch's Point to Crane River, and that's a pretty massive area. I spent most of my spring and summer when I had spare time—when the House was sitting back in the spring, I'd take the weekend and I'd spend the whole weekend up along the lake talking to people, observing how the lake was growing and getting feedback and trying to give them some comfort, some peace of mind in what was truly a terrible situation for them.

I do want to mention that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) did come out and visit the area on a couple of occasions and attended some meetings in the area. They were sometimes short of answers and sometimes not listening very well, but at least they showed up, and I give them credit for that because sometimes they were showing up at a very heated situation and they at least were there.

You know, the Lake Manitoba flood, contrary to what's being said, was predictable and it was partially preventable. Lake Manitoba was high in 2010, and the Province did neglect to release more water in Fairford through the fall and the early winter

of 2010. Releases wouldn't have prevented all the flooding, but they would certainly have reduced it. Over the past three years, we have seen retention areas fill without release. Contrary to what some believe, I think the sad shape of our provincial drains–drainage system played a major role in this year's flooding.

Our provincial drainage system has deteriorated so badly over the last few years, and I believe that leads to some of the problems with flooding. Sedimentation, vegetation, prevents the movement of water and legislation and regulation prevent proper drain maintenance. In the past, when the whole provincial drainage system worked properly, retention areas, wetlands and farmland filled with water in the spring and gradually emptied out over a period of time. Over the past few years the wetlands and retention areas have not been able to drain at all because of poor drain maintenance. The results—that results in every drop of water that arrives, whether it's snowfall, rainfall, whatever, there's no retention area to hold it and it has to run off immediately, and that's what we saw this spring.

We've had years before when we had as much snow as we had this spring. We've had years before when we had as much rain but this year it was, I guess, a perfect storm. All the retention, all the absorption areas were already full and that wasn't necessary, and proper maintenance of the drainage system would go a long way to alleviate that. Spent a lot of the spring driving through water on roads and lanes, probably will have to replace some wheel bearings on my truck.

I want to just touch on just a few of the people and a few of the stories involved with the flood around Lake Manitoba, and I'll start right at the north end with the Crane River community. There's a gentleman up there named Dale Myhre. Dale is a rancher. He pastures most of the Métis side of the community—of the Crane River community council. His road's been under water all year. I don't know whether he can get to his house yet. He couldn't most of the summer. He has five kids that need to attend school, and I'm not sure exactly whether they've been able to return to their home yet or not. He has cattle. He's been evacuated and most of his pasture was under water; the cattle had to be moved elsewhere.

There were other evacuations of the Crane River area and there were evacuations in all three of the First Nations in my former Ste. Rose constituency.

Crane River, Ebb and Flow, Sandy Bay all had evacuations, and in some cases some have returned. In a lot of cases they have not been able to return yet to their homes.

Bill, Lyle, Norman Finney [*phonetic*] live right up against the lake up the Kerr Road [*phonetic*] area and they've got dykes around their houses and their buildings that are huge. Hay land flooded. They've been told that there'd been assessment done. They been told their cattle can go back home, unlike many herds there, and they can. Their corrals are dry but what—or high enough that they will at least be able to support them. But when they start to calve, they try to move cattle to other areas, and all those areas are under water, so they have some concerns there.

And you've got to understand that lake. When the—there's a hump around the lake and when the water gets out beyond that hump, out over that hump as it did with this flood, there's nowhere for it to get back in. We can take that lake down or the Province can take that lake down to 812 this winter or wherever. The water's still going to be at 815 or 816 outside that bank. About the only way that water disappears, there's a few channels where it runs back in. But about the only way that water disappears will be through evaporation next summer providing we don't have another flood in the spring.

* (16:50)

So, any of those ones that their cattle can't return home are facing a tremendous hardship and I raised cattle for many years. I am a cattle rancher, I was a grain farmer too. But I understand the ramifications of this and the answers they're getting are less than adequate. They're being told, well, change the breeding date on your cattle. Well, I'm sorry, those cows were bred last spring. You're going to have a hard time changing the breeding date now. They've been told, well, maybe you should just sell your herd. Well, some of these are 35-, 40-year-old ranchers with young families. These are the people we need to keep in that industry. Some of them are a little grey around the temples like I am, and—but many of them are the younger ones and they're the ones that are going to carry that industry forward and we need them there.

So many of them that are in real dire circumstances, and you can see the stress and the anxiety when you talk to them. Joel Deslaurier [*phonetic*] at Reykjavik, just over 7,000 acres of owned and leased land, at one point this summer 6,500 acres of that was under water—under Lake

Manitoba. He has made the decision to sell his herd. He has 600 cows. They're all going to the Ashern Auction Mart in about two weeks' time. He has a young family, four children. He's 41 years old. That was their home; that was their livelihood. And he's moved out of his home because of the flooding. He's selling his cattle herd. Basically, he's moving out of the industry and that's the age group of people we need.

I don't know whether a lot of the members opposite, and maybe some of the ones on my side, even realize what's out there right now. As the land emerges, and only about 20 per cent of the land has emerged from that overbearing flood, as the land emerges we're seeing debris all over the place. We're seeing a black slime. We're seeing alkaline spots and alkaline is salt that comes up from below, and other areas that are covered with bulrushes and cattails. And we talk about rehabbing this land but we're—most of it's still under water to start with. But the rehab is going to be a lot more than next year or the year after. It's going to take a period of time. You can rehabilitate cropland probably quicker than you can hay land and pasture land because cropland, once you can get on it, you can start working it and get some results on it. But the other is long term. And they were flooded through no fault of their own and that has to be taken into consideration. That has to be remembered. The promises were made. Anyone in the inundation zone would have all their costs covered.

You know, the—some people have said, well, they shouldn't be living there anyhow. It's a flood plain. Well, if you drive—even if you drive toward the Narrows right now, before you ever see the lake, you'll see mature trees that are dying from standing in water too long. Now these are mature trees that took 40 years, 30 years, 50 years to grow. If they took that long to grow, this isn't a flood plain. The saying I heard was oak trees don't grow on a flood plain. Well, a lot of these areas have oak trees, and they don't grow on a flood plain. They won't grow where they're flooded every year. This is almost a one-in-a-lifetime flood, and it's a man-made flood.

The—there's some areas along there, where Darrel and Dee Dee Armstrong, and I've mentioned them before in this House, they have—they had a resort area there, privately owned, 84 cabins called the Big Point Retreat. It was their source of income. They're semi-retired and they rented out their lots. That whole area is gone. They—you talk about lost income, business interruption. Their whole,

basically, retirement plan has gone out the window. They have nothing left. Jonas Johnson, just near Langruth, he's retirement age. He had his land which he rented out and he did do some hay baling, hay for sale. He—his land was his nest egg. He doesn't have a pension plan. He doesn't have anything to fall back on. His land was his nest egg. Now they come out and reassess his land, land that he thought had a certain value, but because a third of it's under the lake, it has no value. He doesn't know where he's going with this.

You know, I think about JoAnn Egilson. She was at the meeting in Langruth that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) attended actually, very clear-spoken, soft-spoken lady, a psychiatric nurse, I believe, who got up to the mike and spoke, and she said—you know, there was roughly 300 people there at that meeting. She said, when the government puts programs in place, make them simple and seamless. And I never forgot that. She said, make these programs simple and seamless so that we can understand them, so that they work very clearly and very—we can move through these programs.

She also told a couple of government employees their mothers would be ashamed of them, but she also asked for an apology. She wasn't asking for a whole lot. She was saying this flood was caused by someone else, not us. Will you apologize for it? And, to this day, no one, no one has apologized for that Lake Manitoba flood, and I think an apology is owed. I don't think it puts anybody in a worse position or anything. I think an apology is owed to someone on that flood. I don't think it's that hard to say, I'm sorry for causing something.

You know, just a couple of other things I'll just touch on briefly because these are things that I've brought to this House and I've read petitions. I've asked ministers in person. I've talked about some of these things and we badly need things like when we talk about the highways and some other members have talked about highways in here. We badly need some things done out in our area of the province, and some of them are fairly simple things.

The Town of Ste. Rose, and I read the petition again, I think, yesterday, has asked for a speed limit. Even the RCMP are supportive of a speed limit right in the area where the No. 5 Highway goes past the town of Ste. Rose. There have been eight serious accidents, and I think three or four deaths in the last five years on that stretch of highway. And what happens is the department goes out, do a traffic

count, and the traffic count isn't high enough to justify it and it dies there. There's other considerations on these things.

I've asked for a traffic light at the corner of Highway 5 north and 16 Highway in Neepawa. We have a new Tim Hortons there. We have a new Subway there, and it increased the traffic at that corner. And I know the former minister of highways said he got caught in the traffic there one day and was—sat there for a lengthy period of time. But the best thing, line I've heard on that one is, I don't want to be the fatality that causes the traffic lights to go in. They've counted the traffic there over and over and over again, and they still come up with this idea that, oh, the traffic count doesn't justify it. There's other considerations. There's businesses. There's a trucking outfit just to the north that's coming through there, trying to get through with a lot of machinery. I've asked over and over again, and maybe, who knows, maybe it will help now. This area's part of

the Swan River constituency now, so I hope the member from Swan River is listening.

The Crane River community needs major improvements to the road into there. I'll just pass it on to the member from Swan River. I've brought that up many times in this House. I wish him better luck than I've had with it.

Another concern, and this is now in the Minister of Agriculture's constituency, is the one-lane bridge in No. 5 Highway with the traffic lights out in the middle of everywhere—nowhere. Major trunk highway with a one-lane bridge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, it'll be open for debate

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Friday at 10 a.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 27, 2011

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