

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

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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
KOSTYSHYN, Ron	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
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
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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
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
	Kirkfield Park	
	St. Norbert	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 28, 2011

The House met at 10 a.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 and 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

Cellular Phone Service in Southeastern Manitoba

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And this is the background to this petition is as follows:

During early October 2011, parts of southeastern Manitoba were hard hit 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 of the communication systems 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 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 and 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.

And this petition has been signed by T. French, B. Nichols and T. Anstett and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

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:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about the safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and the pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by S.A. Nielson, M. Oswald, L. Evans 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 the background for this petition is as follows:

During the record flood of 2011, the increased volume of water flowing through the Souris River caused the Coulter bridge at Highway 251 to buckle and become unstable 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 a 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 this Coulter bridge, and to consider making it an urgent priority to restore traffic across the Souris River either by a temporary or a permanent bridge.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by K. McKague, A.W. Lawrence, R. Brigden, R. Brigden and many, many others.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Jocelinda Guerra, who is the guest of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Swan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crown Corporation Services Ratepayer Stabilization Fund

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Public Utilities Board is forecasting rate increases at Hydro of 140 per cent, the Premier has made some election promises related to rates and that includes creating a

single stabilization fund for three different areas: hydro, home heating and automobile insurance.

Can the Premier just indicate where the money is going to come from in order to build up this stabilization fund, and will he acknowledge that in the end it will only come through higher rates for Manitoba families?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. In the election we said we would have a bundle of services available to Manitobans which would be the lowest in Canada for the next four years. Those services included home heating, electricity and auto insurance. And in the event that they need some rate stabilization, a reserve fund will be built up for those various services and it will be deployed to ensure they remain the lowest in that year relative to all the peers across the country.

This is something that we think will 'amow' Manitoba to maintain its affordability advantage for families and citizens and seniors, and we will follow through on it as we go forward.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said that they will be creating an additional combined stabilization fund, and the issue is where the money is going to come from in order to fund that account. And the concern being raised by Manitobans is that this turns into another government slush fund, that it's built up to artificially high taxes or rates and that it leads to a breakdown in accountability within the Crown corporations.

With Hydro rates projected to go up by 140 per cent with the additional cost of 3.6 billion on the far west-side bipole line, and at a time when American customers are getting a half-price discount on Manitoba power, can the Premier indicate who the beneficiary is going to be of this new slush fund? Is it there to help Manitobans or is it there to continue to provide Americans with a half-price discount?

*(10:10)

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if it will give the member any comfort, but the Leader of the Opposition has now just allowed some of the members in this Legislature to once again claim they were prescient on what the question would be today, and once again the member has gone back to his standard rhetoric that he used before the election.

He knows full well that the export contracts entered into by Manitoba Hydro give a rate that generates low results—low electricity rates in Manitoba. He knows that the rates they play are the market rates in that—in those various jurisdictions and allow Manitoba Hydro to keep the lowest rates in North America for Manitobans.

That is one component of our election promise: low electricity rates. The other one is low home heating rates, and I note that as recently as this week the price of home heating fuel in Manitoba went down a modest amount. And, of course, our auto insurance rates have been reduced as well.

We will have the lowest auto insurance, home heating and electricity rates of any jurisdiction in Canada for the next four years. We promised it; we will deliver it.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I—I think the Premier just tried to take credit for a drop in natural gas prices, which is a global market for natural gas and oil prices.

But notwithstanding his attempt to take credit for a drop in natural gas prices, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns about creating a single stabilization fund for multiple Crown corporations, including whether it would be used as a slush fund, which has happened in the past with Hydro, whether, in fact, it will result in artificially high rates at one corporation in order to subsidize overspending in another corporation.

Professor McCallum from the University of Manitoba, former chair of Manitoba Hydro, said, and I quote: I'm not aware of anybody who has tried to run a regulatory environment that involves two separate utilities, and I suspect it would have enormous unintended negative consequences.

Can I ask the Premier: How is he going to assure Manitobans that what may appear to be an attractive idea in theory doesn't end up having enormous unintended negative consequences for Manitoba families?

Mr. Selinger: We did say in the election there would be an independent audit that verified how we manage to maintain the lowest rates in North America. The member may have missed that. He may have missed that component of the election promise, but there will be an independent audit. We will be reviewed.

We will maintain the lowest rates in North America for home heating, electricity and auto insurance, and let's not forget it's the member

opposite that promised to take Manitoba Hydro to full market rates which would have meant dramatic increases for all Manitobans. It's the member opposite that wanted to tie up Hydro in red tape and roadblocks and all kinds of litigation which would have meant we would have not built it to deliver on our contracts that we have with American customers. It was the member opposite that said that the term sheets we signed with our customers were written on the back of a napkin and weren't worth anything; they have turned into firm contracts for \$7 billion in power.

We will build Manitoba Hydro. We will keep the lowest rates in North America. We will keep the lowest bundle of rates for auto insurance, home heating and electricity compared to all other jurisdictions across the country, and there will be an independent audit of that, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Export Sales Contract Disclosures

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

The Premier has made reference to export sales at Manitoba Hydro, and it's worth noting that the Public Utilities Board, the independent watchdog, has asked for access to those export contracts. They—the NDP government is refusing to release those contracts to the Public Utilities Board for scrutiny.

I want to ask the Premier: If the export deals that he's bragging about in the House are so good, why is he so desperate to hide them?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that's inaccurate and false information.

We appoint the Public Utilities Board. Government appoints the board of Manitoba Hydro. Each of them takes their responsibilities extremely seriously.

We have always encouraged Manitoba Hydro to disclose all the information the PUB requires while protecting their commercial interests as a government enterprise. We encourage that policy today; we have done it in the past. I look forward to them resolving those differences in a way that allows Manitoba Hydro to remain competitive, to do its job of delivering of the lowest rates in North America for Manitoba Hydro, and I'm confident they can do that and satisfy the PUB requirements as well.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the PUB is trying to get access to the export contracts, and yet the government—Hydro, under the direction of the government, is refusing to release them to the PUB for scrutiny.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier tends to focus on selected facts, and yet they want to cover up the export contracts, not—never mind not sharing them with the Legislature, but they don't want to share them with the Public Utilities Board. And I want to ask the Premier if the reason for that is the fact that the export contracts are worth less than what he's planning to spend on the capital program.

Mr. Selinger: Using the same logic of the Leader of the Opposition, why isn't he accusing us of telling PUB to demand the contracts from Manitoba Hydro?

We appoint both sides of this discussion. So he's now saying because Manitoba Hydro doesn't want commercial information to be in the public domain, that we've directed them to do that. Why isn't he equally saying that we directed the PUB to require that information to be disclosed to them? You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that response.

So the logic, then, is that, then, that he's in a position if he can direct the west-side bipole line, and he's claiming that he has oversight and control over both bodies, why not now direct Hydro to release the export contracts? Mr. Speaker, that would seem to be the logical conclusion to the line of reasoning that the Premier has just laid out.

And so, I want to ask the Premier if the reason they don't want to release them is that, on the one hand, rates are going up for Manitoba families by 140 per cent; No. 2, they're charging Americans half price; No. 3, the expenditure side is more than what they're bringing in for exports. So what that leads to is the conclusion rates are going up for Manitoba families; they're not going to keep their promise.

Why not just come clean about that today?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's only the member opposite that claims we direct either of these agencies. Let's be clear about that. It's only the member opposite that has a conspiracy theory for every little issue that he raises in the Legislature. I mean, he could be a novelist. He should be a novelist. He writes great conspiracy theories.

The reality is the board operates independently from the Crown. The Public Utilities Board operates independently. They both take their responsibilities seriously to protect the fiduciary responsibilities that they have. We do have the lowest rates in North America.

Contrary to the fear mongering of the Leader of the Opposition, the reality is we're going to build Manitoba Hydro for the benefit of all Manitobans, not tie it up like the member opposite wishes to do. We're going to do it and we're also going to have the lowest bundle of rates for home heating, electricity and auto insurance of any jurisdiction in Canada. You can bank on it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Tuxedo has the floor.

Minister of Finance Permanent Appointment Priority

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that the world is facing challenging financial times. Yet at a time of financial uncertainty in the world, the NDP Premier of Manitoba fails to make it a priority to put in place a permanent Minister of Finance in this province.

Why is that the case?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, there are many people on this side of the House that can play multiple roles and do it with great competence and effectiveness. The member that we have appointed to be the acting Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has served on Treasury Board for many years; he has stellar experience in preparing budgets; he'll do a good job on any role he's asked to serve in this House. And it's only unfortunate that the rural people opposite won't support the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) and the Minister of Finance on keeping the Canadian Wheat Board in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: If he does have the confidence in the acting Minister of Finance, then why doesn't he make him the permanent Minister of Finance today, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, Ontario has faced an election recently. Newfoundland, other provinces across this country have faced elections. All of those provinces have permanent minister of finances in place.

Does he not, Mr. Speaker—why does he not have a permanent Minister of Finance in place? Is it that the economy in Manitoba is not a priority for this NDP government, or is it that he doesn't have the faith in anyone in his caucus to take on that permanent role?

Mr. Selinger: The member was sworn in as the Minister of Finance. Unlike the members opposite, he's prepared to act and do his job properly. Nothing new about that.

* (10:20)

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Please, folks. We have a viewing public that is watching these proceedings here this morning and I ask for your co-operation in allowing question and answer period to proceed.

The honourable member for Tuxedo has the floor.

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

More than ever, given what is going on around the world, it is incumbent upon the government to show stability in the area of fiscal management and accountability in this province. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is not a priority for this NDP government.

Will the Premier agree that this is a significant area and agree to appoint a permanent Minister of Finance today so that Manitobans can be assured that the state of the economy in this province is a fact—in fact, a priority under this NDP government, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Finance that's prepared to act. And, yes, we do believe in stability in the economy, which is why we put in place our recovery program after the 2008 recession, which generated over 29,000 jobs, which kept our schools and hospitals open, which kept Manitobans working and moved on projects that'll make a long-term difference.

It was the member from Tuxedo who wanted to cut the budget a half a billion dollars in the middle of the election. It was the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) that voted for that, along with all the members opposite in the caucus. If they want to go back and replay the election on what the best program is for building the economy in Manitoba, we're happy to do it.

Brandon University Mediation Timeline Concerns

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, today marks day 17 of the Brandon University strike. The 2008 strike ended after 17 days; it does not look like the same can be said for this strike.

Students and parents are becoming increasingly upset. High school students, especially those who are applying for scholarships, are now selecting the post-secondary education institutions that they will be applying to, and guidance counsellors are telling me that they do not see Brandon University as one of their options.

On Monday, the Minister of Advanced Education (Mr. Selby) appointed a mediator in the Brandon University strike at the request of the BU Faculty Association. Since BUFA asked for and was granted this request, will the minister ask BUFA members to return to work during the mediation process so that students do not fall any further behind in their studies and that we stop further damage to BU's reputation?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. I know he is concerned about his constituency. I'm concerned about the students also at Brandon University, having been a student at Brandon University myself a few years back.

I just want to clarify for him how labour relations works. So, I appointed the mediator as the Minister of Labour; that's part of the responsibility of the Minister of Labour. That followed upon appointed—having appointed a conciliator who worked with the parties from the beginning of that strike. That mediation continues. I have a great deal of confidence in the mediator, Mr. Werier. He continues to work with the parties. I believe that the best way to see this continue and to get everybody back to working and back to going to school is to allow the mediation to continue, without interference.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Advanced Education indicate whether Brandon University is prepared to extend the university's voluntary withdrawal date, as it did following the 2008 strike, and would that include fee reimbursement?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member

for his question because I know that he is concerned about the students of Brandon University, as we are here, as I am as well.

The best thing for them, of course, Mr. Speaker, would be to have the students back in the classroom. That's what we all want here in the House, and we know that's what the students want as well.

As the Minister of Labour explained, the best way to do that is to continue allowing the two parties to speak. We know that they're doing that right now; mediation does continue. And we are hopeful that they will be back in the classroom as soon as possible.

Of course, the university does have some flexibility at this point, Mr. Speaker but, as it stands, we are hopeful that this will soon be resolved and students will be back in the classroom as soon as possible.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, during the last strike by faculty at Brandon University, as the strike entered its third week, Manitoba's premier at that time, Gary Doer, offered to send the dispute to binding arbitration.

Mr. Speaker, as we are now well into the third week of the current strike at BU, will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) do as his predecessor did and offer to send the dispute to binding arbitration and ask the faculty to return to teaching their students?

Ms. Howard: I'm going to continue to talk about the way labour relations works in Manitoba. Binding arbitration is available to both the parties, has been available from the beginning and is on the table, and if the parties are agreeable to binding arbitration, we would be pleased to help them find an arbitrator.

At this point, they're in mediation. That mediation continues. I believe, and I know, that collective bargaining can be a very delicate process. I don't think any of us in this House would want to interfere with that process, would want to see that process go off of the rails because of—because we want to take political advantage of the situation.

So we will continue to see the mediation. I believe that is the best opportunity for the strike to end and for students to get back to school. If binding arbitration is an option where we're going to go, we're prepared and we are ready to appoint an arbitrator and see that process continued. Thank you.

Culture, Heritage and Tourism Department Program Funding Reductions

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it was just a few days ago that we were celebrating Women's History Month and, specifically, women's contributions to the arts community. And we know that the arts and culture are a very important part of our community, and we should celebrate those achievements. But it's very interesting that the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism was attending, knowing full well that she had cut four point—\$5.4 million from programming within her department.

I'd like to ask the minister: Does she not see the irony, Mr. Speaker, in celebrating women in art and at the same time cutting \$5.4 million from programming?

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I thank my honourable colleague for the question. I would like to let this House know that this government has put more resources to arts, culture, heritage and even tourism than the previous administration. And this is the—and our department had maintained our budget despite the downturn in our economy. So all our arts resources have been—oh, so our arts counterparts have had their resources uncut. Thank you.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, this minister's slash funding, by her own admission, and I quote: I'm very pleased to let the member know that, yes, Manitoba has not been spending a whack of millions. End quote. And further I quote: It's not just that we spend less that there is no growth in the industry. End quote.

This minister cuts grants to cultural organizations by almost half a million dollars. There's also cuts to libraries, archives and historical resources, overall a 10 per cent cut in program funding, Mr. Speaker.

How can this government celebrate women in arts and the arts community and at the same time admit that they cut the funding, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Marcelino: In my visits to various arts and cultural organizations, I was heartened to hear of—the members of these organizations speak very well of our government. They told me in the past, in the previous governments, there were drastic cuts to their funding, but under this government their resources were maintained. And I think the last election is proof that the arts community, though we

may not be able to support all of their requirements, have—most of them have been met, and they were happy, and they elected us again.

Mrs. Taillieu: Well, Mr. Speaker, despite this government's cuts to arts and culture, I do want to commend the federal Conservative government for the \$2-million award—for the \$2-million award—to the Winnipeg Arts Council, which resulted in Winnipeg being designated the 2010 Cultural Capital of Canada. The NDP cut half a million; the Conservatives put in \$2 million.

* (10:30)

When is this minister going to realize that you can't approve of cutting whacks of millions out of a budget and at the same time claim to support arts and culture in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker? Does she consider that a reason to celebrate?

Ms. Marcelino: If my memory serves me right, at the last budget the members opposite voted to cut half a billion to the budget and most of those would be cut to the arts organization.

I have a few facts here, Mr. Speaker. In 1999, grants to cultural organizations by the prior government was seven million, six hundred ninety-four point six. When we came in 1999, the grants to cultural organizations reached \$9,737,000. Manitoba Arts Council, in their time, received seven million, three hundred seventeen thousand point three, and under our government we gave them \$9,620,000.

Manitoba Agricultural Museum Funding Reduction

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): On Wednesday I asked questions about funding cuts to the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. The Minister of Agriculture agreed that the museum is an integral part of Manitoba history in the areas of education and tourism. The Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism indicated that there was no cut in funding and that her department indeed received a transfer of \$75,800 from MAFRI for offering support of the Manitoba Agricultural Museum. The MAFRI grant of \$75,800 was not received by the Agricultural Museum last year and they have yet to receive it this year.

Mr. Speaker, where did the grant go? What do we tell the 700 museum volunteers?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I find it

quite interesting that the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) just got up and bragged all about the federal Conservatives, and they—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: —on the Wheat Board, which is an issue that Manitoba should be concerned about, and you cave on that one, Mr. Speaker. We don't need—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. I'm having a difficult time hearing the answer to the question that was posed. I ask for your co-operation and to allow the members of the viewing public also to hear the answer to the question.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: And furthermore to that, Mr. Speaker, nobody on this side of the House needs to take a single lesson from members opposite after they proposed cutting a half a billion dollars out of the '010 budget. What—where would that have left, if the Conservatives have had their way, where would that have left the Agricultural Museum? They wouldn't have had much money to run year to year on, I don't think.

Mr. Briese: The Manitoba Agricultural Museum is unique to it—in its relationship to Ag and should receive funding grants from the Department of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture says he supports that position. The Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino) says the grant transfers were made. The Agricultural Museum did not receive the grant last year or has yet to receive it this year.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just trying to follow the money. The grant for \$75,800, where did it go?

Mr. Struthers: It's interesting that the Conservatives are interested in history when they're working to make the Wheat Board part of history too, Mr. Speaker. Maybe to make—satisfy members opposite we can have an exhibit all about the old Wheat Board that they worked so hard to get rid of in this province. Their position, their hypocritical position on this is ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, our department has been working diligently with the folks at that museum. We've been

working with the Manitoba agricultural-ag society's group. We've been working with a whole number of groups in Manitoba that are working very honestly to preserve Manitoba's agricultural history because we know that that's an important part of what we do.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of lines in our Agriculture budget dedicated to making sure that that history is kept alive in Manitoba.

Mr. Briese: I'm just asking a simple question. Could either one of the two ministers please tell me where the cheque is? Where is the grant for \$75,000?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the Agricultural Museum is one of seven signature museums in this province. Our government's commitment to those seven signature museums remains strong. My department is in consultation with the folks at the Manitoba Agricultural Museum as well as other museums and other agricultural historical societies to talk about and to make sure that that kind of support is there for those hard-working Manitoba organizations that contribute so much to our economy and contribute so much to our heritage in Manitoba.

Canadian Wheat Board Government Initiatives on Reform

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, after the election the Premier met with Prime Minister Harper, and it was reported with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board that the Premier thinks that there is still room for negotiation. But the biggest question is how well the two opposing governments on this debate will play together in the sandbox and deal with what happens in Manitoba when the monopoly is gone.

The economic impact of the Canadian Wheat Board is large on the future for farmers in Manitoba, on the Port of Churchill and on Winnipeg, with an estimated 2,294 jobs in Winnipeg dependent on the Canadian Wheat Board, of which some 460 are positions in the Canadian Wheat Board itself.

I ask the Premier: With the Canadian Wheat Board sitting in the crosshairs of being eliminated by the federal Conservative government, what is the provincial government going to do?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question; it's a great question. One thing we won't do is we won't turn it into a museum like the members opposite are proposing. That's what their objective is. They want to add a—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) and—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Selinger: They want to add another signature museum to the province of Manitoba, and then they want the Province to fund it as a signature—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Sorry to interrupt. I'm asking for the co-operation of all members of the House, please. Allow us to proceed with question and answer period.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the member knows, we've made a very strong case for the value of the Wheat Board in Manitoba as well as throughout the Prairies. The member has correctly stated there's a number of direct jobs here and indirect jobs, and what will be the impact of taking away the single desk from those folks that are working here? It's a head office of Manitoba. What will be the impact of no longer directing grain through Churchill where it's over 90 per cent of the traffic that grows through that port? And what will be the impact of ending the single desk on small- and medium-sized farmers, particularly those that are a long distance from market?

These are all very important issues that need to be addressed by the federal government as they move forward on this legislation, and we have not seen sufficient information on how they will cope with that in their decision to end the single desk.

So the member asks a good question. The question needs to be answered not only by the federal government but by the members opposite that support that initiative.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it was reported in *The Globe and Mail* in early October that the Premier is almost resigned to losing the battle on the Canadian Wheat Board and that the Premier admitted that these little that he can do to stop Stephen Harper end the single desk.

The Premier also said that as Premier he has a responsibility to make sure that Manitoba comes out of this better off than it was before.

I ask the Premier: Has he given up, and what is the Premier's transition plan if the single desk goes, given that Stephen Harper has the single desk in his crosshairs and his finger is pressing increasingly hard on the trigger?

* (10:40)

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate the metaphor and the analogy from the member opposite.

The reality is this: the federal government is changing the legislation. They are removing all the duly elected farmers from the Wheat Board after farmers in majority, across the Prairies, said they wanted to maintain the single desk. If they believe that they can ignore the wishes of farmers and end the single desk and the Wheat Board, it is their responsibility to determine what happens, what the impacts on our—on small- and medium-sized farmers, particularly those that are far from market. It is their responsibility to identify what will be done with the employees that may lose their jobs as a result of this decision, and it is their responsibility to put in place a program to maintain the strategic importance of the Port of Churchill for the security of this country and as the only inland deep-sea port in the country.

Those responsibilities are federal responsibilities and it's our job to ask them and demand from them a suitable plan to address those questions. I hope the member from River Heights will join with us in asking for that accountability.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the federal Conservative government has indicated that they will provide some dollars for the Port of Churchill, and that for a few years they will subsidize the shipping of wheat through the Port of Churchill. But they haven't—the federal government has not presented a viable plan for the future of the Port of Churchill.

I ask the Premier: Why has the provincial government not yet presented a viable, long-term plan for the future of the Port of Churchill? And it needs to be, obviously, as part of a larger plan for the future of the grain industry and for farmers in Manitoba.

I ask the Premier: When will we see such a plan so that it can be debated in the Manitoba Legislature?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, that was a tour de force. He, first of all, gathered support from the right wing of the House; then he moved over and tried to get support from us.

The reality is this, Mr. Speaker, if the member from River Heights, the Leader of the Liberal Party, is truly concerned about the Wheat Board, we'll see him at the rally this afternoon. We'll see him down there supporting the farmers of western Canada, the farmers who have, in majority, said they want to maintain the single desk. He'll be down there supporting Churchill, Manitoba. He'll be down there supporting employees in Winnipeg and he'll be down there particularly supporting small- and medium-sized farmers throughout western Canada who have expressed their concerns. Many occasions they are being removed, their voices being snuffed out in this bill that's being brought forward in Ottawa; it needs to be listened to. I hope you will join us in allowing, and for pushing the federal government to listen to producers all throughout western Canada.

Lake St. Martin Emergency Channel Project Update

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, Interlake residents, be they First Nations people, cottagers or farmers around Lake Manitoba, and especially Lake St. Martin, have been among the hardest hit by this year's record-breaking flood. Our government has responded with special compensation and recovery programs in this very challenging time. Our government has also undertaken the largest emergency construction project in the history of our province, to bring lake levels down. This is a very ambitious construction project in some of the most hostile working conditions imaginable.

Could the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation please update the House on the progress of the emergency channel?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): First of all, I want to put on the record certainly my thanks to the tremendous work to the member for Interlake who has been an advocate for the people in the affected flood communities.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, if you want to see a shining example of the Manitoba spirit coming out of one of the worst floods in Manitoba history, we undertook a very ambitious project. We brought in 95 pieces of heavy equipment. We had a maximum of 130 workers there. We had engineers. We had contractors. We had workers 24-7 on the project, and I'm very pleased to report we set a target of opening in early November and we're going to be

opening the outlet from Lake St. Martin in early November.

I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, it's also on budget. We're going to be continuing work throughout the winter. We are there. We're working with Manitobans. This is the spirit of Manitoba, the outlet from Lake St. Martin.

Ecological Goods and Services Programs Government Support

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked about this NDP government's lack of movement on the ecological goods and services programming. Agricultural producers are willing to use these programs to help protect wetlands and riparian areas.

Ducks Unlimited is also concerned by this government's inaction. Mr. Bob Grant, their manager of provincial operations in Manitoba, recently told the *Western Producer*, and I'd like to table the article, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: "Given all the environmental issues that wetlands address, it is somewhat disturbing that a commitment to protecting wetlands was not a key component of the Throne Speech." End quote.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: Where is the commitment to ecological goods and services programming and why isn't it on this government's radar?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Well, Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out to the member yesterday, the ecological benefits of decisions that are made in agriculture go on every day, day after day, in this government, in the discussions of farm groups in our province and in discussions of environmental groups such as Ducks Unlimited. And Mr. Bob Grant is someone who works very co-operatively with our government to make sure that we don't drain every swamp and we don't drain every marsh and that we make good environmental decisions every day in this province. We're going to continue to do that.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that these programs are accepted by farmers, as I've just mentioned, and the Province's ecological goods and services interdepartmental policy working group issued a draft policy paper on the EG and S program last December, December 2010. The paper makes a number of observations, including the fact that Manitoba continues to lose natural capital from rural landscapes like wetlands and riparian areas.

This NDP government has repeatedly stated it wants to address water quality and quantity issues to protect wetlands, but providing incentives to producers to maintain wetlands and riparian areas on their property is one way to help achieve these goals.

Mr. Speaker, the government has had 10 months to review the working group's report. Will the government commit today to making ecological goods and services programming a priority?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would refer the member for Arthur-Virden to the actual Throne Speech where we did talk about a water surface management plan that we will be bringing forward and that we will make sure that folks like Mr. Bob Grant have an input on. We will make sure that—heck, the member for Arthur-Virden could have input on that if he didn't always see the glass half empty rather than half full all the time in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of very positive things happening out on the landscape when it comes to environmental decision making. And I want to remind him of the high volume of environmental farm plans that some of his own constituents have participated in, have put forward in partnership with our department to make sure that they have a plan in place that guides good environmental decision making from one farm to the next in Manitoba. There's some real positive things happening out there. I would like to see the member for Arthur-Virden get on board with some of those.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

I would like to—before we proceed to member statements, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have in attendance students from Seven Oaks School Division. These students are joining us today from the Seven Oaks Division's Wayfinders program and are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manuel Guerra

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'd like to honour today the

memory of a dedicated leader of our Winnipeg Portuguese community, Manuel Guerra, who passed away from cancer last December.

Manuel, who was born in Portugal before building a rich life here in Manitoba, exemplified the vision and courage it takes to emigrate to a new country. Together with his immediate family, the Portuguese community, and many others in the West End, we will remember him as a man who always welcomed people in with open arms.

Manuel Guerra arrived in Canada in 1967 and worked most of his career in real estate. He became involved in the Portuguese-Canadian community immediately upon his arrival, and in 1969 he became the president of the Portuguese Association of Manitoba's general assembly and also held various executive positions with the association over the next several decades.

In 1972 Manuel founded a Portuguese newspaper called *O Mundial*. This newspaper connects Portuguese Canadians with their home country and highlights successes in developments of the Manitoba community. The newspaper links people in a community who share both a history and a future, and it was one of Manuel's proudest accomplishments.

* (10:50)

Manuel was a veteran of the Portuguese Armed Forces. He served his Catholic parish here in Manitoba. He was a man of action in many ways. If Manuel saw an opportunity to improve the lives of his neighbours, he did not hesitate. He also served in the Board of Regents at the University of Winnipeg, and founded the Association of Portuguese Entrepreneurs.

We still feel Manuel's legacy most deeply through the Portuguese newspaper which his wife and his sons continue to run. I had many occasions to spend time with Manuel at various events, and although we did not always share political views, we shared a love for the West End community.

My deepest condolences to Manuel's family for their loss. His life's passions will continue to inspire our community for many years to come.

Family Doctor Week

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Good health is essential to an active and dynamic society. It is my pleasure to recognize the outstanding contribution of Manitoba family doctors in this goal, during Family

Doctor Week, which takes places across Canada this year from October 31st to November 5th

Family doctors play an integral role in our society. As health-care providers, they diagnose and treat illness, promote preventative medicine and advocate for the best interests of their patients. They are a patient's first point of contact and, generally, their most regular point of contact. They are the medical professionals whom patients and families form longer term relationships. As teachers, they encourage healthy living and educate the next generation of physicians in Canada's 17 medical schools.

As family doctors know best, the patient is the centre of family medicine. This means, in many communities across Manitoba, family doctors are much more than just physicians. They provide additional care in hospitals, personal care homes and other community facilities to ensure the patient is always the top priority.

In Manitoba there is a lot of work to do because we know that more than 180,000 Manitobans do not have a family doctor. This makes it more challenging to access the medical system and to have consistent care.

Celebrations for Family Doctor Week will take place this year in Montréal at the Family medical-Medicine Forum. Over 2,000 participants will be attending from all across Canada, including Manitoba's Dr. Joanne Maier from Brandon. I would like to congratulate Dr. Maier for recently being presented with the Reg L. Perkin Family Physician of the Year Award.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate the importance of Family Doctor Week, because as health-care providers, family physicians contribute immensely to the well-being of our communities. This upcoming week, I urge all members to recognize the important work and role of family doctors in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Valour Community Centre

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): As you know, during this election a number of constituencies' boundaries were changed. In St. James we gained a number of streets in Winnipeg's West End, including a particular treasure, the Valour Community Centre.

Valour is the result of the amalgamation of three different neighbourhood community clubs: Clifton,

Orioles and Isaac Brock. A few years ago they agreed to unite their boards to address efficiencies in programming, volunteer power and finances. Together, they have become one of the busiest community centres in the city, and the move to combine resources has had some very positive results.

In 2009, renovations were completed at all three sites, including the addition of a regulation-sized gymnasium and a parking lot, which were made possible by grants from the Province and the City. Valour can now offer year-round activities for all ages, and is very welcoming to the newcomer, as I discovered first-hand.

The clubs give youth a place to play volleyball, basketball and many other sports, and are part of the city's SPIN initiative, which provides financial and volunteer supports to inner-city youth interested in sports. These programs enable young people to learn fair play and build basic skills like leadership, teamwork and sportsmanship. Valour also runs an after school drop-in that gives children a fun, safe place to go.

Adults can come to the centre for boxing, zumba and tae kwon do classes, or enjoy a variety of team sports. Valour also supports families in the area through the Healthy Baby program, where new moms and dads can learn from each other, speak to an on-site public health nurse or dietician and participate in social activities that benefit both parents and children.

In addition, the different locations partner with Age and Opportunity to provide fitness and arts programs for seniors.

Located in the heart of Winnipeg, Valour is very important to my constituents and their families. The centre is dedicated to the community and works with and for the people in the area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to recognize their valuable contributions today.

Prairie Dale School Grand Opening

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, at 2 o'clock this afternoon I will have the distinct pleasure of attending the official opening of the just completed Prairie Dale School in Schanzenfeld, Manitoba. My predecessor, Peter George Dyck, participated in the sod-turning ceremony for that same facility a year ago in May.

It's an exciting time for everyone involved in the project and I am glad to be able to take part in today's grand opening celebration of this beautiful new school.

Mr. Speaker, Winkler and the surrounding communities have seen astounding growth in the last 10 years. Immigration to south-central Manitoba increased sharply starting in the 1990s because of our own party's Provincial Nominee Program, addressing a severe shortage of skilled labour in the workforce and helping many new residents come to southern Manitoba. The increased immigration has meant rapid development for the village of Schanzenfeld, located just two miles south of Winkler.

The Garden Valley School Division has faced tremendous challenges in delivering education in this context: recruitment of new teachers, the provision for temporary classrooms, the diversion of students temporarily to other schools. And it has meant capital projects progressing concurrently. Just a few years ago, Emerado Centennial School was opened, and two weeks ago the sod-turning ceremony took place for the future Northlands Parkway Collegiate.

Prairie Dale School is a bright, modern, environmentally friendly building, Mr. Speaker, providing an excellent academic environment for students and teachers and staff for years and years to come. The opening of Prairie Dale yields positive dividends for a newly reconfigured Southwood School just down the road where K to 3 students will now enjoy a much less crowded learning environment. Had Garden Valley School Division not taken such a strong position to address these rising student populations brought about by regional growth, there would now be over 500 students at Southwood School.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Garden Valley School Division Superintendent Vern Reimer, their predecessors, as well as the School Board Chair Sam Berg and principal of Prairie Dale School, David Hoepfner, his teachers, staff and students, who over the last eight years have led the charge to get this school built. The completion of this new state-of-the-art facility is thanks to their commitment and hard work, and the 310 new students at Prairie Dale School thank them.

Once again, my congratulations on the completion and official opening of Prairie Dale School. Thank you.

**Seven Oaks School Division
Bright Futures Program**

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure to attend the Seven Oaks School Division Bright Futures Student Exhibition evening, along with the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby) and the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief). The event highlighted the Wayfinders program.

Learning more about the innovative approach this program uses to keep students in school left us all feeling confident that the youth of the Seven Oaks School Division have the tools they need to succeed. Wayfinders is an education program for young Manitobans funded under the Bright Futures Initiative.

It provides high school students residing in the Elwick and Watson Street neighbourhoods with the supports and encouragement needed to graduate high school and make the transition to post-secondary training and education. It has demonstrated how the right approach and impassioned dedication can change the lives of students. The success of the Wayfinders program has been, to say the least, astounding.

Beginning with a few students in the school library, it now has nearly 200 students and its own unit. Because of the hard work of mentors, volunteers, teachers and especially the students themselves, 80 per cent of these students have completed all school credits and are on track for on-time graduation. Central to the program is the commitment the students make to maintain a 70 per cent academic average. Students are given help in staying on course by individual student parent support workers, staff, homework support provided by over 80 volunteer tutors and encouragement to participate in extracurricular activities.

By their own hard work, students can earn \$600 a year to be used towards talent development and \$1,000 to be held in trust for post-secondary education. The program helps students build stronger self-images, set goals, connect with role models, explore career and post-secondary interests and encourage community involvement.

I would like to congratulate the achievement of the Wayfinders program, and especially the students who have taken their education into their own hands.

The future looks bright for them and their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (11:00)

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

**THRONE SPEECH
(Sixth 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 at this First Session of the Fortieth Legislature of Manitoba, and the amendment thereto, and the debate was open.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I, too, like—as many members have indicated during their speeches, want to welcome you to the Chair and look forward to your wisdom and experience and guidance.

And I want to thank all of the legislative staff, the table officers, the pages, and all of those people who make our lives functional and much easier and more comfortable in an environment where, on occasion, things can become somewhat tense and where real significant issues are debated.

And I want to welcome all the new members. I've been overwhelmed by the—some of the speeches that I've heard from our new MLAs, and I'm really pleased that as we begin a new mandate, what we effectively see is a second mandate for our party, notwithstanding that it's the fourth mandate, as we see, is a new beginning to do a whole—and to have a whole action plan over the next four years, Mr. Speaker, that speaks to hope, that speaks to progress, that speaks to equal opportunities, that speaks to all Manitobans, whether you live in the north, whether you live in rural Manitoba, whether you live in a small town, or whether you live in an urban centre. And this opportunity and these goals are what we talked about during the election campaign, and I think that's largely why we've received this renewed mandate. We've received a renewed mandate because Manitobans are humble, hard-working and optimistic. And I tend to think that our party reflects

that, not just in terms of the makeup of the candidates and the representatives, but the fact that we are humble and we are hard-working, but we're also hopeful.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think the best example of that might have been today's question period. And I hope some of the new—I think I'll have as good relationships, I think, with some of the newly elected MLAs on the other side as I've had with some of my colleagues on the other side over the past many years. But I hope they don't fall into the trap that we noticed in today's question period, where one side of the House, that is, the opposition, who are—whose role is to criticize and whose role is to provide alternatives to the government, are in this quagmire of hopelessness and negativity and sometimes, frankly, irrelevancy.

Today, a channel—or this next few days, a channel's opening up that might make a—that will make a significant factor in terms of the recent record flooding. Today, there's a rally in this city that has to deal with the future of western Canada, and the questions and the comments from members opposite sometimes were so irrelevant as to defy logic. So I hope some of the new members can reflect on that and try not to fall into that trap of not dealing with reality and being in a—being—having that hopelessness and being wounded by virtue of the fact that, well, they lost an election in '99, and then they didn't get over it in 2003, and then they didn't get over it in 2007, and then they were sure they were going to win it this time around. In fact, I was in committee and heard one of the members opposite who's saying, when we were passing some bills, saying, oh, yes, we can pass this, we'll just change it when we're in office in the next few months. Talk about being a little bit over-optimistic, Mr. Speaker.

And that's part of the contrast, this view that somehow there's a natural—there's a couple of misconceptions: one, that there's a natural ruling right on the other side—and I use the word "right" in a number of fashions—and the other, that somehow the other side is representative only of rural Manitoba.

You know, members opposite ought to shake their heads a few times at the tremendous strides that have happened in rural Manitoba and the fact that our party, our representation, reflects the geographic and the proportional structure of this whole province. Thirty per cent of our caucus is outside of urban Winnipeg. Well, it so happens urban Winnipeg is 70 per cent of Manitoba's population; 70 per cent of

the representation in our party is from Winnipeg. I mean, it's on any front. And so when we equalized the hydro rates—the new members ought to know when we equalized hydro rates between rural and urban centres, members opposite opposed it. They opposed it. Those great defenders of rural Manitoba, those—they opposed the equalization of rates.

They talk about rate hikes for Manitoba Hydro, which is, by the way, have been below, basically, the cost of living over the past decade. Well, look what happened when you privatized the telephone system. What has happened to those rates?

You know, Mr. Speaker, they complain about cellphone coverage all across Manitoba. Well, you know, cellphone service is the responsibility of the telephone company and, by the way, falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government. And, you know, we're doing our best and we're trying to help.

So I'm only trying to give some advice, because I think some of the old crowd across the way are beyond redemption, Mr. Speaker. You know, they're beyond redemption and they're going to say the same thing over and over again.

And, you know, the—I often talk—but I want to talk about the things that we talked about in the campaign, which is the future and hope, and if there's any lesson—I don't want to give members opposite lessons. I—you, know, they should have been able to figure things out for themselves, but we offered hope to Manitobans, and Manitobans are a hopeful people, Mr. Speaker. And we talked about things like expanding education and opportunities so that every Manitoban could have a chance to get a good job. We talked about expanded apprenticeships. I've never heard one member yet in this session talk about apprenticeships, not one, not a single one. I don't think I've heard a member this session talk about First Nations, not once. What did they talk about today? Is the Finance Minister the acting Finance Minister or are they going to be the permanent Finance Minister? Like that's a question. Go read the Order-in-Council.

You know, I haven't heard anything relevant or hopeful from members opposite during this entire session. I have heard them say, why wasn't X, Y and Z in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker? I say to the members opposite, what we put in the Throne Speech were our priorities and our hope for the future, which is why Manitobans, I believe, voted, unprecedented, for a fourth term for this government and a new mandate to do these things.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of those things that are happening. The members opposite—perhaps some of the new members ought to know, because I don't think you sit in caucus on the other side and talk about some of the things going on in Manitoba.

Like Rolls-Royce up in Thompson, Manitoba. *[interjection]* Yes, well, the member laughs, the member from Tuxedo, who wants to know who the Finance Minister, laughs, but the member ought to know that Rolls-Royce—I was in London meeting with Rolls-Royce, and you know what? The vice-president of Rolls-Royce told me that Manitoba was the best place in the world to do business. Vice-president of Rolls-Royce, you know, this wasn't some accountant or some charter or some official sitting in a Manitoba suburb, it was the vice-president of Rolls-Royce. Rolls-Royce filmed Thompson workers putting in the new site at -39 in Thompson, filmed it and showed it to their entire 15,000-person workforce because they were so impressed at what they saw in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. That's what Rolls-Royce did.

* (11:10)

So, Mr. Speaker—and when Standard & Poor's upgraded and upheld our AA rating, that said something. That is hopeful. Wondering whether or not the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is acting or permanent is irrelevant. It's a waste of time; you're wasting your time in question period. In fact, members opposite asked some of the same questions today that they asked yesterday that made no relevance then either.

You know, Mr. Speaker, GE's coming to Manitoba to do an engine-testing facility. GE's here. Mitsubishi. Let me talk about Mitsubishi. Let me talk about the future. Mitsubishi came to us and sought out Manitoba. I said to the vice-president of Mitsubishi, why do you—why did you come here? He said because you guys are creative, you have lots of energy, you're prepared to undertake projects.

So Mitsubishi and New Flyer and the Red River community College, are putting together a program to test an electric bus. You know, Mr. Speaker, that is significant. Though—I don't—the member says—you know what—I will—the member says it's in spite of me. I don't—I'm not taking any credit for that. I'm not taking any credit for that. You know why? Because Mitsubishi sought us out. They came to Manitoba. They looked through. They knew what kind of environment there was in Manitoba.

Do I hear anything from members opposite about, is there a future for New Flyer? Is there a future for the electric vehicle? Are we testing? Do we have 110 hybrid vehicles in our fleet? Are we testing 11 Priuses Plug-in? Are we testing electric cars? Yes, Mr. Speaker. We don't brag about it. Manitobans don't brag. But they ought to sit in their caucus and talk about some of the things that are going forward.

When it comes to Hydro, Mr. Speaker, it's a one-trick pony. They don't want it. They want to sell it. They are—have no comprehension whatsoever about the future of Hydro.

It's interesting that something came up today in question period where members said something about, well—I don't know if it was today or yesterday—a member said something, well, if you built something—if you had built it before, it would only have been \$5 million; now it's gone up to \$15 million.

Well, the same thing goes with Hydro. When you build a hydroelectric dam it can last a hundred years and it's never cheaper than to build it right now. It never gets cheaper. You build it now, it pays for itself. It pays itself through export revenues and that's the reason we have the lowest hydroelectric rates in the country. Is it an accident that we have the lowest hydroelectric rates in the country? We have the lowest hydroelectric rates in the country and the members opposite attack and want to mothball it—attack and want to mothball it, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, during the campaign we talked about cancer drugs, making cancer drugs available to people, which I think is an outstanding recommendation. I think it's very hopeful for the people of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Believe it when I see it, Dave.

Mr. Chomiak: The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) says she'll believe it when she sees it. Well, we did this once before. We did it with palliative care drugs. We gave—we did it to palliative care drugs. I was opposition critic when the former member for Lac du Bonnet, Darren Praznik, was Health minister, and I said why don't you make palliative care drugs free for people at home, because when they go in the hospital, they get them for free but when they're home they have to pay. So, obviously, people want to be at home but there's a disincentive.

We came into office and we changed that program so that you can get—but, it wasn't as simple as saying, all your palliative care drugs are now going to be available at home, free. In fact, that would have been dangerous. We had to put in place, Mr. Speaker, a process to allow us for a 24-hour prescription changes, doctors on duty 24 hours, nurses on duty 24 hours. Because the thresholds and the interactions and the changes between drugs can occur within hours. So you just can't, holus-bolus, put in place a program like that. It requires a network and it requires a lot of work.

Now, members opposite are already criticizing us for doing something that they didn't promise, that we promised and they say you should have been doing and, by the way, you still should cut 500—half a billion dollars from your budget. So I don't want members—I want members, the new members, to know that there's positive things happening in this province and there's good things happening in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, a member made a members' statement about a new school going up. During the mean, lean, miserable '90s, nothing new went up. They only built one thing: they built a remand centre. They built the Remand Centre. Schools were frozen. Personal care homes were frozen. Hospitals were frozen. Nothing went up.

I could spend the bulk of my time talking about the facilities that have been constructed to help all Manitobans around this province. I could spend the balance of my time doing just that without even getting into the promised health-care facility in Brandon that we put up, or the MRI in Brandon, or the renovation at the Health Sciences Centre, or the Selkirk reconstruction, or the new hospitals—Boundary Trails Hospital, the new hospitals all around—Neepawa personal care home. It was on the Tory charts for 11 mean, lean years and never happened. So it happened; it's happening under us.

There's a hopefulness and, you know, Mr. Speaker, young people are very appreciative of the efforts we've made on post-secondary education and on the cost of education. I think that's a good indicia as to why young people are flocking back to the province and back to our party and back to supporting us because they know there's hope. They know they have an opportunity, and no matter where you go in this city or this province and you see the programming, you can see hope.

I was at a conference the other—just the other day that was put together by the Life Sciences Association of Manitoba and a Korean official came up to me and said: We like so much of what you're doing in Manitoba. Can we have a relationship with you like you have with Israel where you've done so much, like you have with Australia, that you've done so much, like you have with Illinois, which you've done so much? So he approached us. There was a Dutch delegation there that was so impressed with what we're doing on bio and biofibre and, what is it? It's CIC—composites and composites, Mr. Speaker, that they also want to do business with us and actually want a delegation to come. And then the Finnish council came to me and said: When are you guys coming to Finland, because we want to do a—we want to do some projects?

The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that both inside and outside of Manitoba, it's recognized that there's big things happening and one of the best things and best acknowledgements of that is when you go door knocking, and all of us had the opportunity to door knock over the last few months. And I had the opportunity of door knocking all around the city of Winnipeg and outside of Winnipeg. And I know my friend from Springfield, I hope he was in my riding door knocking like he promised, but, you know, I heard positive things on the door. You know, I heard tragic stories about people suffering from depression, I heard tragic stories about people who had health illnesses, but I heard tons and tons of stories about kids getting engineering degrees and women getting positions and families having their kids come back and families living all in the same area again. And I didn't hear those stories in the 1990s; it was more like the kids are going to Calgary; the kids are going to Toronto; the kids are going to Vancouver. We didn't hear that.

Mr. Speaker, our population's gone up, and the ratio of our population with respect to young people and people with an education has gone up. In some lists, we're considered one of the best places in the world to live and that's—and there's a whole bunch of reasons for that. It's not just the economic activity; it's not just the fact that we have a well-skilled workforce; it's not just the fact that we welcome and assist immigrants to this great province. But it's because we offer the best home care program in the world; it's because we have one of the best health-care systems in the world; it's because we have a reputation of working together.

Again, when I was at the conference in London, an unnamed company said to me: You know, we're doing business in Manitoba because we can talk to everyone in Manitoba. You can get anything done. We're not so big that it's a huge bureaucracy; we're not so small that you can't get stuff done. And he said: That's why we're bringing our company and our expansion to Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker, and they did. They brought their expansion to Winnipeg for that very reason. I won't mention the places that they criticized, but my overall point is that we have a future and we have a future in our hands. And we've been elected with a mandate to develop that future, the future of hope, the future of opportunity and the future of—I guess what I would term—better equality for all of our citizens no matter where you live and who you are.

* (11:20)

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I—we certainly are not unaware of some of the really significant challenges we face in this province. We have some significant challenges with some tremendous pockets of poverty. We have some tremendous challenges with respect to dying, to some of the practices in rural Manitoba where smaller farms and medium-sized farms face major difficulties. We have some improvements to make across our health-care system and we recognize that. So it's not all rainbows, but it's two things: The first is we're hopeful, and, secondly, we always try.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to give up. We're not going to give up on people. We're not going to give up on programs. We're not going to give up on economic opportunity. We're not going to give up on communities. We're not going to give up on immigrants. We're going to work with them and we're going to try to make things better and try to think—make things fairer for all Manitobans. And we're not perfect, and we said that many, many times, but I can tell you, to return to the door and to go door knocking with—literally, to thousands and thousands of doors, and to hear the comments from those people was absolutely buoyant. I don't know what members opposite heard at the door, but I can tell you that it was positive, it was buoyant, it was hopeful.

I went back to a house where a fellow had said two elections ago, you've got to do something about downtown Winnipeg. And I went back and I said, well, how's Red River, the Hydro building, MTS Centre doing so far? He remembered, and he was

really pleased that we moved and helped redevelop that whole downtown area, and that there's thousands of people downtown now that provide a vibrancy and life back to downtown Winnipeg. There's much more to go, and we're going to have a challenge with the loss of the head office and so many jobs in Winnipeg as a result of the demolition of the Wheat Board, but Manitobans work hard, and we'll bounce back and we'll keep trying. We'll keep trying on every front.

It's been quite a year, Mr. Speaker. It was the year of the great flood; it was the year of how Manitobans demonstrated the Manitoba way, which is to co-operate, to work together, not to point fingers. Not to point fingers: another lesson that I think came out of the election campaign and, I think, is something that I think the new members elected on the opposition benches ought to think about. We've tried to develop a culture of learning from mistakes. I mean, when you parent your child, your kids are going to make mistakes. And if you blame them and go hard on them and criticize them all the time, they're going to be afraid to make mistakes. And if they're afraid to make mistakes, they're not going to learn and they're not going to tell you. We're trying to develop a culture where people will do things. They'll risk making a mistake, but we won't decry them and we won't condemn them. We'll just say, let's learn from that mistake and let's do better next time.

And that has never been more illustrated than during the flood period and the work that was done, the extraordinary work done by Manitobans and the outstanding co-operation and the outstanding dedication of all Manitobans. And if Manitoba's anything, it's a place where people work together, be it because of climate, be it because of geography, or be it because we're a representation of almost every single nation, language, culture, on this planet. And all of that added up makes this a unique place. You take all of that and its positive energy, and you give it some hope, and you work with all of these people, and you find that you have a province that's moving forward. You find that you have a place that isn't boom and bust. It doesn't go out and brag and say it's doing all these things. It just goes out and does things and then people hear about it.

And people have heard about Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and it's not because we have gone out and done a bunch of press releases or blown our horns. It's because they see that Standard & Poor's gives it a rating. All of the institutes say there's something

special about Manitoba. *Maclean's* calls Manitoba the Manitoba miracle; *The Globe and Mail*—you know, *Globe and Mail* does a piece about the amazing things happening in Manitoba.

Now, again, I—that's not all—I'm not saying that's all the government, Mr. Speaker. No, it's the people of Manitoba, but it's also an attitude of hope and support that's provided by government that's completely lacking. And what I've heard in this House, during the course of this debate, on members of the opposite side, I haven't heard one positive suggestion or one acknowledgement of anything positive happening in this province.

So, is it any wonder when we go door to door, Mr. Speaker, people say over and over again, yes, we like what you're doing, we think you're doing a good job? You know, it's not perfect but we know that our kids are staying here. We know that there's apprenticeships available. We know that there's jobs available.

Mr. Speaker, I had a youth in my office who said—I said, so what are you doing when you graduate from grade 12? He said, oh, I'm going to the oil patch. I said ours? He said, no I'm going to Fort McMurray. I said, well, you know, you can go to the oil patch here. I mean, we've got 1,500 people working in the oil patch. And, sure enough, he's working here in Manitoba, in the oil patch. He didn't have to go to Alberta.

I know that there's jobs up north. There's training programs, Mr. Speaker. There's mines coming on. The largest mine development maybe in the history of Manitoba, Lalor, is coming on line—is working its way through the system. There's a lot of hope in this province, and we are trying to tap into it and work with Manitobans to ensure that they get all of those opportunities passed on to them.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, which I hope are recognized for what I'm trying to portray, and that is one of optimism and hope for the future, I will finish my comments by saying—by repeating what I've heard a few times, and that is, something very big is happening in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my privilege to be able to put a few words on the record in regards to the Throne Speech, 2011 Throne Speech, as well, that came in, Mr. Speaker, short as it was, and short on direction as it was.

There are a lot of opportunities in Manitoba, and I look forward to being able to work as an opposition member in the next while, to work towards becoming—sort of filling some of the ministers' shoes that left—that leave so much on the table by this government that needs to be done in this province to improve it even more.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, start off by congratulating the Lieutenant-Governor Philip Lee in his—for his presenting of the Throne Speech to us. Also to the Clerk and the staff of the Legislature for the fine work that they do in—and look forward to the next four years as well in, I guess, the implementation of the rules of our parliamentary process and the keeping of the gate, if you will, keeping us all in line with what the proper rules are, from time to time, as well.

I want to also thank the pages and the interns for the work that they will do over the next year, particularly here in the House, in our offices, and also to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for—congratulate you as the Speaker. I know that—and the Deputy Speaker from Interlake riding as well. I want to say that I respect you as an ambassador for the province of Manitoba, because I know you'll have that opportunity on many occasions throughout, not just perhaps North America, but other areas as well, and look forward to your rulings in the House as well.

I know that you had done a good job as committee chair. I also was even looking at some of the material that I was going through the other day in my office, as we've changed locations, and one of the papers that I came up was the 2020 vision and transportation that you chaired back in the early 2000s. At least you had a 2020 vision, unlike the Minister of Agriculture at the time who brought out a 2010 vision, and we all kind of kidded her that it was just a—sort of half a vision of where things would be. You had a full package there, and much of it is being implemented over those years. The budget has gone up. We respect that, and we know that it's much needed, and I'll get into that more later on, Mr. Speaker, but I want to welcome you to the Speaker's chair.

* (11:30)

I want to welcome all new members and returning members to the House here as well and say congratulations on being elected to this House. I also want to congratulate those who ran unsuccessfully, across the province for all parties, and put their time and effort and their family's time and effort on the

line, for the work that they've done throughout the—this past election, Mr. Speaker. Many of them were nominated years ahead of the election date and worked very hard from all parties to put their views forward and put their vision.

And that's why we have the best parliamentary process in the world, Mr. Speaker, in this province is because of the dedication of individuals who want to see Manitoba improve. That's why our Canadian country, basically, at the present time is doing better than some of the other countries in the world in regards to this economic downturn. It's due to the dedication of individuals who work hard to try and bring bills forward to make it a better country. And certainly we know that there is much to be done in Manitoba as opportunities go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also say just a quick congratulations to my competitor, Mr. Draper, in Arthur-Virden, who ran for the New Democrats. And we ran a—I think it was a very amicable campaign in Arthur-Virden. We know that the Liberal member never set foot in the constituency, I guess, throughout the election, as they didn't in many as, I'm reminded, by the—I'm reminded by the House leader from the NDP that they weren't in many constituencies, and I appreciate that as well—her comments.

I want to say that it is a privilege to serve here in the Legislature as one of the 57 members. I want to congratulate and thank my family, my wife, Beryl, and our kids. We've got two new—since the last time we were sworn in, Mr. Speaker, we've got two new grandchildren. My son's young son now, Shamus, and my daughter's new son, Henry, that was just born on September 10th in the middle of the campaign. And so it's a privilege to be able to welcome those two new individuals to the world since the last—well, I guess since the last time I was sworn in my daughter's actually also had a three year old, Oscar, as well. That's a new person in our lives and look very much forward to spending some time with them as the fall moves forward.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the staff that we have in caucus, Mr. Speaker, as well in all of the aspects of the research that they do daily for us. And I think all members find the staff that they have invaluable, whether you're a minister in the government, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), or Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) or any of us, they certainly are there to help make our lives the most efficient that they can—that we can be with our time

and our energy. And without them I don't think Manitoba would be moving forward from a government perspective or an opposition perspective as well as we do.

I want to say congratulations, particularly though to my campaign team in Arthur-Virden, and those that have been there throughout the elections over the years, Mr. Speaker. This being my fourth time being elected in Arthur-Virden, it's an extreme honour to be able to represent the southwest corner of Manitoba with its great, vast agricultural significance, with its tourism and with its booming oil industry, if I could use that term. Alberta always shuddered when they used that term because it kind of turned around when Mr. Trudeau tried to take back the energy years there in the '80s.

But I just want to say that the communities in my constituency are growing. I want to let the government know that. Virtually every community is growing. There are new homes being built in them. There are new, young people moving into the region as well and that and the—in spite of the most devastating year in agriculture's history, Mr. Speaker, in Arthur-Virden and southwest Manitoba.

I farmed through 1999 myself. I know the significance of what it was—the effort that went through trying to get a crop in the ground or calves on the ground that year, Mr. Speaker, in the livestock industry. And anything that happened in 1999 is just dwarfed by the significance of the problems that they had with not only river flooding but overland flooding and also high water tables that perhaps some areas didn't have. And I think that's what's led to the ruination of all of our roads in southwest Manitoba. I could name all of the highways, and I'll get into that later in regards to the devastation that's taking place there—never mind the Coulter bridge, the Hartney bridge, washouts of culverts in the Archie municipality that I've spoken about in the House before.

And I also want to say that without the significance of an election team, one can't cover a constituency the way we did and in every community. Thanks to the many scrutineers that supported us in those areas, but particularly thank you to those who came to the meetings that we had, put forth their views on how to improve Manitoba, and particularly their own local regions of communities in southwest Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and helping in the recovery of suggestions on how to improve from the flood that took place this year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a particular thank-you to my constituency administrator who also ran my office during the campaign, and look forward to the next four years and working with her in the office in Virden, as well, for constituents to get a hold of us. It's somewhat easier to have that office, and I certainly appreciate all of the work that she does there on a daily basis.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have a fine motion, an amending motion, to the Throne Speech that's—that our leader, Hugh McFadyen—oh, pardon me, our member from—take that back, Mr. Speaker—that our member from Fort Whyte, our Leader of the PC Party here in Manitoba, put forward in recognizing the importance of the things that we need to—that we still see need to be improved. I wanted to also commend him for the work that he's done over the years as our leader and for the work that he did in this campaign. And I wish him all the best in any future endeavours that he may have as—but I congratulate him at this point for staying on as our leader and looking at—the look to the process that he has established or led to in relation to the choosing of a new leader in our party. But I want to commend he and his family for the effort that they put in in this campaign and others and—because it is a significant family endeavour that takes a lot of energy and takes a lot of time, and I know that he'll be looking forward to spending more time with his family in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I—there are a number of significant points that I want to mention, and, as I outlined a little bit earlier, the—I guess, probably one of the most significant things that I've taken from the Throne Speech is the fact that the total debt of Manitoba is at the highest level in its history, in spite of the fact that the first nine years this government had to operate received the most—well, let's just face it, that it was—the economies of the world were moving forward very well.

This government was the recipient of record transfer payments from the federal government that it never even expected to get in some cases, and yet it still had to take—pass bills in the House to take money out of Hydro. Fortunately, it only was able to take \$205 million back in the day in the early 2000s when they had a three-year bill that they could take 75 per cent of the profits of Hydro for three years, Mr. Speaker. The first year, they took \$150 million, the next year, they took 57, and, of course, the third year, fortunately for Manitobans, but unfortunate for Hydro, we had a drought and there was no profits in

the Crown corporation that year. And it limited vastly, I think, the NDP's ability to get their hands on the money that they felt they needed to operate and fund the programs that they wanted to put forward. And, I think, in spite of having record transfer payments, it showed the mismanagement that was involved in the government at the time, because they were not able to fund a government in record years without taking from the Crown corporations in a significant manner.

And I think that then they've had to change the balanced budget legislation three times in order to balance the budget themselves, and just prevent their Cabinet ministers from losing salary, I guess, in relation to the significance of the sound balanced budget legislation that was put in place back in the years under the Filmon government, Mr. Speaker, a very sound policy that was put in place at that time and wrecked by the NDP since they've come into power.

They have a different vision, being able to—your borrow against all of the profits of Crown corporations every year and add that to the debt. It's a very similar policy to what defeated the Pawley government back in the '80s. And I know that Manitobans will become more aware of that as we move forward with the economic crisis around the world that we are not immune to. As I said earlier, Canada is not isolated from these things, but we are doing better. Manitoba could do better as well, Mr. Speaker, and yet we watch the government failing to provide initiatives—putting roadblocks in place actually to allow businesses to succeed and prosper in Manitoba. And I'll get to a few of those in a minute as well.

* (11:40)

I guess the one area that, you know, concerns me as well is that the debt of the Province, the interest on paying debt down is the third largest budget item behind Health and Education in the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I mean Family Services and I think that that's horrendous, when you've got your interest debt on the debt as the third largest item in the budget. It tells where this government's at and probably is why the provinces to the west of us don't want us as a partner in the New West Partnership, and the Throne Speech, I certainly noted, didn't have anything to do with improving trade relations or trade for Manitoba.

I've spoken to many of the people in the trucking industry and they do depend on

manufactured goods going to the United States and that market. Their markets—or their gross revenues are down considerably because of the loss of those—the downturn in the US economy and the fact that there isn't as much going by truck in some of those areas, although—that they—so they are looking at new markets in different areas to continue to move product. And I think we need to encourage CentrePort to be developed and move forward, and move forward quickly, because as I've said earlier, our neighbours to—in Saskatchewan are moving forward very fast with the development of a similar project around Regina and we cannot lose sight of the fact that we need to attract private industry, to be able to develop the needs of CentrePort and continue to use the Port of Churchill, expand the use of the Port of Churchill in spite of what we hear on a daily basis from this government, Mr. Speaker. So I think that the—that those are areas of concern in the management of the finances of this Province.

The tax levels go—speak for themselves. We have the highest west of Québec and I think that that's a real concern still for people. The red tape that's been put in place by this government, the unnecessary management of the economy is nearly a billion dollars a year in extra red tape, Mr. Speaker, that is dumped on the 82 per cent of our economy that's run by small businesses, and so that's of grave concern as well and something that could be really—you know, when small businesses have dollars in their pockets like that, they spend them; they invest them back in their businesses in the province and the government can get the spinoff of tax dollars from those, so they look at it, doing this in a different way instead of fees and putting extra red tape in place that costs people to get business done.

They should be promoting business so that they can actually make money from the taxation of new businesses coming to Manitoba, instead of them leaving Manitoba, as Viterro did a number of years ago. And there hasn't been a word whimpered from the government in relation to the number of jobs lost by Viterro, a large grain company that went to Regina first and now is in—has their head office in Calgary, Mr. Speaker, and so many others. The area that I come from, a lot of the oil industry out there, a lot of the small companies are now owned by Saskatchewan and Alberta companies, and I think that's a concern as well. The people are still here operating; they're still buying the groceries; and their need—the gasoline here, their needs and vehicles but

a lot of the head offices are located in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, the area of infrastructure and transportation is key to my region right now, as it is across the province, and I think that in spite of having a \$25-billion debt virtually that we have in Manitoba under the—some budgeting that the government is working with today, in spite of having that \$25-billion debt, the big concern by municipalities across the province, by the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, by cities and towns, is the fact that there's—that I thought it was 11 billion, Mr. Speaker, but I understand now from recent reports from the Heavy Construction Association that there is \$13 billion of debt, deficit in infrastructure in this province.

Now that's over half of the debt that we already have and it's not on the books. It's not on the books of the Province of Manitoba. Where would we be if our province was to get back to neutral, Mr. Speaker, in relation to having sound roads and sewer and water that we could rely on in this province? There's a \$13-billion unfunded liability in transportation, sewers and water in infrastructure in this province that the future Manitobans, the young people of this province, the businesses that are here are going to have to pay for through taxation. And I find that in spite of the fact that a lot of the repair from this flood will be done with 90-10 dollars from the federal government—and thank heavens that Mr. Harper, Prime Minister Harper, was on the dikes in Brandon and indicated that they would be there to support the building of the dikes, the repairing of the flooding, a lot of the homes that were damaged, a lot of the farmland that has been inundated by water and the lack of continued support for crop insurance programs in other areas, or else we would never have been able to come out of this as a province by ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, this 11—this \$13 billion in unfunded liability infrastructure is a grave concern across all provinces, but particularly here in Manitoba where we've just finished having, as I said, up to 2008, nine of the best years in the history of the province in regards to funding and revenue.

I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, that it's going in the wrong direction to take the Manitoba Hydro line down the west side of the province and continue to—we look forward to the government having a flip-flop in relation to bringing it down where the engineers of Hydro spent 25 years designing that line

down the east side of the province, and it's shorter on the east side. It's more environmentally friendly. It's certainly less costly and it's more reliable as well, because anytime you build a hydro line 479 kilometres longer than it needs to be, you are putting it in greater jeopardy of storms or sabotage or anything else in those areas—particularly the fact that they never took into consideration anything to do with the farmland that this—prime farmland that this will—line will go over. The fact that it'll cross over the widest part of the flood plain south of Winnipeg before it wraps itself back around the east side of Winnipeg to be exporting power to Minnesota and Wisconsin at rates that are half of what our own consumers are paying is just an atrocity. The billions that it will cost Manitobans extra is unheard of, never mind the fact of the power loss on that line on an annual basis and a daily basis.

And so, therefore, we look for—I was almost buoyed up by the fact that the government put in the Throne Speech that the line was going to be going down the west side of Lake Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it will be, and it's technically right if you build it over near the Saskatchewan border. But they've always talked about the west side of Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba. But it's not unheard of to get their geography mixed up, and it's just a technical glitch to get in the, you know, in the wrong side of the lake. So we look forward to them maybe changing their mind in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the areas of Conservation and Water Stewardship are key as well. We were looking forward to being able to support the conservation districts in Manitoba by putting \$20 million into them over the next four years, double what they're presently getting from this Province of Manitoba, from this government. We looked forward to being able to pay farmers for water storage and retention on some of their farms and retention mechanisms would be developed in consultations with municipalities, conservation districts, farmers on the land.

I've had many, many farmers come to me with concerns over either too much drainage or a lack of drainage and there needs to be a—I think a homogeneous area that we can work on through consultation, and I was looking forward to being able to do that, and now I will encourage the government. That's why I was asking questions today in the House on the Ecological Goods and Services program, Mr. Speaker. It's one that I think is a tremendous opportunity for us to add value to

Manitoba, to Manitoba farms and our Manitoba communities and, whether we're looking at preventing the flood type that happened here this year or using water for droughts in irrigation and waters for communities and new lagoons down the road, there are opportunities that I've talked about with the Red River Basin Commission meeting moving forward in some of those areas in the past.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the legacy that this government will have, I think—I'm just going to make a few short notes here—the legacy will be that it's got the biggest debt in the history of the province on the books. It's also got the biggest liability in the history of the province that's not on the books. It's got the highest taxes west of Québec. It's the crime capital of Canada and it has also watched—you know, it watched the Hells Angels entrench under its watch. And we've seen the plethora of drug trafficking and that sort of thing that's taken place and the murders that have led to the crime capital in Manitoba as well. It's never balanced the books in its 12 years of being here without having to either change the legislation or borrow from the Crown corporations. It's been the car theft capital of Canada. It's got the biggest—as I said—the biggest infrastructure deficit in the history of the province. It's increasing the number of boil-water orders across Manitoba; they're increasing every year.

* (11:50)

They're using a blame game for environmental degradation in Manitoba and, rather than relying on science-based decisions for its research in agriculture and in water management—water stewardship, Mr. Speaker, rather than using science they're using innuendo and accusation. And I find that that's not a good way to build relations between urban and rural citizens, which I've always tried to do in every organization that I've ever been a leader in. In farm organizations, I spent my time trying to get people to come together to understand each other more than is happening here. This government just looks at it and says, well, we can get re-elected inside the city of Winnipeg, so why should we look elsewhere? I find that short-sightedness is pervasive in the government and I felt that even helping a few persons knock on doors in the city of Winnipeg.

The previous speaker talked about what he heard at the door, and I heard quite a different story when I was helping at the doors, Mr. Speaker, in some areas. And even throughout my own area, particularly, they

said, well, we know what you've got to do to defeat the NDP so, you know, do it, because they're not helping us; we know that if you're in government, you will have that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the hydro line will be the biggest economic boondoggle in Manitoba's history, the Bipole III coming down the west side. That's been put forward by many of the economists and the engineers from the University of Manitoba and throughout the province.

We've got—the health situation is no better than it was years ago when we've got 65-minute wait times for patients in an ambulance before they can even be unloaded at an average emergency room door, Mr. Speaker, throughout the province. And I guess I just wanted to say that, you know, there are—these are just some of the things that, I think, that will be left as a legacy, never mind the fact that they haven't repealed the vote tax and that there's a number of other areas.

There's the business of saying that there'll be hundreds of jobs if not thousands lost when the Wheat Board change—not degradation and not demolition and not killing it. Today what the federal government is doing is giving farmers a choice in how they sell their grain, how they sell their property, anything that any one of the members of the Legislature here would like to have. I don't think they'd ever want to have a situation where their neighbour would tell them when they can sell their car or for how much, Mr. Speaker. And it's just unacceptable in this day and age to send out our young people going to university, getting agriculture degrees, degrees in commerce, as I've said in this House before, and coming home and saying that they can't manage their own farms. The Wheat Board will still be there. I'm more of a—unless, of course, they don't come up with a business plan.

I found it kind of interesting that the member—the Liberal member of the House today would be talking about this when it was his Member of Parliament that he was with, the member from Wascana, that actually meddled with the Wheat Board back in 1998 when he put the clause in to allow farmers to have that vote, Mr. Speaker. And for—but I—and I don't very often agree with Mr. Pat Martin, but he certainly got it right when he said that Parliament has the right to make changes in the legislation, and he knows that, in spite of his—you know, and I appreciate his stance and the fact that he's against farmers being able to sell their own

grain and that he'd sooner see farmers go to jail for doing that. But he did get it right when he said that the government in power of the day—and that's no different than what Mr. Goodale did in 1998.

And as a former farm leader on the Prairies, I was there in the room when those changes were made, Mr. Speaker, and it's devastating to see the New Democrats rail on such a parliamentary, sort of, democratic process. That all—that's all farmers want today is a democratic process and they will have that and I think that the federal government recognizes it. They have taken steps as were outlined today in the House to support Churchill, to support the grain sales that the board will make, to support the research that is continuing on through the Canadian Canola Council and will continue to monitor those areas.

And so I would just want to close by saying that there are a number of things happening in southwest Manitoba. One of the biggest is recovering from the infrastructure of the degradation that took place through the flood this spring, Mr. Speaker. I know that there will be persons—they had a rally on the Coulter bridge over the Souris River on Highway 251 west of Waskada this fall in the middle of the election. That bridge needs to be replaced immediately due to the heavy use of the oil industry and the mix of oil and students travelling on those roads to get to school, gravel roads that will be soon covered by snow and ice. It's not a safe situation. That bridge needs to be replaced. And I appreciate the work that the deputy minister and the minister are doing to try and move that forward as much as we can and replace the bridge as a priority to putting a temporary bridge in place. Now, if they can't do that, a temporary bridge is what those citizens would want.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've also got situations, I guess, in southwest Manitoba where we have No. 10 Highway in complete demolition from No. 2 Highway—destruction, rather, from No. 2 Highway east to the US border through the municipalities of Whitewater and Morton. Absolutely needs to be rebuilt. It is in atrocious shape, considering that we've got a community of Boissevain that wins international Communities in Bloom's programs, the tourism that I didn't mention earlier that prevails from the International Peace Gardens being on the border, Mr. Speaker, between our two nations, the 9/11 ceremonies that are held there every year and the expansion of those facilities. But also the fact that it is our second largest export port and it is a port of entry that gets the second most use to Emerson of

anywhere in Manitoba. And it's a shame that the government has let this—has not, actually, done—gone in and done anything to even repair these broken-up stretches of this highway this fall to get it in shape for winter even, and then look more at a permanent basis later.

Now I wanted to go through Highway 23, 24, 41, the area around Pearson on Highway No. 3—to list—No. 251 needs extensive work done on it; No. 21, from the US border at Deloraine, up to Deloraine, is probably the worst piece of road in Canada right now, Mr. Speaker, or it was this summer, and there's been some patchwork done but not rebasing that it needs. The area at Hartney, there's the bridge at Hartney needs to be considered to be either replaced or repaired immediately as there are barricades. You can only use cars and pick-up trucks through it. There's also the Griswold marsh area, and the highway from Hamiota to Shoal Lake needs to be completely rebuilt.

These are to name a few of the areas of my constituency that need immediate attention in regards to the safety of the citizens and the economic activity, never mind the RTACing of 256 for the oil industry and the trucking that goes on in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that it's a—I appreciate having the opportunity to represent the people of Arthur-Virden again. I look forward to being able to try to improve and maintain our doctors and nurse situation in our region for our health care; it's most important to our citizens and also to all of those who need that care on a daily basis. There are things like daycares and seniors facilities that are required, and I look forward to being able to work on their behalf to make sure that the government is aware of those.

And I just want to close by saying that I thank the—

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker in the debate, I'd like to draw the honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have 50 international students from the Brandon University under the direction of Ms. Sue-On Hillman. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer).

On behalf of all honourable members I welcome you.

* * *

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I also want to join with the rest of the House in welcoming the students here to join with us and observe our debate and hear about the exciting new things that are happening in this province in the way that we're moving things forward; welcome here and hope you enjoyed your time here.

I also want to acknowledge the member from Arthur-Virden, who took up his whole 30-minute time allotment, and we certainly appreciate that. We get to hear—he certainly has lots to say and we appreciate that he has such strong opinions and outlook about Manitoba.

But really what we want to do here, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity now to stand and put a few words on the record and to speak to the Speech from the Throne, and it's only my second time doing so. I'm no longer the newest member in the House, and that feels really good. It's nice to not be the rookie any more. But the reality is is that I am very new here and still very much learning the ropes. And I always am appreciative of the opportunity to stand and put a few words on the record and add my voice to the debate and to the opinions that are presented in this House. So I appreciate that.

And it is an exciting Speech from the Throne. I think we've got a great plan and so I'm very excited to talk about it. Nobody told me I was going to be following the member from Kildonan here, who, you know, I've got to say, we were sort of all in awe of his ability to articulate his opinions and his input. And so I'm following him and I guess it's a tough act to follow. But I did appreciate what he had to say about the optimism and the hope that this particular Speech from the Throne represented, and, in particular, not just for one demographic or another, or not just one part of the province or another, but, really, for all Manitobans. And that's really what we're all about here on this side of the House, of course.

* (12:00)

But what I wanted to talk about very quickly, Mr. Speaker, is to take this opportunity just to have some thank-yous, or make some thank-yous to those individuals that have been so helpful to me in this last election, and previous to that, throughout the

year. As a new member and a new MLA, and just getting to learn the ropes and to getting to know my community better. And I want to make an acknowledgement of their hard work and their effort. And I'm not sure, exactly, always who to thank first or thank last, and do you save the best for last or do you acknowledge them off the top, so I'm just—in no particular order, maybe, I can just acknowledge some of those folks that have gotten to me where—me to where I am today.

So, first and foremost, of course, I need to and I want to acknowledge the voters of Concordia and the people of Concordia. And, you know, all of the members in this House will know what a humbling process the—an election can be, whether you're a minister or you're the Premier himself, you know, we all have to go out every four years and speak to our neighbours and our friends and our constituents, and present our—what we've done, and ask them for their support. And it's a—certainly a humbling experience. But it's also an experience that I appreciate and I really do love—I think, is the best part of the job, is my opportunity to go out and speak to people.

You know, I've lived in the neighbourhood my entire life and I've—I—my family, in fact, when—on my father's side, when they first came to Canada, moved just outside of my current constituency and so they've—my grandparents lived there, my—all my aunts and uncles grew up in the neighbourhood. My parents, of course, grew up in the neighbourhood and now I had the opportunity to represent the constituency. And so I feel that I do have an understanding of the place and I have a feel for what's going on. And that being said, I—during the campaign and any time that I have a chance to talk to people on their doorsteps, at their kitchen tables, in my constituency office, I always feel that I'm learning something new with every person that I meet, every different perspective that they bring to the place and to what we're doing in Manitoba.

So it's a humbling experience and it's also an experience that, you know, impresses upon one that—the responsibility that we all have. You know, of course, once we've become elected, just how important this job is to honestly try to represent the folks in your neighbourhood as best as you can. So I'd like to thank the voters in Concordia and for their faith in me and their trust in the work that I've been doing.

I'd also like to acknowledge my campaign team. Of course, my campaign manager, Amelia Ramsden, and she was just a real firecracker in the office, and I—you know, we always didn't see eye to eye and I think that's a sign of a good campaign manager. And I think she was a very good taskmaster and she had a very clear vision on where we were going in the campaign, and I really appreciate the work that she did. And we were learning together a little bit, as again, only my second time as a candidate in a campaign situation, so—and her first time as a campaign manager, but we learned a little bit together and I think we were certainly—ran a very good campaign, a strong campaign, and I appreciate her work for that.

My assistant, Jim Still, who brings to the table such an incredible experience and I appreciate so much his knowledge of the neighbourhood and his knowledge of the political history in the neighbourhood. And Jim is—I wouldn't be where I am without him, and Jim, he is—recently had an illness in the family, and—in his family—and he's just really put all of his efforts and time into being with his son during a really difficult illness, and at the same time was still such a strong contributor to the campaign. And so I just can't thank him enough and his dedication to the campaign and to the NDP and to his family as well. So I just want to acknowledge the work that he did, and wish his son, Kevin, all the best in his recovery.

Jeff Hook, who was a name that some may have known in the past, somebody that left for, I don't want to say greener pastures but what he saw at the time, I guess, greener pastures in—on the west coast of Canada. He's back now. He was working two jobs during the campaign and at the same time gave me assistance, and I want to just acknowledge him.

And, of course, the volunteers on the campaign. And we all know that there's really no way we can do what we do without those volunteers. And in my constituency, as I'm sure in all the members here, constituencies, there are some volunteers that are—just give so much of their time and effort, and that's a humbling acknowledgement. That they give so much time and so much of themselves, and their personal time in support of what you're doing, and it really makes you appreciate the responsibility that we all have.

Of course, I want to acknowledge my family, Mr. Speaker, and first and foremost, of course, my wife. And this was an interesting campaign, in that

this was the first campaign that I had as a new father, and with a little one at home, and my little girl is 11 months old yesterday, and so it was a—it's certainly an experience where I had to, you know, balance my time between being out on the doorstep and spending a little bit of time with her. But, of course, my wife just put so much of her time and effort into making sure that our household was running and that our daughter is doing well, and I really couldn't do it without her, and she's—continues to support me in this. Of course, you know, we—the campaign is a particularly busy time, but it's always busy in this line of work, and so she continues to support me in this, in my endeavours, and I appreciate so much her work.

And, of course, my extended family and my father and my mother, who are not really a particularly political family and, at the same time, they have managed to step in and support me, and I appreciate that very much.

I also wanted to quickly acknowledge the other members of this House, and—who have given me so much advice and support over the last year. As I mentioned I'm not—no longer the newest member, but I'm still a rookie and I do feel very blessed that I've come to have so much advice from the experienced members here. It's almost nice that I came in when I did—I was elected in the by-election because it gave me the opportunity. We have a good changeover in the caucus. We have new members, of course, in the House, but we also have very experienced members. And so it's very nice for individuals like myself; we can still learn from some of the greats, can I say, and get their perspective on how this place works and how being an MLA or the best MLA works.

I also wanted to take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, and it's an incredible accomplishment for you and, you know, we've had a special relationship, being in the northeast quadrant of the city and, of course, working as colleagues in that respect. And I've always respected your—of course, your ability and your knowledge of this place and, I mean, you're a likeable guy, so you have gotten along with the folks here in this House. But I've also felt a special connection with you because you've been a political giant throughout my young political life, and so I've learned very much from you, and I respect the work that you've done, and I believe that you'll do a great job as Speaker. I almost lament that we don't get to see you as often in

caucus, but certainly the work that you're doing here is important, so I appreciate that very much.

And I also wanted to quickly acknowledge the Deputy Speaker here, who is my seatmate, and who, I also believe, will do an incredible job in maintaining the order and the rules in this House.

I wanted to take a moment also to congratulate all of the new members that have been elected, especially on this side of the House, and I'm just going to mention them very quickly because I feel that we've got such a great batch of new folks and folks that have so much experience, some in politics, some outside of politics, but certainly they all bring something to this House. And I know a lot of people have mentioned—members in this House have already mentioned the incredible speeches that have come in this—in their maiden speeches and their responses to the Speech from the Throne, and I just want to join in that in just acknowledging them.

So, from the member from St. James, and she, of course, had to go first, and I had to go first the last time, so I know how tough that can be, and we spoke a little bit about that; the member from Flin Flon who's my seatmate here; the member from Burrows, who has such a passion for community—I look forward to working with her. Of course, Tyndall Park, and I really appreciated his speech yesterday. We were talking a little bit about that, and just a unique perspective that he brings to this House and on our province and on our city. Of course, Fort Garry-Riverview, and somebody who has a lot of experience, so I think we're going to be looking to him and his ability to understand the workings of government. The member from Point Douglas, who had an excellent speech the other day as well, brings a new energy to this House, and I think we're all very excited about the work we're going to do together. And, of course, the member for St. Norbert who—I'm not sure if I can mention him—he's now the—officially the member for St. Norbert, I believe, but he's another young, energetic person, and I really appreciate that in our caucus and that renewal that we're feeling.

* (12:10)

Now, I was going to mention the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). I'm not sure how that works exactly. He's a new member, he's been here before, he's got a lot of experience, and, again, one of the giants. And I guess I could say, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't—I never thought, I guess, in my wildest dreams, that we'd be seatmates again or seatmates in

this House, but I appreciate him being back here and representing the good people of Elmwood.

I also wanted to very quickly acknowledge the members from the opposite side who were successful, and, especially, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). And I can only imagine how hard he worked during the campaign. I know it's a very difficult role that he played in the campaign and a lot of sacrifice in his personal life and in his life in general, and I just wanted to acknowledge his hard work, and, you know, he did resign on the night of the election, but he, you know, that takes some conviction, and he's making room for the next guy, and I certainly appreciate the work that he's done and wish him all the best.

To all the other members who put their name forward, whether you're successful or not, it's an incredible effort; we know this, and especially in my local community, my opponents, for giving the people of Concordia a choice and creating that debate on the doorstep and for the people of Concordia.

So this was an especially exciting campaign for me. This was my first re-election, and that was a special time for me because this was my first opportunity to run on my record and run on the things that I had done. We, as new members, come in and people give us the benefit of the doubt maybe and they say, well, we think you'll do a good job, but they don't really know exactly how you'll do as an MLA; they don't know if you'll be a good MLA or a bad MLA. They make some assumptions and they choose you, but you're really following in the footsteps of those who come before you. And, in my case, it's, again, two giants of political life: of course, Peter Fox, who is the former Speaker of this House, and the former premier of the province, Gary Doer.

And so when I came into political life, I believe that I made a strong case for the work that I was going to do but didn't have a record to necessarily run on. In this case, my most recent campaign, we had that opportunity to talk about the record. I knocked on thousands of doors, and, as has been mentioned by others here in the House, particularly the member from Kildonan, there was a positive response. People on the doorstep were generally positive. Now, they weren't saying that we had done everything right. They weren't saying that everything was perfect, but, what they were able to say is that, generally, things were getting better. And that was

the message that I hoped to carry as well and we carried throughout the campaign: that we did know—we did recognize that there were issues that needed to be addressed and there were ways that we could become better at what we do, but we certainly are on the right track, and cutting or stopping or slashing is not the way forward.

Manitobans agreed that we had done this job well. They entrusted us now, of course, in the path forward. This is what I would consider the first mandate in a new set of mandates, hopefully, going forward eight more years, 12 more years, 16 more years. We can keep going. I know the member from Gimli is ready to continue to serve the people of Manitoba. And, you know, ultimately, we had—we chose a clear path, and this was articulated here in the Speech from the Throne: a clear path for Manitoba to move forward.

And so we introduced this in the campaign, and now we've solidified it here in the Throne Speech, and I really do believe that our Premier (Mr. Selinger) has some incredibly innovative ideas, whether it be in health care, whether it be in education, whether it be in safety and crime issues. This Premier is somebody who is pointing the way forward for Manitobans, and is looking for those efficiencies and those ways to be innovative and to move Manitoba forward in a positive way.

So I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the accomplishments in my constituency that we talked about during the campaign, and also what we've talked about during the Throne Speech. So, in education, you know, we've been very successful in my constituency, as we have across the province, of building on infrastructure and building on capital, and this was seen in my constituency with the new gym-gymnasium being built in George V; it's a hundred-year-old school. We have a brand new facility that will be built at that school, as well as Elmwood High School now has a brand new track and field. I know the Elmwood Giants have been out there practising and playing and getting ready for their run at the championship in the near future as well.

And, as well, even smaller projects: Hampstead School. When they wanted to build a climbing structure, not just for the students at the school but for the residents all around that school—it's really just a community building thing—and we were able to support them, and I'm very proud of that.

And we continue to do this in education in Manitoba. We, of course, reduced—pledged to reduce class sizes to a maximum of 20 students for kindergarten to grade 3. This is something that, you know, at the doorstep, teachers were so supportive of, residents were supportive of. We've got a large number of teachers, either present or retired teachers in our caucus, and so we're well represented by teachers. And I think they recognize that this is just an innovative way to go forward and to look at how we can better deliver education to those youngest Manitobans.

We also want to create more opportunities for companies to hire apprentices and expand access to skill trades training in Manitoba. And the way that we've done this in my constituency, of course, is with—through the Kildonan-East Collegiate, which is a vocational school. And students there have the opportunity to learn and get ready for the trades and then, of course, plug into the apprentice programs that will get them the jobs of the future in Manitoba.

And, of course, we're building a new skill trades and technology centre at Red River College. And this is all part of the way forward for us here in Manitoba. Now education is, of course, very pressing for myself, not only as do I have a young daughter who, at some point in the future, not too distant future, will be entering the school system, but for myself as somebody who is, actually, I think, the only member in this Chamber who's currently still in university.

So I'm still in school, and it does give me a unique perspective when we talk about, you know, our commitment for tuition and freezing that at the rate of inflation. It's particularly important to me. And I've been one of the many Manitobans who's benefited from our tuition freeze and our balanced approach on tuition. And so I'm very much committed to that future, and I appreciate my opportunity to lend my voice in debate on education issues and tuition, as somebody who is currently partaking in those.

Likewise when it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency we've had a lot of success with the Hip and Knee Institute, a world-class facility, something that is not only serving the residents of Winnipeg and Manitoba as a world-class facility, but is also doing first-class research and research that is shared all across the world in how we can better do these surgeries and better address the issues and especially in an aging

population. We recently did the emergency room at Concordia Hospital, and I've heard nothing but praise about that facility and about its ability to better handle the patients.

Now the folks at Concordia have been fantastic in their vision about the way forward on that facility, on the hospital and other facilities and housing. And I'm very excited about working with them in the future on how we can, as a government, plug in to what they've doing and support what their good work is accomplishing.

When it comes to health care in general, though, you know, Manitobans agreed with us on the doorstep. We heard it over and over again. We said, we've hired more nurses; we've hired more doctors. We're going to continue to build. And then we said, no, we're not just going to stop there; we're not going to cut. We're not going to slow the train down; we're going to continue. We're hiring 2,000 new nurses and nurse practitioners, 200 more doctors, 50 more physician assistants.

Now we're expanding medical training by creating 22 more medical residencies. And we're ensuring that every Manitoban has access to a family doctor, which is just an innovative way of looking at the overall health-care system. We're not looking at just the emergency room or the point of where things are at their worst, can I say, Mr. Speaker, but they are—we're looking at preventative and how we can have better health care in the long term for Manitobans.

And people at the doorstep again agreed with what we were doing. And, in fact, at the end of the campaign, I think, you know, people were starting to get a little confused. I said, well, doesn't the other side offer any—offering more nurses and doctors, and they couldn't really make heads or tails of it. And, of course, I had to remind them that it was only 12 months ago in this Chamber when we had to hear about the cuts that the other side was looking at and making in the face of an economic downturn once again. And, of course, Manitobans agreed with us on that.

*(12:10)

Crime and safety in my neighbourhood—of course, East Elmwood is a needy community and a place that I live and have a special connection with and has special requirements and needs when it comes to crime and safety. It's top of my mine for folks. And we've had some real movement in terms

of our ability to deal with what's happening in our community directly. Of course, our resource officer at the Elmwood High School, who is now operating in that school, who's able to liaison with the students and get to know them better and get to know the issues that they're having and get a comfort level between the students and the police.

But we're not going to stop there, and, of course, when we talked on the doorstep, we said: Look, we've got these—we're supporting the police. Not only have we supported the police whether it be with more officers, but we're also—and the police helicopter, but we're also moving forward on this and we're not stopping there. And we want to make sure that we hire a hundred additional officers—and this was talked about in the Throne Speech—50 new cadets to serve throughout Manitoba and 50 officers right here on Winnipeg streets that are going to make a difference in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to speed up prosecutions—more prosecutors, weekend courts, the mental health court. These are things that we hope will move the prosecutions forward more quickly, and, of course, working with the federal government to strengthen the Criminal Code has been an important part of what we've been doing. And, when we look at what the federal government has done in recent weeks, I think we've had some positive accomplishments in that, but we're not going to rest on that. And I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) has been out knocking on doors, not only in my constituency in the past but throughout Winnipeg and throughout the—some of the most needy areas. And he has a real knowledge of what's going on on the streets and has a knowledge of that need for safety and a feeling of safety among residents in Winnipeg.

So we're going to continue to lobby the federal government. We're going to continue to work with them to identify what's important to Manitobans, what's important to those people who are victims of crime and how can we best put our resources towards addressing those issues.

But we know that this is only half the story when it comes to crime and safety. We want to make sure that our recreation opportunities are there, and I think this has been a great announcement during the campaign that we're going to extend the Northeast Pioneers Greenway, which is an active transportation network out to Birds Hill. This is something that will, you know, help build community, and this is something that allows people to feel a greater sense

of community and less afraid and less worried when it comes to crime.

And, of course, one of the most important things in my constituency is the East Elmwood Community Centre. East Elmwood was a vibrant community centre and somewhere that was doing a really great programming for the people in the neighbourhood and, of course, that tragically burnt down. And we're working with the City now and working with the club, and we're ready to step up as a provincial government to make sure that that club gets rebuilt and gets rebuilt in a way that the residents will be happy with. I've been a very strong proponent of what they've been doing and, at the same time, not sacrificing the other clubs in the neighbourhood. We want to make sure that all clubs, that all serve such an important role in our community, are protected.

So I'm going to continue to focus on that and to focus on making sure that they can provide the programming that keeps kids out of trouble and that gives them something positive to do.

Now I also wanted to very quickly mention a just few notes about our, of course, our economy in Manitoba, and I know that the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) mentioned our economy as well briefly. I'd like to take a bit more of a positive approach and just talk about some of the positive things that have happened, because I think we're on the right track. And, again, I'm not going to say that everything's perfect, but I think we're on the right track. And I think that our five-year plan is responsible, and it does bring us to a point where we can continue to grow the economy in a very positive way for all Manitobans.

So, you know, one of the most important things that we've done is to increase the—or to support the new Canadians that are coming into our economy and new people who are coming to Manitoba and making a life for themselves, and I know we had the member from Tyndall Park mention his experience first coming to Canada, and we continue that. We're going to continue to lobby the federal government to make sure that we can get more Manitobans here and more people who want to support our province and support our economy, and I've had a lot of success in that in my own constituency working with folks who are going through the Provincial Nominee Program and assisting them as best I can. And I'm going to continue to do that and to learn from other cultures that are coming into Manitoba.

But it's a slow and steady approach that we have when it comes to the economy, and this has been very beneficial to Manitobans. We're going to continue to make sure that Manitoba is affordable, and that's one of the best ways to grow the economy because we're putting money back into the hands of those people—the consumers, the drivers of this economy, the people who are—who support Manitoba businesses. And I think that's an important thing that is sometimes overlooked.

The 99 per cent—if I could steal a term from the folks who are interested in that issue right now—we believe that if we give those people the opportunity to make more money or to support their families in a more thorough way, that they'll be better for our economy and they'll be more productive citizens, not only in the economy, but otherwise. So we've increased the minimum wage, of course. We've lowered the small business tax. We've done these things that support the creation of new jobs in Manitoba, and it's not often mentioned from the other side, but we think that these things create new jobs and create more efficiencies. We're helping Manitobans renovate their homes; again, a great program for creating new jobs and getting more money into the hands of individuals. So we're going to continue to do these things. We're going to eliminate the property tax for seniors. We're going to make sure that life in Manitoba is as affordable as possible and that our economy continues to grow. And we're going to make sure that we get new Manitobans to do that and new people who can support our great province.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to just again acknowledge the voters in Concordia and thank them for their support, and I'm very excited about serving my first full term. It would be nice, maybe, to have more than just a couple of years between elections; four would be—sounds pretty comfortable right now, so I'm very excited about that, and there's a lot of exciting things that I want to do in that four years. And I pledge to be, of course, available to my constituents, responsive to their local concerns and, you know, I do love spending time in my constituency and my constituency office—the ability to meet with people and hear their points of view—and I'm going to continue to do that as a public servant and somebody who serves the public in my neighbourhood.

And I think our government has some incredible ideas going forward and I'm just so excited to be part

of this team that will continue to do that work and to continue to make Manitoba a better place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to start off today by welcoming you to your new role as Speaker of this fine institution here, and welcome to the Chamber. And I know, certainly, you have—I'm sure you've heard this before—but, big shoes to fill, and I know, certainly, I enjoyed my time over the last 11 years working with your predecessor, the—Mr. George Hickes, in the position, and we look forward to working with you. I know we spoke just before you were—as you were running for the position of Speaker of the House, and I asked—you know, it would be good to line each one of the candidates up and ask you please to step forward and say, order, order, at least a few times, just so we know what we're getting into for the next few years. And—but I've heard you say it a few times, and we're starting to get used to your voice here in the Chamber, so, welcome to your position and I'm sure you will do extremely well.

And, to the new pages, a couple—a few of you are here today, and to those who are not: welcome to your new positions. I hope you enjoy your time here in the Legislature and that you learn from your experience here in the Chamber. It's a great place to learn about how democracy works in Manitoba, and it's, indeed, I think, a privileged position for you to be in and a great honour. So I hope you enjoy your time here in the Manitoba Legislature, and we look forward to working with you.

I also want to welcome back the table officers who are here today. And I know we have a new table officer, as well, who we look forward to working with over the time—over the next little while as we get into committees and so on, Mr. Speaker, and in the House here. I often wonder, because I know at times these—you, you yourself, you'll get to know over the four years, and I'm sure your predecessor, Mr. Hickes, often sat in the Chair and had to listen to many of us speaking over the time, you know, about various things in the House, and sometimes not so, you know, not so relevant to the topic of discussion, and I know, at times, our table officers certainly have to sit here with a straight face throughout the debates that go on in this House, and I often wonder what's going through their mind when they're listening to some of the debates that go on, but, no—I know that they do their job with—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Tuxedo will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 28, 2011

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