

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	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
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
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, Hon.	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
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated, colleagues. Good afternoon, everyone.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 8—The Provincial Court Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 8, The Provincial Court Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: This bill would amend The Provincial Court Act by adding a section to facilitate the use of electronic documents in the Provincial Court. The amendment meets the requirements of the Criminal Code of Canada that allow the use of electronic documents provided their use is in accordance with an act or the rules of court. This amending act will enable the use of electronic documents as a further measure to improve police efficiency and to streamline and modernize court proceedings.

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

Bill 11—The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice, that Bill 11, The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les procédures contre la Couronne, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Bjornson: Bill 11, The Proceedings Against the Crown Amendment Act, will ensure the Province complies with new obligations arising out of recent revisions to the dispute resolution chapter, chapter 17, of the Agreement on Internal Trade, or AIT. Chapter 17 revisions ensure person-to-government dispute provisions essentially mirror government-to-government dispute provisions, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 200—The Results-Based Budgeting Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that Bill 200, The Results-Based Budgeting Act; Loi sur la budgétisation axée sur les résultats, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: This bill requires the budgets for all government programs, services, agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed on a regular cycle to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes that the public needs. Once the review process is completed for a given program, the budget for the program will be re-established. The process is to be transparent, with the findings and the recommendations of program reviews made public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further bills? Seeing none, we'll move on with petitions.

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And here are the reasons for this petition:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake

Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife of the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and the potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To 'recrest' the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their preflood conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This signed by J. Lachapelle, K. Houle, E. Johnson 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.

Coulter Bridge—Provincial Road 251

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

And the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The flood of 2011 caused the Coulter bridge on Provincial Road 251 west of Waskada to collapse.

(2) The current 36-kilometre detour provides only a minimum level of safety due to heavy traffic from petroleum industry trucks and agricultural equipment having to share this detour with school buses and local traffic.

(3) Local detour options at the bridge site have been rejected by Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation despite industry support to cover the costs for a temporary bridge.

(4) Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation to date have not provided any financial support for requests to develop an engineering plan for a local bypass in the Coulter bridge vicinity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation consider co-operating with the rural municipalities of Arthur and Brenda, their citizens and local industries to immediately provide a temporary detour over the Souris River on Provincial Road 251 near the collapsed bridge.

This petition is signed by D. Wilkinson, K.A. Gardiner, S. Stewart and many, many other Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Vita & District Health Centre

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Vita & District Health Centre services a wide area of southeastern Manitoba and is relied on to provide emergency services.

On October 17th, 2012, the emergency room at the Vita district health centre closed with no timeline for it to reopen.

This emergency room deals with approximately 1,700 cases a year, which includes patients in the hospital, the attached personal care home and members of the community and surrounding area.

Manitobans should expect a high quality of health care close to home and should not be expected to travel great distances for health services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (13:40)

To request that the Minister of Health consider reopening the emergency room in Vita as soon as possible and commit to providing adequate medical support for residents of southeastern Manitoba for many years to come.

This petition is signed by D. Jablonski, S. Lomax, M. Stalnyk and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 433

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition as follows:

Provincial Road 433, Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac

du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road were not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic they now accommodate.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists, and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by N. Barbour, J. Barbour, G. Haga and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Trunk Highways 16 and 5 North—Traffic Signals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, 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 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 pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by H. Swanson, R. Yano, C. McRae and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care—Steinbach

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care spaces in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by B. Dueck, B. Schroeder, H. Schroeder and hundreds of other good Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Law Reform Commission 41st annual report for 2011-2012.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the attention of honourable members to our Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today the Ambassador of Poland to Canada in Ottawa, His Excellency Zenon Kosiniak-Kamysz, and the Consul General of Poland to Canada, Grzegorz Morawski, and cardiologist Dr. W. Czarnecki. The ambassador and consul general are here to officially open a new honorary consulate office in Winnipeg, which will be

headed by Dr. Czarnecki. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And also, in our public gallery we have with us today a Russian delegation from the Siberian Federal University. Included with our—with the delegation is Dr. Pavel Vcheransky—Vcherashny, pardon me, Dr. Alexey Surin, Evgenya Bukharova, Natalia Firyulina, Elena Kruglikova, Nadezhda Samarnovnikov—pardon my pronunciation, please, this is a mouthful for folks—Valery Imov—Yimov and Mikhail Vasilyev. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon. My apologies for mispronouncing. We welcome you here, and please forgive my pronunciation of your names.

Also in the gallery we have with us today 130 visitors from the Highway Engineering division of Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also in the public gallery we have Andy and Lesia Minarik, who are the grandparents of our page Julia Minarik. On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipalities

Apology Request for Member's Comment

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, last week, the government announced rather unilaterally that it was going to proceed with amalgamation of rural municipalities. And last week, unfortunately, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) chose to describe those municipalities as dysfunctional. Now, that's 92 rural municipalities, hundreds of rural councillors and staff doing their best possible work for the ratepayers in their areas in challenging times with challenging responsibilities.

And I know that the Premier wants to rise in his place today and clarify and distance himself from those comments, out of respect for local governments, out of respect for the people who work there and who do their best to represent those ratepayers. I'd ask him to rise and apologize for those comments if he would.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question, because we do know that our municipal officials have done a tremendous job, particularly in the 2011 flood when they pulled together on disaster assistance planning and efforts

and mobilized a tremendous number of volunteers throughout many rural municipalities throughout Manitoba.

We also know that in 1997, when the members opposite were in government, they set a rule that a municipality could not incorporate unless there were a thousand residents. And today we know that over 92 municipalities have less than that thousand-resident threshold, and so the initiative around rural amalgamation is to support the local leadership and their efforts to do local economic development and their efforts to do municipal planning and their efforts to do disaster management planning for their area and to do all those things that will help rural communities thrive and grow into the future.

The opportunity is for one is to strengthen rural and municipal governments to the advantage of all those excellent leaders that we see at the AMM conference in Winnipeg today.

Government Tax Increase

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, well, you don't respect local governments by referring to them as dysfunctional, and the Premier missed an opportunity just then.

Now, the NDP spending record is a serious one, reflective of a serious problem, and that problem results in downloading to local governments. And despite his promises of a year ago at election time, the Premier decided subsequently to download costs to local people and to local governments as well. Gas costs had risen, diesel costs as a consequence of massive tax increases as well, benefits costs for life insurance, vehicle registration costs, insurance costs for property. All of these, the largest year-over-year increases and costs of any Canadian province, according to Statistics Canada. So the fact is that the Premier, who wants personal wiggle room, has created a lot less wiggle room for local governments.

I'd like him to verify today that in his next budget he will not include additional tax increases to municipalities and to local people.

Mr. Selinger: It's unfortunate the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Whyte, is so inaccurate and partial in the information he puts on the record.

Last year, we increased capital contributions to municipalities in Manitoba to the equivalent of 1 per cent of the provincial sales tax, a net increase of over \$23 million. If the member wants to be fair in

his characterization, he would have mentioned that fact. He would also know that operating expenditure for municipalities have increased dramatically, double digit for many years and single digit in every single year that we've been in office; there's been a very significant increase in operating expenditures. He would also have identified that Manitoba is the only province that shares corporate and personal income tax revenues with municipalities in the province of Manitoba.

* (13:50)

And he would also know that we've made record investments in roads, sewer and water treatment facilities in this province of Manitoba, not to mention the programs that have funded new recreation facilities all across rural Manitoba. The investments we've made have been very significant.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): If the Premier were fair, he'd admit that his decisions on hiking taxes have had a severe impact on local governments, if he'd be straightforward about that.

He's severely impacted local municipalities who have been especially affected by flooding this year, and this Province's mishandling of that and its sluggish approach to paying claims has affected people profoundly, and it's affected their local governments profoundly as well.

Now, the Premier was happy pre-election to go out and preen before the cameras and play at being Santa Claus and promise prompt payment of claims, full payment of claims. He made those promises. As soon as the election was over, however, he shifted aside, wiggled out of his obligations, shifted the responsibility to the MLA for Thompson, who had to play Ebenezer Scrooge to the people of this province on his behalf. And the fact remains that the Premier needs to be accountable for the way that this flood process has been mishandled.

I'd ask him to understand that local government should not be asked to pick up the broken pieces of his broken promises.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The Leader of the Opposition has a very long, inaccurate and, quite frankly, disrespectful preamble to his question.

Last year, contributions to municipalities went up \$31 million to a record \$375 million. That's an increase of 9 per cent. No other province in Canada made that kind of a contribution increase to municipalities anywhere else in Canada.

If the member is a man of respect and dignity, he will get up and apologize for misrepresenting the facts. When you have a \$31-million increase, a 9 per cent increase, that is not a reduction. That is an increase. Even the Leader of the Opposition should be able to do that simple mathematics, Mr. Speaker.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, the one that should be apologizing is the First Minister. Unfortunately, he just don't get it with these broken promises.

I'd like to welcome the councillors and the reeves and those flood victims that's been impacted by the flood of 2011.

In respect to broken promises, this tired NDP government—on this side of the House, we need to remind the First Minister of what his Minister of Finance said June the 1st of 2011 in Langruth where families were promised by this government that would be receiving appropriate and one hundred per cent compensation. And then again, the same Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture at the time, said the same thing over again, that there would be one hundred per cent compensation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Agriculture why this tired government failed these families. What went so terribly wrong?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The Manitoba families, Manitoba farm families, faced an unprecedented, devastating flood the year before last. That's very clear. We understand that.

I know members opposite, you know, I went with the member for Lakeside into his constituency and met with farmers who had their backs up against the wall. We understand the kind of stress that that leaves a Manitoba farm family under, and we know those pressures.

I was really proud to sit with the Premier and introduce the programs that were available and helped his own constituents, all of our constituents, Mr. Speaker. We have delivered \$350 million through those depart-those programs that we

announced. This was a big flood. It covered 30 per cent of our arable land in this province. It was a big, unprecedented flood and we came through with the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired now.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we certainly understand and are full aware that some people have received compensation. Many in the gallery here today have not received all that compensation.

Our point is very clear. Mr. Speaker, bankers don't like to be misled. Farmers don't like to be misled. Manitobans don't like to be misled. Bureaucrats don't like to be misled and used. A promise is a promise is a promise. This government misled all those folks intentionally. I guarantee you every member of this NDP government will be held accountable. If we're going to have compensation for these folks, we have to keep our promise. Our promise is our bond.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the First Minister: Why in the world would you allow any minister to make a promise that he or she had no intentions of keeping? It's time to do the right thing. Will the First Minister right these wrongs?

Mr. Struthers: Well, we promised the people of Manitoba, the flood victims that were hit by this unprecedented flood, we promised them that we would stand with them and we're doing that, Mr. Speaker. We did it by announcing the programs in the first place. We did it by very quickly putting together the terms of reference, the criteria that we use to send the—to determine who qualified and send the money out. We have sent \$350 million forward through a number of programs that helped a number of different Manitoba farm families and the communities that they live in.

This was a big, unprecedented flood. I believe we've made the correct commitments to the farm families of Manitoba and we're following through on that. It was an expensive flood. There's no two ways about it. We followed through on the commitments that we've made, and we continue to work with Manitoba farm families who continue to need that support, Mr. Speaker.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): The young family of Melinda Moch thought they were getting to

live their dream when they got the chance to move back to their home community of St. Ambroise and purchase the local general store. This was in 2010. Then came the flood of 2011. Their community was devastated by the flood, the provincial park and associated beach and campsites inundated and closed. Hunting and fishing lodges and guiding suffered, and sales at the store plummeted. In short order, the business failed. Support for—from flood programs for businesses never materialized or was so slow coming that bankruptcy followed.

I ask the Premier: How is this real-life example possible, given the promises made by this Premier in front of the cameras during the flood?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): There is—there was some real hardship in the St. Ambroise area, no question about it, and all up and down that side of the lake, including the St. Laurent area and the Twin Beaches area, and there was suffering.

We did make available grants for rural economic development and restart programs out there. Those programs were available to people.

The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh) is fully seized of the realities of rebooting that park in the St. Ambroise area. It is a park that is right on the edge of the lake and is a park that does need to be restored. It was severely damaged in the flood, the record flood of 2011, and plans are under way to restore that park and ensure that people have access to that park and local businesses can serve the people when they have access to that park.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, this young family with three small children could have been part of the revitalization of this small Metis community.

Compensation programs announced with much fanfare by the Premier have not worked. This government has failed them. It is one thing to make grand promises, but quite another to take actions in a timely manner.

In the gallery today we have a number of people affected by the flood and then revictimized again by the compensation programs.

Will this government admit today their compensation programs have failed to meet the needs and take immediate steps to remedy this problem?

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate the question from the member because he's focusing on a very specific case of hardship. There is—there are resources

available to address the concerns of specific individuals. If the member would like to discuss this with myself or any of the ministers that are in charge of com-running these programs, we will take a look and see what resources were available or not available to those programs and whether they're appropriate and to see if that particular business should have been treated in a manner that they have not yet to been treated here up to now.

The reality was is we did make resources available for rural economic 'revitalization' in revitalization in areas that had been severely damaged by the flood, and that included the specific area where this business is located, so if we have specifics, we'll take a look at that.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): A constituent of mine's 82-year-old mother owns lot No. 204 at Twin Lakes Beach. She has in her possession a copy of a caveat agreement signed by the landowner and the deputy minister of Natural Resources on November 12th, 1947, and I have a copy of that for the House today that I'll table.

* (14:00)

The agreement states, and I quote: And whereas the party of the second part has requested the party of the first part to grant him the said party of the second part a perpetual easement, right and privilege to overflow and injuriously affect up to elevation 813.5 feet above sea level.

Mr. Speaker, given that there is clearly an agreement between my constituent's mother and the Province of Manitoba to allow overflows up to the 813.5-foot levels, and given that the NDP government deliberately allowed this level to flow to more than 817 feet, why is the government stalling on getting back to my constituent about this matter? Will she be compensated under this—

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

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the member knows or should know that we had a regulatory system on Lake Manitoba that essentially worked from 1961 through to 2011. We had the Fairford structure. We had the Assiniboine diversion. There was never a construction of an outlet from

Lake St. Martin that was actually looked at in the 1970s and rejected.

And what happened in 2011 was we had unprecedented flooding throughout the province; 30 per cent of the arable land, Mr. Speaker, of the province flooded. We had a one-in-400-year flood on the Souris, one-in-350-year flood on the Assiniboine west of Brandon, one-in-300-year flood east of Brandon.

The member should know that, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very surprised that the member hasn't told her constituent what happened—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Mrs. Stefanson: My constituent is well aware of what happened and that this was deliberately flooded, this area, by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, my constituent's 82-year-old mother has been given the runaround by this NDP government since they deliberately flooded this land in May of 2011. A copy of this agreement was first sent to the Minister of Emergency Measures on June 4th, 2012. On July 9th, one month later, it was determined by the minister that it was not his responsibility and they will pass the information on to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn). One month after receiving a copy of the agreement, the Minister of Agriculture's office called my constituent to inform her that the minister could not read the agreements and there was nothing they could do. They then passed the issue onto yet another government department, the Department of Water Stewardship. My constituent was in touch with the departmental staff one month ago and has still not received a response.

Six months later, three government—

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

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite may have forgotten 2011, and we're still, by the way, in the 2011-2012 flood. Talk to the people of Minot, North Dakota. Talk to the people in Saskatchewan who were impacted by flooding. Talk to the people of Brandon who put up a heroic effort to put up protection. Talk to the people all along the Assiniboine Valley who had to deal with unprecedented water. And talk to the people in Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and the people that put in place the emergency outlet that dropped the

level of both lakes by 5 feet. And I want to say to the member opposite that's the reality of 2011-2012.

The other reality is unprecedented assistance. And I want to urge the member opposite, by the way, Mr. Speaker, to take access of Ron Bell, the appeal commissioner, to take access. The appeal mechanism is built in place because we've already paid out significant assistance—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, First Nations, farmers, ranchers, property owners in the Lake Manitoba inundation zone were told by this Premier and this current Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) that recovery programs would be multi-year. Now, they can rant and rave, they can wave their hands and point fingers, but the fact remains they broke their promises.

Will the Premier please explain why this NDP government has broken the promise to those people in the inundation zone?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the compensation made available to the people of Manitoba through the 2011 flood is at least at a billion dollars and probably will go up another couple hundred million dollars.

Three hundred and fifty-nine million dollars has been provided to producers, \$4.8 million for Hoop and Holler, \$33 million to the Lake Manitoba Financial Assistance Program, \$162 million through the Excess Moisture Insurance Program, which this government made permanent, Mr. Speaker. When the reality is looked at, you will see another \$289 million was made available through the disaster financial assistance program, and an additional \$240 million was made available through floodfighting, mitigation, restoration and flood proofing. And \$89 million was—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. First Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, people like Tom Teichroeb were told that because it was a man-made intentional flooding, they would not be expected to pay out of pocket. They were told they would be compensated at a level that would return their properties to preflood conditions. Tom took the

government at their word because he believed and trusted what the government said.

Why has this NDP government refused to keep their promise to Tom Teichroeb and all the other ranchers around Lake Manitoba? You made a promise; why did you break it?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, the—I want to stress one thing, and I think this is important for members opposite, but more important for the people of Manitoba who were part of this historic flight—and historic flood recovery. We have currently paid out 1 billion, 25 million dollars—[*interjection*] Well, the member opposite says it doesn't matter. I think to the flood victims and the flood-affected communities it matters a lot. We, Mr. Speaker, anticipating a further \$250-million payment with existing programs to continue to be paid out.

I want to stress, by the way, that we've been working very co-operatively with the federal government. We are anticipating significant federal recovery for some of those programs, but we have eight separate provincial stand-alone programs, Mr. Speaker, and we're continuing to work with flood victims, including in and around Lake Manitoba.

If the member opposite thinks flood recovery is over, he's wrong.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Lake St. Martin Emergency Channel Closure

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, levels in Lake Manitoba are still at 812.2 feet and in Lake St. Martin at 800 feet, still close to the maximum levels. We all know water going into a system must equal the water coming out of the system or flooding will occur.

Given the fall rains and the above-average snowfall in this province, or in this—is this government not recreating the events of 2010, the fall events—the events of fall 2010 by closing the emergency channel from Lake St. Martin to Big Buffalo Lake so quickly?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in the gallery I had engineers from my department, I know, working on the flood recovery, and I could tell you the advice we have been given by our engineers

in the water-control side was it was the appropriate thing to do.

I want to stress, by the way, that we did receive full co-operation from the federal government to operate that on an emergency basis. We actually have achieved below 812 feet over the last number of weeks.

And I want to stress that's 5 feet less than if we hadn't built the channel, and that channel, Mr. Speaker—and this is a credit to everyone that was involved in it—it was built in months, something that would normally have taken years. I thought that was perhaps something the member might have wanted to add to his question, the fact that that outlet made a significant difference in improving the situation on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

Big Buffalo Lake Emergency Channel Use

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): If the emergency channel worked so well, why is it still not operating?

The emergency channel from Lake St. Martin to Big Buffalo Lake was completed at a tendered cost of \$43 million, which the minister likes to call a hundred million. It was put to good use to lower both lakes, as the minister has suggested, on behalf of many Manitobans.

A second channel from Big Buffalo Lake to Lake Winnipeg was nearly completed at a cost of \$37 million, but never open and never used. There are many here today who think this money could have been put to better use.

Can the minister explain to all Manitobans why it was necessary to build this channel that will never be used?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): You know, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very easy to be an armchair quarterback. I'm sure there's a lot of people—the Calgary Stampeders doing that after Sunday as well.

But I could tell, what we were faced with, historic flooding, Mr. Speaker, and I want to correct the member, by the way. I think he should go and do his homework in terms of the regulatory range of Lake Manitoba, which runs up to 812.5.

We built that, Mr. Speaker, without hesitation. We went to the federal government—perhaps the member's not aware of this. We do require

environmental approvals; they gave it. I want to credit the federal government for doing it. We built it and we operated it until it came back within regulatory level. We are going to review. We have an independent review right now of the regulatory range in Lake Manitoba.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I thought the member, again, he would've had the opportunity to stand up—perhaps some member opposite—to give credit, not to this government, but the people of Manitoba who built that outlet, made a real difference for Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin.

* (14:10)

Highway Traffic Board City Speed Limits Consultations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, at the hearings this morning of the Highway Traffic Board, many residents came forward to emphasize the need for safe roads in the residential area of River Heights. There were residents who want safe streets for themselves and for their children walking along in this residential area. There were cyclists who want safe streets to cycle along in this residential area. All are very strongly in favour of keeping the speed limit at 50 kilometres per hour rather than increasing it to 60 kilometres an hour, which is less safe for children, for pedestrians and for cyclists.

I ask the Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation: Why is he and his Highway Traffic Board interfering in the city residential issue?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for the question.

First of all, I do want to correct him. The—it's not an issue whether transport board has jurisdiction; it does.

I do want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that in regards to speeds—speed zones for school zones, we have actually given that over to the traffic authorities, which includes the City of Winnipeg, so the City of Winnipeg does have the ability to do those kind of decisions in school zones.

I can indicate it is an arm-length process. We do not interfere directly in that, Mr. Speaker, but I would certainly say that I appreciate the member raising these concerns. I know other members have raised concerns. The member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) raised it directly with me. I know a

number of city councillors are, and I would certainly encourage people to be part of that process.

And I can indicate the priority for this government is having safe operation of our highway systems, one of the reasons we are decreasing speeds in school—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly my point. Only a few months ago, the minister was talking about the need to decrease speeds where there were schools. There are schools along these roads in Grant and Corydon. Right beside these roads there have been near misses and near accidents, and now he and his Highway Traffic Board are coming in and saying, we want to look at raising the speed from 50 kilometres an hour up to 60 kilometres an hour.

And so many residents of Winnipeg, and in River Heights in particular, are asking why the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, when he's got so many important things to do in the flood recovery process, with more than 2,000 people still evacuated, why is he not focusing on those areas rather than interfering in a residential issue in River Heights?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I, actually, Mr. Speaker, am focusing on the flood. I want to indicate that this was an initiative of the Highway Traffic Board. It was not an initiative from MIT, not from this minister, not from this department.

There is a hearing process and I think the—and I don't always say this, but I think the member's raised some important points for consideration by the Motor Transport Board, and just as I did earlier with a discussion with the member from St. Norbert, who's got similar concerns out about a proposal to raise the speed limit in St. Norbert from 50 to 60 in the farmers' market area where there are schoolchildren and there's a play area in place, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to raise those concerns with the Motor Transport Board.

It is initiative coming from the Motor Transport Board, not from MIT, and I want to encourage the member to continue to raise those kind of concerns, because I think they are legitimate issues for the Motor Transport Board to consider.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the minister that I was there this morning and I did raise exactly these concerns because they are my concerns as well as the concerns of people in River Heights.

There have already been too many accidents and near accidents, particularly in areas where there've been schools and daycares along Grant and Corydon.

And so I think that the real question is: Why is the minister and his board trying to create speedways through the centre of this residential area? Why are they there at all? Why did this come up? Why is it coming up now? And will the minister ensure that there are safe speeds and that the speed won't be raised in River Heights?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did mention my first answer to the member's question that we've moved in terms of school zones. I want to also indicate, by the way, that we do clearly have an agenda in terms of reduced speeds in terms of safety. We've done it for construction zones. We also will be bringing legislation—it was flagged in the Throne Speech—that will provide particular protection to our emergency responders, our firefighters and our police officers who are dealing with emergency situations at the roadside, which will be requiring motorists to slow down. So the agenda of this government has been very clear in terms of overall policy, which is to reduce speeds where required.

And I want to indicate, and I want to stress again to the member, it was not an initiative by MIT or this minister; it was an initiative by the Motor Transport Board, which is an arm-length's body. But I'm glad he went there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't politically interfere in that board, but I think it might—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Power Smart Neighbourhood Project Energy and Water Efficiency Initiative

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I understand the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines was on hand to announce yet another first in all of Canada that adds to Manitoba Hydro's package of Power Smart programs.

Can the minister advise the House of the announcement made in the William Whyte neighbourhood today?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker, and can you imagine—can you imagine—what the announcement would've been had the members privatized Hydro as they intended to?

Mr. Speaker, we were able today to announce, for households eligible for LIEEP, the Power Smart Pay As You Save program that will finance upfront capital costs in 2,000 homes, most of which lack insulation and lack modern furnaces, that will allow for those provision of that, as well as the pay as you go-pay-as-you-save program that will allow people to pay over a period of time, both tenants and landlords, to decrease the cost. That'll increase the housing stock in that area, will increase the value, employ people in that area and help overall—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, Fred Neil was forced to evacuate his 250-head dairy herd due to the 2011 flooding in the Souris River. Last January, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) told me he didn't want to see any farmers going broke because of the flood. The Ag Minister, the departments and Treasury Board have procrastinated over how this—how to support this claim all year. Mr. Neil is the only Manitoba dairy farmer of this size to be forced to evacuate due to a natural disaster. The irony is if he'd abandoned his herd to let them drown, he'd have received business loss insurance, but that's not humane. As a result, Mr. Neil is in desperate financial position.

Will the Premier see the—that compensation for Mr. Neil's claims are finally processed, or is he just going to let him go broke?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that farm families like the Neils have experienced a lot of stress and a lot of hardship because of this unprecedented flood that we've been dealing with in this province. There's no doubt about that.

This government has responded with programming, programming specific to the farm families that we're concerned about in this House. Mr. Speaker, \$350-million worth of assistance has been provided. Our commitment has been to work with Manitoba farm families, including the Neils in this case, to make sure that we can do what we can to help them through a very, very stressful time.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, these people need help and that's no solace; that answer's no solace to

Mr. Neil, who's driven nearly four hours to be here in the gallery with us today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to table the documents from the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba showing the quota that Mr. Neil has had to sell to desperately sustain his operation, as well as a letter from the RM of Cameron outlining the evacuation procedure.

Mr. Speaker, his claim including replacement cattle is over \$450,000, as I recently informed the Premier, his ministers and the dairy producers of Manitoba by letter. The Premier himself has stated that—in this House that he wouldn't turn away individuals with unresolved claims.

Well, Mr.—well, will the Premier, Mr. Speaker, and his members stop pointing fingers, meet with Mr. Neil today and get this outstanding claim settled as the Premier has promised?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for raising the question, and he has raised it before, and the folks in the Department of Agriculture have taken a serious look at this situation and they are still examining the situation to see what support can be made available to this individual where his situation does not squarely fit under the disaster financial assistance program guidelines. And those guidelines are put in place by the federal government, administered by the provincial government.

But the reality is that we are not going to give up on examining this individual situation to see what can be done under our programs and whether or not there is any accommodation that can be made under programs that have been put in place by the various levels of government. Currently, the existing guidelines do not apply to this situation, but we are going to continue to examine the situation to see what could be done—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (14:20)

Flooding (RM of St. Laurent) Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I hope that means the Premier's going to meet with Mr. Neil now that he's taken the time to come here.

Mr. Speaker, the deliberate flooding of Lake Manitoba in 2011 by this government caused severe hardship and cost to many municipalities around Lake Manitoba. The RM of St. Laurent was particularly hard hit from the high water and

windstorms that destroyed many properties along the lake. This Premier and this government promised long-term support to help municipalities rebuild after they were deliberately flooded in 2011.

Why is the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) ignoring the RM of St. Laurent? How could he promise to do something and now do complete opposite?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, the RM of St. Laurent was one of the many municipalities hit by the flood. It certainly was one of the hardest hit.

I want to indicate that right from day one we were there in terms of the flood fight itself. There were significant efforts put in all around Lake Manitoba with the immediate flood fight in terms of putting in dikes, which we did in St. Laurent. We worked—and I know local government was a part of that in terms of recognizing the impact on a number of municipalities, the hardest hit municipalities in terms of their assessment base.

We built the outlet, and I want to stress again, members opposite do have the opportunity, perhaps, to stand up and say that this made a real difference, because for the RM of St. Laurent, it has reduced the level of Lake Manitoba by 5 feet, Mr. Speaker, over what it would have been. I think that's the key thing we've done for the RM of St. Laurent.

Yes, we're working on the recovery stage, but we were there fighting the flood, fighting it for the people around Lake Manitoba, fighting it for the people around Lake St. Martin, and that's what people of Manitoba expect from their government: to be there on the front lines fighting for them.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I was over at the convention centre this morning when the Minister of Local Government lectured the AMM delegates about respect and about having respect. I asked a question about municipalities and the minister sits on his hands. That is not respect.

The RM of St. Laurent has experienced a 40 per cent drop in their assessment base due to the intentional flooding of Lake Manitoba and now faces severe cash flow issues. These cash flow issues include remitting the school tax portion of property taxes collected on behalf of the school division. How is this municipality to provide long-term fiscal

responsibility on a local basis when this government deliberately destroyed 40 per cent of their tax base?

Why is the Minister of Local Government breaking his promise to provide long-term compensation due to deliberately flooding Lake Manitoba in 2011?

Mr. Ashton: Well, I think the member opposite might also want to respect the rules of this House, which is when he asks a question, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't get to dictate who gets to answer.

He asked a question about the flood of 2012, and I want to assure him that on this side of the House, when it came to the flood, and I—for a while there was a period of time where I would've included the opposition in this, where we all worked together. And they may have gone a different route, but I can tell you we are not done yet in terms of the flood recovery.

I indicated before, despite the payout of more than a billion dollars in terms of floodfighting costs and assistance, we still have a lot more work to do. We've already indicated there could be upwards of \$250 million more. We have a lot more work to be done in terms not only of the recovery but the long-term flood mitigation, including around Lake Manitoba and around Lake St. Martin.

So we've been there—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The minister's time has expired.

Flooding (Assiniboine River Valley) Tabling of Compensation Reports

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on November 16th, just before the session was to begin, the minister responsible for disaster assistance and emergency measures admitted that artificial flooding had taken place in the Assiniboine River Valley in 2011 and 2012, a flip-flop from their position of this summer. The Assiniboine Valley flooded farmers received no notice of this announcement, no consultation.

Several times last session, we asked the government for required reports which would determine compensation. Does the minister now have those reports? Was his announcement based on these reports, or was this just a timely announcement to deflect the issue before this session or the AMM meeting taking place this week? Will he table the reports today?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that when he asked the question about Shellmouth, I said that the technical work was still being done. He also knows, as I answered this question a number of months ago, that we had a major flood in this province in 2011-2012 and virtually every single one of our engineers, and including many of the contract engineers, their first priority was on fighting the flood. And so there was a delay in getting the analysis done on whether it was an artificial flood.

I received the indication from my department, Mr. Speaker, in fact, a couple of weeks ago that, indeed, there was analysis showing that for a period of time there was artificial flooding. And what I did is I gave advance notice of that, and as soon as the technical reports are available they will be released.

And under statute brought in by this government, they will be getting compensation, something that didn't exist when the Conservatives were in office.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Brandon Optimist Soccer Park Flooding Compensation Claim

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, last spring, the Brandon Youth Soccer Association went through several adjusters, at least four, while waiting to hear if they could possibly apply for flood compensation, if they would get anything.

We raised that issue in the House here last spring, Mr. Speaker, and, poof, they got a cheque for \$10,000 with—you know, well, this is maybe all they're going to get, but it's nowhere near the cost of rehabilitating those fields to a playable level. And then they're told—this is a volunteer association—that they had to do the work and then apply to the government, and we'll see if we're going to cover any of that. What volunteer association can possibly come up with that amount of money—well over \$100,000—go out and volunteer fundraise to make that happen?

Mr. Speaker, how does this minister expect the volunteer association, the soccer association, to proceed when there's no commitment from this government, and how much pressure does it take to actually get a cheque for flood compensation?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I would

suggest the member opposite perhaps get a briefing from the Emergency Measures officials, as he clearly doesn't understand how the process works.

We have a program; it's called the disaster financial assistance program, Mr. Speaker. It's a federal-provincial program. It operates under guidelines. There was not a cheque made out because he or anybody else asked the question.

But I also want to say one thing as well, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised he doesn't have more faith in the volunteers in the city of Brandon. They were there fighting the flood. They were there working in terms of the recovery. I know the member opposite did not see that himself during the flood, but perhaps now he'd like to be part of the solution when it comes to Brandon and show some faith in the people of the city of Brandon, because I think he's wrong. I think those volunteers can and will rebuild that soccer field.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Order, please. Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Neelin Spartans Volleyball Team

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am pleased today to rise to recognize the achievement last night of the Neelin Spartans female varsity volleyball team.

The team from École Secondaire Neelin High School in Brandon won the Manitoba High School Athletic Association's AAAA provincial volleyball champ title last night by defeating Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute Hawks at the University of Winnipeg's Duckworth Centre.

It was indeed an electric atmosphere in the stands, packed with both Neelin and MBCI parents and supporters. Both teams played very well and should be very proud of their accomplishments. Neelin traditionally competes at the AAA level due to its size but made the decision to play at AAAA level this year, and that decision obviously played-paid off.

The team is mainly made up of grade 11 students and a couple of grade 10 students, so I am sure we will see them competing well again next year.

As their coach, Kevin Neufeld, said after the game, it just means a lot to our kids to have the opportunity to compete at that level, and being the

No. 1 team in the province is a real reward for their hard work. Tournament all-stars for Neelin were Alison Quiring and Kristine Ward. Paige Thomson was named player of the match for Neelin, and Amy Gordon was named the most valuable player for the tournament.

I'm sure the members of the Manitoba Legislature will join me in congratulating the team on their win. The Neelin Spartans girls 2012 Boston Pizza varsity volleyball champion team-championship team members are: Amy Gordon, Tara van den Ham, Jamie Campbell, Courtney Bryant, Danielle Larocque, Jael Unger, Maddy Wilson, Jordan Hardy, Alison Quiring, Paige Thomson, Sierra Lefebvre, Alexis Jameson, Kristine Ward, with assistant coach Nicole Clemons and coach Kevin Neufeld.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, Helen Betty Osborne is a name that is very powerful in this province. It's a name that holds so much hurt and sadness, and yet Helen Betty Osborne has also become a name that represents strength and hope—hope for a better future for Aboriginal people.

* (14:30)

It was Helen Betty Osborne's dream to finish high school. It was her dream to get a teaching degree and return to her community of Norway House to share knowledge with others. And it is that dream we honour through Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation. The memorial foundation was established in year 2000 through an act of the 37th Legislature under the auspices of the Attorney General at the time, Gord Mackintosh. The foundation promotes the memory of Helen Betty Osborne and provides financial awards to Aboriginal students pursuing their post-secondary educations.

This year, on November 20, I was honoured to attend the foundation's annual academic awards. There, 113 Aboriginal students received bursaries so they can follow their dreams the way Helen Betty Osborne would have wished to follow hers.

Helen Betty Osborne meant a great deal to our community, and the injustice she faced deeply impacted each and every one of us. What we wanted to see, as a community, was justice. And so we came together to do the right thing—to ask for justice. One way we were able to get justice was by educating

others on her story. Another way was providing opportunities for Aboriginal youth. And another way was by acknowledging and rewarding the hard work of First Nation and Metis students who are working towards combatting racism, sexism and indifference.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for this Legislative Assembly to show gratitude to the 113 Aboriginal students who won bursaries last week. They are true examples of youth fighting to make this province and this country a better place for all people. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to recognizing the next member for a member's statement, I wish to caution the House that when members are referencing members of the Assembly, it's to be by their constituency names or by-ministers by their portfolios. I just wish to draw that to the attention of honourable members.

Manitobaville 2012 Contest

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Today I would like to share something that has helped Manitoba communities take pride in themselves and focus on projects that will improve their facilities.

The Manitobaville contest, run by Astral Media for the past two years, has been a great community-spirit builder. The four Astral radio stations combined forces to sponsor contests that included a \$25,000 cash prize for a community project. Communities were asked to send in a video submission that highlights their community and what they would use the prize money for. Of all the entries, 10 were selected, and then the public had 11 days to vote on one of the websites of the four sponsor radio stations.

Ste. Agathe was voted the winner in 2011 with the funds going to their new daycare fundraising project. This year, 21 communities from across Manitoba submitted videos. The projects submitted for Manitobaville this year included playground replacement, sports grounds refurbishment, places for children and youth to be active, arena repairs, theatre upgrades and general upgrades to community spaces. The Manitobaville contest saw Manitoba communities come together to promote their causes and encourage people far and wide to vote for their videos to ensure a win for their cause. For some communities, this included daily reminders on Facebook from the organizers to vote.

Mr. Speaker, the winning community for 2012 was Birtle, Manitoba. They received \$25,000 for

their playground upgrades, a town celebration, and, thanks to the generosity of sponsor Peak of the Market, one pound of produce for each vote cast in the contest. At well over 400,000 votes, they received a lot of produce. Other contest sponsors included Sunrise Credit Union, Travel Manitoba, the Manitoba Turkey Producers, Herzing College, the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba, Mazergroup and BOSS Lubricants.

Hats off to all the communities that submitted videos to the contests that showcased their strengths and the great things they have to offer. And a great big congratulations to Birtle for being the successful winner and using the \$25,000 to help promote children activities in their community. Thank you.

Rotary Seniors Christmas Party

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, November 25th, 400 seniors were celebrated and honoured at the R.H. Channing Auditorium in Flin Flon during the Rotary seniors Christmas party.

I had the pleasure of emceeing this amazing luncheon. People from all over the community came together volunteering their time and service to make this event a success. It was quite the show of community support for our seniors. Even before the luncheon began, the Lions Club, the Kinsmen Club and the Flin Flon School Division provided vehicles and assistance to all who could attend. Once the guests got to the party, the Flin Flon Lionelles club presented every single senior who attended with a homemade corsage. The local hockey team, the Junior Bombers, offered their strong arms to help seniors find their seats, and what really impressed me was watching these youths chatting and getting to know the seniors who helped create this amazing community they now enjoy.

Members of the community, too many to count, donated door prizes and the Rotarians gave a gift to each senior. It truly was an environment of giving and sharing.

The Inner Wheel made and served refreshments, and many talented entertainers donated their time: the Flin Flon Community Choir, Borealis, Coppertones, the Flin Flon Community Band, Ukes Ahoy, Mark Kolt, and, of course, the good old standbys, the Two Rockin' Cowboys: Andy Stewart and Wayne Wollaker.

This was a very important event for me. Here, I had the chance to see many of the people who I knew

growing up. What I felt was not just a great sense of community, but a sense of who I am and where I come from.

Mr. Speaker, we have the most amazing people in the Flin Flon constituency: people who volunteer their efforts to make strong and healthy community. The Rotary seniors Christmas party could not have existed without the help of the dedicated and compassionate volunteers and all the amazing seniors who came out to share this holy spirit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Chris and Lawrence Warwaruk

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put a few words on the record about a pair of very entrepreneurial brothers, Chris and Lawrence Warwaruk.

Growing up on a farm near Erickson, they have always had the bug to grow something from the ground up. They and their two brothers, Eugene and Eric, started the very popular Lux Sole restaurant in Osborne Village back in 1999.

Then in 2008, Chris and Lawrence started Luxalune Gastropub, also in Osborne Village. Serving more than 150 types of beer, it has given beer drinkers more options than what is normally found at their local watering hole. The growth of this business and their love of farming has taken them on a new adventure.

At an Arden Ridge area farm, the Warwaruk farmers have launched The Farmery, Canada's first estate brewery. They intend to grow the hops and the barley and eventually brew their own ales at on site brewhouse and facility. They could use strawberries and saskatoons growing on the property to make fruit-infused beer.

The enterprise will allow the brothers to create a unique product for their local gastropub customer base and to attract new customer base through tourism that the site will one day attract. The hope is to one day offer this beer to other restaurants and bars across the province, bottle for sales in liquor stores.

The idea of an estate brewery is unique to Manitoba, but not to other parts of the country. Provinces like British Columbia have estate wineries, but here, in the heart of barley country, an estate brewery is coming to life. While the craft-brewing industry has taken off in the United States, this is the first such large-scale operation in Canada.

The Warwaruks are the first to admit that they won't be able to compete with large breweries from the beginning, but their hope is to establish a tourism market and a market for their beer very soon.

I would like to commend the Warwaruks for their entrepreneurial drive and for bringing these truly unique ventures to Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Howard: Pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday—assuming that private members' business is considered next Tuesday—will be one put forth by the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight). The title of the resolution is We Day.

Mr. Speaker: It's been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday—assuming that private members' business is considered next Tuesday—will be the one put forth by the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight). The title of the resolution is We Day.

The honourable opposition—Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking leave on a matter.

The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) had begun his Throne Speech when last we sat. He needs to attend to important business. Seeking leave if he would be able to not continue on with his debate right now, have it proceed to a government member, but that the member for Arthur-Virden would be able to resume his time when he's able to at a future time prior to the vote on the amendment.

Mr. Speaker: It was been request—a leave has been requested by the Official Opposition House Leader that leave be granted to the honourable member for Arthur-Virden to have his time remaining for

speaking on the Throne Speech postponed to a later time and to allow a government member to proceed at this particular time.

Is there leave of the House for that? *[Agreed]*

* (14:40)

THRONE SPEECH (Sixth Day of Debate)

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): It is my pleasure to rise in support of the Throne Speech as presented by our government. It's a nice opportunity for me to thank some of the people who make this work possible.

Of course, the first people I want to thank are the people of—

Mr. Speaker: I regret interrupting the honourable member. I have—a certain portion of my duty's that I have to recite into the record first before I recognize the honourable member. I neglected to do that. So it's orders of the day, government business.

To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Administrator:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of 40th Legislature of Manitoba, and the proposed motion by the leader—Official Opposition House Leader in amendment thereto.

And, now, the honourable Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy, my apologies for interrupting your opening comments.

Ms. Selby: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It just gets me a chance to once again thank the people who have allowed me to be in this House and allow me to do the work for the people of Southdale. And, of course, the first people I need to thank are the fine folks of Southdale who allow me to be their voice in this House and I appreciate that very much.

I also want to thank all the staff who work very hard to make me look good. I appreciate the effort that takes to do that.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the friends who agree to come with me to events on behalf of government, sometimes come along to those sort of things if they want to see me because, of course, as members in this House know, our

friends sometimes suffer not being able to spend as much time with them as we would like to because of the duties that are called upon us.

But, of course, the people that make the biggest sacrifice, and I think I could probably speak for all members in this House, is our families. To support someone who works in office is a huge sacrifice for family, and I'm not sure they all realize what they're taking on when they get behind us and cheerlead us as we run for office, but I have to say my family supports me without complaint and I appreciate that, that they do.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important Throne Speeches, I think, is the one that we just brought to this House. I think during times of economic uncertainty it is a test of government. It's a test of the convictions of the people who are here in the House. It's a test to see what those of us who are here believe in. And, as we have difficult economic times, uncertain economic times and we need to weigh those decisions, we also have to think a lot about what those decisions mean, not just today, not just tomorrow, but the consequences years, decades sometimes, of what those decisions are.

It has definitely been a time for choices for this government, sometimes difficult choices. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud of the team I work with and that is because of the choices that I see them make as we sit around the table as we make decisions as government. I see them standing up for people. I see them voicing for people who don't have a voice often at a table such as these, and the choices that we make to support all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, it's particularly important to talk about that now because we know that some governments make different choices. We know that—what the opposition did when they were in government. We know what the new Leader of the Opposition did when he sat around the Cabinet table because he, too, had to make tough choices. I don't dispute that. But I guess the people of Manitoba will decide if the choices that he made when he had his hands on the power of the wheel—the wheel of power, rather—were good choices or bad choices. And I think it's important to see how much we can learn from history when we look back at different choices people have made.

I'm going to talk a lot about choices. This government chooses to protect front-line services. We choose to protect the things that Manitobans tell us mean the most to them: education, health care,

protecting families, protecting jobs. Health care being one of the most important of those things, to know that it is there for you or a family member needs it. Sometimes easy to take it for granted if everyone in your life is healthy and hasn't had to be touched by the health-care system, but once you need it it is certainly good to know that we have it there.

The other thing that's important to this government, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that children get a strong start, be that through education, be that through support of their family. We know that allowing children to reach their potential, and, hopefully, that potential means going on to post-secondary education, is important for all children no matter which neighbourhood they grow up in. We don't think that only certain children should get to reach their potential; we believe that all children should get that chance. Even if no one else in their family has done it before them, perhaps, as many people I know are, on this side of the House, the first person in their family to finish high school, to go on to a post-secondary education.

Times are changing, Mr. Speaker. Jobs are changing. There was a time when a high school education was enough to guarantee a good job. In fact, a generation ago, you could get a pretty good job without a high school education and work your way up. Employers expect more these days. It is more difficult to do that, and I suppose you could always find somebody who's defied the odds and still become what society considers a success without a post-secondary education, but it does become increasingly difficult to do so.

When I speak to young people today, I see that, again, the generation has expected more. When I was in university, we considered getting a bachelor degree probably sufficient to find a good career afterwards. When I speak to students now, they're talking about a minimum of a master's degree. We have a knowledge-based society. We know that people need skills, they need training and they need education to make the demands—to meet the demands of a modern economy, which is why this government chooses to support universities and colleges.

In the last two years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen historic funding to universities. We have seen a 10 per cent increase in operating to universities in just the last two years alone. I talked a little bit earlier about choices that people make, choices particularly when facing difficult or uncertain times, as the Leader of the Opposition did when he was in Cabinet

in the '90s. But, of course, he made very different choices. Instead of preparing young people for jobs, instead of ensuring that young people could reach their potential, and instead of ensuring that young people could all have the chance to succeed, instead of supporting our post-secondary institutions, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was around the Cabinet table, didn't raise—increase operating to universities by the degree that we have seen. No, instead he chose to freeze or cut funding to universities for five years straight. That is a choice that he made and he'll have to live with that.

Of course, I know that the opposition want to argue that that's just history; it's all old times. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, some of those choices were made a long time ago. But past performance is also a good indicator of future action.

My colleagues on this side of the House have a strong faith in humanity. And they express it by ensuring that all children have a chance at succeeding, no matter where they were born, no matter where they come from. No matter what their circumstances, my colleagues believe that all children have potential and should be given a chance to make it.

Now, it doesn't mean that all kids get a fair start, and I wish that were true. And I wish we could legislate that. I know the minister of family services and housing, if she could find a way to in-legislate that all children get an equal and fair start, she would. But unfortunately that can't be done. But what government can do is be there to level the playing field, to ensure that those children, although they may not get the same start, have the same opportunities. That is the job of government, Mr. Speaker.

By providing an early childhood curriculum, with highly trained daycare workers, we're doing what we can to get kids off to a great start. By supporting their families, we're doing what we can to get kids off to a great start.

Funding our schools at the rate of economic growth is also a choice. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's the right choice, to ensure that our children have the skills to succeed.

There was a time in the '90s that only a lucky few, that only the elite, got a chance at post-secondary education. If you were lucky, and your parents had enough money, you could go on to university or college in the '90s. If you went to one

of those schools back in the '90s, it was probably severely underfunded, thanks to the Conservative government freezing or cutting grants for five years straight to universities. But, still, if you could afford to pay, you could be there.

Now the 'lew' Leader of the Opposition also made the choice, while sitting around the Cabinet table, to increase tuition. Anybody have a guess of how much? He didn't increase it—he did not increase it by the rate of inflation; that was us that brought in that legislation. Ten per cent? No. He did not increase it by that; that is not the choice he made. He also did not choose to increase tuition in the '90s by 20 per cent. No, he did not. When the Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet, he chose to increase tuition by a hundred and thirty-two per cent. Now, surely, you think, of course you think, Mr. Speaker, that if somebody chooses to increase tuition by a hundred and thirty-two per cent, then surely they put other measures in place to ensure that all Manitobans have a chance to succeed. You can't raise tuition by a hundred and thirty-two per cent and not think of the consequences for families, for children, for young people who don't have that kind of money. You must put things in place to ensure they can. There's no way you can increase tuition by a hundred and thirty-two per cent and not realize that it's going to make post-secondary education out of reach for many students.

Well, at the same time in the '90s, as tuition was rising by a hundred and thirty-two per cent, the Conservative government, with the Leader of Opposition around the Cabinet table, also decided to get rid of the bursary program. We, of course, brought back the bursary program when we came into office, and since we've been into office, we provided nearly \$220 million in bursaries, grants and scholarships.

* (14:50)

On this side of the House we believe your passion to succeed, your willingness to learn should be the reason why you go to school, not because you got the amount of money in your parents' pocketbook.

We've also introduced the 60 per cent tuition rebate for students who stay in Manitoba after they graduate. Now, this isn't just students who go to school in Manitoba. You can go to school anywhere in the world, but when you choose to bring that education, those skills to Manitoba, put down roots and build a life here, well, we want to thank you for that by rebating 60 per cent of your tuition. That has

put \$66 million back into the pockets of 50,000 graduates here in Manitoba.

When faced with tough economic times, the Leader of the Opposition when he was in Cabinet also made another choice. He and his colleagues thought it would make sense to save money by cutting medical seats by training less doctors. Now how's that for short-sightedness? It takes years to train a doctor. It is a long-term commitment, an investment that takes years to see the result of. Mr. Speaker, it has taken 10 years to dig out of the hole they created when they were in power, but one way we did it was to increase medical seats from 70 to 110. We're training more doctors, we're training more nurses and, more importantly, we're keeping them in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech committed to adding 75,000 more workers to our labour force. It is a large task, but I know the Premier's Economic Advisory committee is up to the job. To kick this off, labour, business, educational institutions will work together at a skills summit to best identify how to reach these goals. Training, of course, is becoming one of the most important areas. Attracting more international students is another way to grow our workforce. We know that international students bring a wealth of diversity to our province and contribute more than \$154 million each year to the Manitoba economy.

I was reading some interesting statistics on international students recently. Canada's biggest export dollars to China is in international education. In fact, across the country international education brings in as much export money as does softwood lumber. But, of course, we know international students do more than boost the bottom line, they bring a unique perspective to our classroom and they often decide to live and work in Manitoba after they study. And for those who return home, they bring lifelong connections to Manitoba that, of course, affect future economic ties.

Here in Manitoba, we know how special our post-secondary institutions are, and word is spreading around the world. Recently, Brazil announced a scholarship, science beyond borders, which is an initiative to send 100,000 Brazilian students outside of the country for post-secondary science education. Now, traditionally, Brazilians don't think of Manitoba as their destination of choice. They tend to think of Toronto or Vancouver or Manitoba. But not this year, Mr. Speaker, the

University of Manitoba received the second highest number of Brazilian students in the country this year at around 85 students.

We will continue to work with all our post-secondary institutions to increase their numbers of international students and to ensure that students who choose Manitoba will receive not just an excellent education, but receive it under safe conditions for their families back home as well.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier this Throne Speech was about choices. It's also about education. Education is key to having choices. The more education you have, the more choices you have with your future.

We also know that children succeed when the entire family plays an active role in school. The new parent-friendly report card makes it easier for parents to stay connected to their children's education. My daughters got the new report card a couple of weeks ago. It was very clear which areas they were excelling at and which ones needed a little more attention, but I will put on the record now that they brought home three very good report cards.

As we have heard, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is growing, and my community is proof of that. There are many new families building new homes in Southdale, new homes, incidentally, that will be protected by the New Home Warranty. And let me take a moment to thank the folks in my constituency who brought it to my attention, the need for more protection for new home builders.

New homes, new families and, of course, a need for new schools, I'm proud this government chooses to support families in Southdale and around the province by building new schools and daycares like the one that will be built in Sage Creek. And this mandate will also see more recreational opportunities for Southdale families including a splash pad in Island Lakes and a new playground for Royalwood.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech was about choices. Every government has to make them and sometimes—sometimes like during difficult, uncertain economic times—those choices are even more challenging. But it is a test of government. It's a test of what you believe in, to see which choices that you make: protect front-line services, ensure that everyone has a level playing field, allow opportunity for all or just for an elite few?

There will be more tough choices ahead, Mr. Speaker, but I'm proud to stand with my colleagues

on this side of the House, women and men who believe that education is the key to fighting poverty and crime. We believe that education is the ticket to a more fulfilling life. We believe that every child born in Manitoba should have the same opportunity to meet their potential.

Mr. Speaker, we believe Manitobans should be thankful for the many people around the world who choose to make this province home and, in short, we believe in this province, we believe in its people and its future, and we will choose to support this vision of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I'd like to put a few words on the record with regard to the Throne Speech that was presented by this yesterday's NDP government, and I'd also like to congratulate the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), who provided, I think, some very important amendments that should indicate to this government that there are a number of things that they could be doing to ensure that all Manitobans are being represented by this government within this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

Now I would first like to welcome all of the pages that are attending to us over the next few weeks. We appreciate your support and help in making sure that we have caffeine and water and ensuring that we are able to continue on debating in the Legislature. I want to welcome the pages—or the table officers back to the Legislature. We all appreciate the work and guidance that they provide us, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get into the issue of the Throne Speech and the challenges that this government has put onto Manitobans. The No. 1 thing that this government seems to focus on is looking out for their best interests first and not looking out for the best interests of Manitobans, and that has been clearly set out in their interest in creating and implementing a vote tax. Voting is a deeply personal and individual exercise, and I believe that by incorporating a vote tax that would benefit this—a political party definitely works against that support.

A vote tax actually is a pickpocketing proposal that will further disengage voters in political process, and I believe that if this current government, this yesterday's NDP, would actually take this seriously, they would go out and meet with Manitobans, listen to Manitobans and actually engage them, so that they would then consider supporting them financially, as

well as through other means. It's taking money from the unwilling and giving it to the unaccountable, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that Manitobans work very hard for their tax dollars, and I believe that this would definitely not work in the best interest of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I was given the responsibility or role of being Family Services critic by the Leader of the Opposition, and I believe that this is a very important department. And I believe that this government is showing strong weaknesses in a number of areas. We are now going through an inquiry on the death of Phoenix Sinclair, and what we've seen from reports of that inquiry is that this government has actually not done what it needs to do to ensure that children are safe. The standards are not in place to ensure that children at risk are being taken care of.

* (15:00)

The monitoring systems in place are not there for children, and we are now seeing agencies and authorities taking legal action against this government because they don't believe that they are being listened to. What we're seeing is a government who's hiding behind the authorities, and ultimately the government is responsible for children in care. This Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) is ultimately responsible for children in care and when she sends a letter questioning an email or a letter that she got from an authority, I think that more could have been done, and I believe that when we put pressure on the minister there appear to be some action taken.

To have a deputy minister leave the Department of Family Services and go in and actually oversee an authority is a very serious, serious action to take. A deputy minister of Family Services has a number of responsibilities in ensuring that the minister is kept up to speed and that the departments have the ear of the government. And for take—to be able to take out the highest level of the bureaucrat and the highest level within that department and put him into an authority you are now removing him from overseeing other sectors and other important avenues of family services. So I'm very concerned, and I do believe that the minister should be asking tough questions and ensure that the mandate is in place, that the board is functional and that children are being taken care of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about education, and I believe that education is the greatest tool to help

individuals move forward. Whether it be from poverty, through difficult situations or challenges, I believe that education is the greatest tool to have. And I have a friend who was a past superintendent of a school division, is currently involved in other leadership roles within this province, indicated to me that the greatest form of racism is to push children along without ensuring that they have the necessary skills to move forward. They need to read; they need to write; they need to know how to analyze and work through formulas in math; and we have children throughout this province who are struggling with those types of challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal children and Aboriginal youth in Manitoba face particularly difficult challenges. We've been hearing from debates within the Chamber over the last number of years since I've been elected that there are some serious challenges and we want to see leadership from this government to address them. Aboriginal youth make up about 80 per cent of the children in care so we have asked this government to pay specific attention to these children and to ensure that their needs are being met. I believe that the Education Department has a role to play with regard to Aboriginal children and ensuring they receive a good education and quality education so that they can move forward in society.

The school division the—within my constituency in Parkland area is working in partnership with INAC and with the Province on a special initiative where Waywayseecappo is working intertwined—or intertwined in the education system to ensure that children within the school's system, within the way we see capital are also accessing supports and services throughout that school division. And I believe that—it's a pilot project and it's worked very well, Mr. Speaker, and I think we have to be doing more of that. We have to look outside of the traditional ways of educating and ensuring that we don't lose children through neglect or through cracks in the system.

With regard to poverty, Manitoba is currently, again, the child poverty capital of Canada and, Mr. Speaker, that concerns me. We have a government that is not concerned about balancing the budget and we also have a government that doesn't appear to be concerned about child welfare. We have the highest number of children, three points higher of children in poverty than other jurisdictions within the country. Thirty-two point six per cent of people under 18 years of age in Manitoba are low income. So we have children that are actually starving within this

province and we need this government to pay attention. And I look forward to the report card that will be presented this week from stakeholders who have been working really closely with families and looking for some leadership from this government.

Youth suicides in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that's an issue that has been a concern to me personally and to all members of this Chamber, and what we wanted to see was this government to take a stronger leadership role in addressing that. Numbers did decline for a number of years, but, again, numbers are increasing. And what is most disturbing, Mr. Speaker, is that the age that these young people are taking their lives at are lower and lower. We're seeing children ages 8, 9, 10 years of age, taking their life. And I—that just—that pains me and it stresses me, because I cannot believe that things could be that bad for a little child who's 8 or 9 years old and feeling that there's nothing left for them to live for. So I encourage the government to take a serious look at this and to actually look at ways that can improve the conditions for these children who feel that they have nothing to live for.

Mr. Speaker, I live in a rural riding. I've lived in Winnipeg a number of years and I live in a rural riding now, so I've had the benefit of living in both an urban centre and a rural community, and I must say that I've enjoyed both. Both have opportunities for families, but I do feel that there's a major disconnect by this government with rural Manitoba. There are a number of things that they could be doing in a very different way.

With regard to Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, economic development is key for so many rural communities. They look for leadership from this government and—not looking for handouts, but supports; hand—a hand up in a lot of ways.

I know personally, when I was working with the community of Souris and the RM of Glenwood, we were successful in bringing in a feed mill into the community, into the region. And we worked very hard and I found that there was nothing but obstacles by this government. We wanted to put in a passing lane or a—so at—that transfers—transfer—or big trucks, could get into the facility without causing hazards for travellers along Highway 2. It was almost an impossible task, Mr. Speaker, to get that to happen. And I believe that when we asked this government to do that, that they just weren't interested. But we persevered and we did get the passing lane developed on that highway. But what was interesting

was, the help that we asked from this government didn't exist. And so it creates a lot of anxiety within communities who are trying to ensure that they—and they get a business that will stay in their community and not go to Saskatchewan or elsewhere.

Today we learned of Glanbia, the flax processing plant in Angusville that burnt down a number of months ago, in February, I believe. That business offered fifth—or employed over 50 people directly within that company, and indirectly have a lot of other stakeholders that saw employment from that facility. We have heard today that that facility is going to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and that is so discouraging and so disappointing for so many people within that region of the province. That facility employed people from Waywayseecappo, from Rosburn, from Russell, from Binscarth, from Angusville, from Birtle, from Shoal Lake. And I asked the Minister responsible for Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives to do—to take a real, strong look at what could be done to keep that plant in Manitoba, 'especially' in the region that it currently had staff. And, Mr. Speaker, he let us down. This government, this minister, did very little, if nothing, to ensure that this plant would stay in Manitoba. Now we see the plant moved to South Dakota, and it's devastating for these families at this time of year to be told that their jobs no longer exist.

* (15:10)

The municipality provided incentives. The regional economic development group provided incentives. And I know that they were looking at other facilities within Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, but again, the minister was silent. And I believe that, you know, he has to be accountable to these individuals. He has to indicate to them what exactly he did or did not do to try to keep those jobs in the region.

So I'm very disappointed in this minister's inability to retain a company within the province, especially when in the Throne Speech they were indicating that they're supporting expanded access to global markets with the adoption of new technologies in the farm and food industry. Well, if Glanbia didn't provide that, Mr. Speaker, I—you know, I just find this an insulting statement by this government when they had a company that provided jobs, provided a market for producers, employed drivers from all over the country, and actually now have turned a blind eye, and this company has left Canada. So I'm very, very discouraged.

With regard to flooding and this government's lack of commitment to working with Manitobans to rebuild flood-damaged areas, on a daily basis I talk to individuals who have been affected by this flood, whether it's from the community of Souris where I live, there's individuals who cannot get an answer with regard to whether a dike is going to be rebuilt, whether they can actually clean up the weeds in their backyard, because this government can't make up its mind with regard to how they're going to provide support for these families. And, Mr. Speaker, these are people who live along the river who take pride in their yards, and for them to not be even looking into their backyards because they cannot believe the mess that's there speaks volumes. So when this government talks about committed to working with Manitobans to rebuild, I believe that they leave a lot to be desired with that comment.

With regard to Assiniboine Valley producers, Mr. Speaker, I had a number of colleagues join with me this year and we toured along the Assiniboine Valley and visited with a lot of producers, a lot of community leaders and a lot of business owners along the Assiniboine River who are very disappointed in how this government has been working with them, or lack thereof, in addressing their concerns. The Minister of MIT recently—or the Minister of MIT indicated to the media that they are looking at providing compensation for artificial flooding. Well, these individuals, these producers, these business owners along the Assiniboine have been waiting for months to hear from this minister and have some type of indication on how they're going to work with them. And again, they keep falling back on the Shellmouth Dam act, and they're in contravention of that act. If they're not going to provide reports when they say that they are to be presented—they're missing timelines like crazy, and this does not bode well for individuals who are looking for some leadership from this government.

We met with a family, Kowalchuks, who are very concerned that this government just has not thought about how the flood situation is affecting them. One of the flooded farmers indicated that his son wants to farm but has now lost faith and wants to sell his land, and his father is begging him to stay and to continue on, and that's called succession planning, Mr. Speaker. That's called succession within the family farm, and this government talks during the Throne Speech about succession planning. Well, they're actually killing the industry by not

responding and helping individuals who are facing these types of issues.

With regard to infrastructure, I find it rather interesting that, you know, the government talks about how they care about Manitoba's infrastructure challenges and that they're trying to address them with the 1 per cent that they gave to municipalities last year. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not new money; that's exactly—oh, I think it's a little bit less than what the municipalities have received in the past. They just, you know, reworked it and spun it with their 200-plus communicators to make it look like they're actually providing support for municipalities when they—*[interjection]*—2,000. He had two hundred 2,000. Anyways, what—seriously, though—*[interjection]*—3,000 tomorrow, yes. What we're—but seriously, this government can spin things to make it look like they're helping a sector of this province when actually we're finding that that is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, number—Highway 83, now, that's an interesting example of what happens when you ignore infrastructure needs. Highway 83 is a very significant route for travellers from Swan River, Dauphin, Roblin. Along Highway 83 there are a number of businesses—there's the Prairie Lake Lodge industry, there's Assiniboine Valley campgrounds in that area. Prairie lake—or the Lake of the Prairies is a great fishing area. And what we're finding is this government has ignored that highway. They indicated they're monitoring it. Well, it slid and it disappeared and this caused a great amount of stress on business owners, landowners, travellers who wanted to access communities or villages or property along 83.

And what happened, Mr. Speaker, is the municipality of Shellmouth-Boulton took up a lot of the slack. This NDP government cut monies that were going to MIT for different regions. And they were—and the municipality was told that our numbers are down in financial supports for these communities, this—these regions, from MIT—that their budgets are less than what they were before. So who picks up the slack but the municipality—offloading onto the municipalities the responsibilities to ensure that the roads are safe. And you know, I guess I find it very discouraging when we have a government who prides itself in collecting the tax and using that tax through general revenue to fund different projects and initiatives, but they fail to think about or care about the individuals who are being directly affected by the lack of support or funding from this government.

Mr. Speaker, what Highway 83's challenges have produced are putting another agriculture industry into question—into having to determine best ways of getting a product to their site. Harrowby is a canola processing plant in the RM of Russell, and it has a great deal of product that comes from the Swan River area and that product needs to get to Russell. So the municipality of RM of Shellmouth-Boulton made sure that roads were accessible as best as possible wanting to keep those trucks that were transporting that product in Manitoba. Because if they do cross the border and they go into Saskatchewan, Yorkton has two or three flax—or canola processing plants that actually would take the product. So what—by dithering and not responding to Highway 83—when they knew that there were challenges facing the infrastructure, they ignored it and it created a huge challenge and now has created financial challenges to a lot of industries within that area of the province. So it just adds to the Glanbia flax processing plant issue, and now we've got infrastructure challenges that this government just can't seem to address.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what we see is a government who has—I don't know what kind of priorities they have, but it's definitely not in the best interests of Manitobans. We saw a lot of families that are asking for this government to pay attention to their needs, and when this government talks about being there for Manitoba families, I think they've dropped the ball. And I believe that the amendments that have been put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, I think, speak volumes. They—it—clearly identifies the challenges and the weaknesses that this government has. And I look forward to future debates and questions with regard to how this government plans to implement a budget and respond to these Manitoba families who are very concerned and feel that they are being neglected by this government.

So, on that, I do support the amendments presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister). I have some serious concerns with regard to the Throne Speech presented by this government. I don't believe that they have clearly thought out the directions that they need to follow. And I look forward to continuing to work with the constituents of Riding Mountain to ensure that a voice—their voices are heard and that this government actually pays attention to the needs within those communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:20)

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It's a privilege to rise in the Legislature to put a few words on the record with regard to the Throne Speech.

Before I begin, though, I'd like to congratulate coach Kevin Neufeld and his team of young women from Neelin High School, my alma mater, who emerged triumphant last night as the Manitoba AAA high school girls volleyball champions, Mr. Speaker. I played volleyball in my time at Neelin, and although I didn't distinguish myself quite so well as these young women who had, but I know all of Brandon is very, very proud of the Neelin High School team today and I congratulate Kevin and his team. In fact, I congratulate the entire school on a job well done.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, the 2012 Throne Speech that we're debating today is probably the most challenging Throne Speech that we've had to undertake during our time in office. We live in a world of economic uncertainty not only in Manitoba, but in Canada and throughout the world. Manitoba has been very well placed by policies undertaken by this government over the last decade to weather that economic uncertainty and our province has performed better than virtually every other Canadian jurisdiction during this time of economic uncertainty.

Notwithstanding this performance, Mr. Speaker, the times are, indeed, challenging in this province. The times are, indeed, ones that call for certainty and stability in terms of government policy and in terms of new initiatives. However, even though the times do call for a great deal of caution, I am very, very happy that my community, my home community of Brandon continues to figure prominently in throne speeches, in budget speeches, in fact, figures prominently on this government's agenda.

I will touch on a few of the initiatives that were referenced in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, because they do contextualize our government's concern for the economic well-being of Brandon, the social well-being of Brandon and the fact that we do work very, very diligently to ensure that Brandon is put on a very strong footing to realize future opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education figured fairly prominently in this Throne Speech. We referenced the Brandon University Healthy Living Centre which is now in use. We are doing some

finishing work still on that facility, but the Brandon Healthy Living Centre on the campus of Brandon University is now in use and is a tremendous facility adding immeasurably to the environment at Brandon University. In fact, not only at Brandon University, but this Brandon University Healthy Living Centre is a partnership with the City of Brandon, and the community at large is welcome to use that facility. I think that initiative was very forward thinking. I'd like to see better interaction and integration between the town and the gown in Brandon. I did spend some time at Queen's University in my younger years where I did an education degree, and the town and the gown is integral to that institution and is something that we can build upon in Brandon to create a greater synergies between Brandon University and the larger Brandon community.

Assiniboine Community College was also referenced, Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech with the significant development of the greenhouse, sustainable greenhouse at Assiniboine Community College's North Hill campus. This continues—the development of that campus into what will be the—a most architecturally outstanding college campus in Canada, and I want to give credit to President Mark Frison and his team at Assiniboine Community College for continuing to work assiduously to develop that campus on Brandon's north hill. We are, in fact, by our actions as a government transforming Brandon by our focus on post-secondary education in that community, both at the Brandon University campus and significantly through the historic redevelopment of Assiniboine Community College at the former Brandon Mental Health Centre site, a site that is blessed, as I've said, by the most outstanding architecture of any campus in Canada. And I look forward to continued work to develop that campus to its full completion in the years ahead. We are committed to building a centre of post-secondary educational excellence at Brandon University and at Assiniboine Community College. Those initiatives will see a high-skill, high-wage economy developed in my region of the province, which is going to hold a very promising future for young people in western Manitoba through the decades to come.

I would also note that the Throne Speech announced the—a first in Canada, Mr. Speaker, the master of arts in psychiatric nursing program at Brandon University. This is a national first, the first in Canada and does position Brandon University in a very good spot to take advantage of other graduate programs as the years unfold. During my time at

Brandon University, I don't believe there were any graduate programs and today the university has a master's programs in a number of areas, and the master of arts in psych nursing is the most recent and is a national first, which I'm very proud of. And I know that Dr. Deborah Poff and her team at Brandon University are very proud of that initiative as well.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure has been a very important part of our government's undertakings over the last number of years. We have—currently we're in the midst of a five-year program that provides for the largest investment in Manitoba history in the development of our roadways and bridges throughout the province. We're midway through that program, and I note that the eastern access route into our industrial park and bypassing Brandon to the east, allowing industrial goods to bypass the residential urban streets of our city, the eastern access route has been completed under our watch. It was announced I should say—this is a very historic and long-term initiative.

My dad was a—worked for the highways department and when I was a child he used to keep me abreast. I used to go out on the road with him from time to time. He used to keep me abreast of different infrastructure projects related to highways and transportation in western Manitoba, and the eastern access route was one that was initiated during his time as an employee. In the early '70s under the Ed Schreyer government, Mr. Speaker, this project was begun. It was mothballed when Sterling Lyon came to office. Then it was resurrected again when Howard Pawley came to office. It was mothballed again during the Filmon years, and when the member for Linden Woods, the current Leader of the Opposition was in office, his government, they chose to mothball that eastern access route, and when we returned to office in 1999, we, again, began investment in the eastern access route.

And I'm very, very happy that that particular project has been completed. It has been only New Democratic governments that have invested in that initiative, and it was a New Democratic government that completed it. And I'm very, very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. I had the occasion to take that road into Brandon, into my home constituency of Brandon East when I was home last week, and it actually knocked a little bit of time off my trip to Brandon. And I was very impressed at the mainline CPR underpass that was created for that eastern access route. The access route is also twinned in a number

of locations. It was great to see a sign directing me to Boissevain on that eastern access route. It will provide a great deal of relief for industrial traffic to move more quickly through Brandon into the markets of southwestern Manitoba and also provide a great deal of enhanced safety for those living 'ajay'—living in the city of Brandon for—as it allows the industrial products that are transshipped through that route to bypass the residential areas of Brandon.

* (15:30)

I would note, Mr. Speaker, that the Throne Speech also made reference to the—in terms of infrastructure, to the continuing construction on No. 10 Highway. We have had successive years of significant construction, both on No. 10 Highway north of Brandon and on No. 10 Highway south of Brandon. I'm very happy that that development will continue, that highway renewal will continue through southwestern Manitoba on No. 10 Highway in the coming construction season, and I was very happy that the Throne Speech referenced this fact.

Mr. Speaker, a pilot project was also announced for Brandon in this Throne Speech; a very important project, one that my good friends in the Green Party in Brandon and others that are concerned with environmental stewardship in this province will be enthusiastic about, and that's the initiation of curbside composting in Brandon. And I look forward to seeing the data from those—from that curbside composting program as that data becomes available. I know that I've been composting in my home probably for about 25 years now, had a couple of compost heaps transferred into my garden, but this will allow the community at large to participate with ease in terms of composting in my home community of Brandon.

And I know that this pilot project will be watched very closely by other communities throughout the province, because I fully expect that curbside composting will, during our time in office, flow to communities throughout the province of Manitoba, and I'm very proud that Brandon is taking the lead in piloting this.

I should say, also, that the City of Brandon has been very, very supportive in terms of green environmental initiatives, and it's been a real pleasure, particularly over the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker—it's been a real pleasure to work in partnership with the City of Brandon on initiatives such as this.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested, as a government, over a billion dollars in the city of Brandon since coming to office. We've completely transformed the Brandon Regional Health Centre; we have initiated the western Manitoba cancer treatment centre in the city of Brandon; we have redeveloped the Westman lab in the city of Brandon; we have renewed surgical suites, provided neonatal units, completely replaced the ambulance fleet in the city of Brandon; we've developed the Brandon health access centre.

In terms of health care and health-care excellence in the Wheat City, there's never been a time in Manitoba history that there's been such investment in health-care excellence in the city of Brandon, and it does point to the fact that we, as a government, place the highest priority on health care, developing health-care excellence in this province and, in fact, it's our responsibility as a government to ensure that Manitobans have the best health-care opportunities available to them—world-class health-care opportunities in the Wheat City.

And my friend—I don't know where he's from; he's from north of us—*[interjection]*—Ste. Rose, I believe, is chirping from his seat, Mr. Speaker. Agassiz's chirping from his seat. I'm not sure where—Agassiz, Ste. Rose, I believe, is where he's from. It think it's important to note that every single penny of health-care investment in this province and in the city of Brandon and in that member's constituency, has been voted against by those people.

So the member from—I'm not sure where he's from—Agassiz, Ste. Rose—where he's from; he's voted against every single penny. He chirps from his seat, interrupts consistently in this House. It is what he's known for, and I appreciate him being able to continue chirping like this to put on the record, his record of opposing every single penny of health-care investment in this province.

While I'm on the topic of health-care renewal, Mr. Speaker, I do want to—*[interjection]*—if the member will cease interrupting for a bit—I do want to give credit to the philanthropists in the city of Brandon led by Mr. Kerry Auriat and Ms. Laurie Murray who have raised considerable money locally for the development of Murray House at the Brandon Regional Health Centre, which will act as a home away from home for those coming in from western Manitoba. In fact, from the member's constituency of Ste. Rose or Agassiz or wherever he's from, to provide a home away from home for those folks who are undergoing cancer treatments in the city of

Brandon, Mr. Speaker. We still have a long way to go.

The Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has announced a number of cancer treatment hubs as part of this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to ensuring that Manitobans north, south, east, west, wherever they live in this province, do have access to health-care treatment and, in this case, to cancer care treatment.

And I suspect and, in fact, I do expect that in other communities throughout the province you will see other citizens like Mr. Auriat and Mrs. Murray who will be working together with this government in building the capacity in communities throughout the province for their citizens to have the best experience possible as they're undertaking cancer treatment, a very, very challenging time for any family, Mr. Speaker. But I do want to, as I said, I do want to give credit to and thanks to Kerry Auriat and Laurie Murray and their team and all who donated to the creation of Murray House which is a very important ancillary component of the western Manitoba cancer treatment centre in Brandon.

While I'm on the topic of philanthropy, Mr. Speaker, I should also give credit to Gord and Diane Peters and their team who have been raising money for the Display Building Number II at the Brandon Provincial Exhibition Grounds, the Keystone Centre grounds. The Display Building Number II, also known as the Dome Building, is one of two turn-of-the-century pavilions—Beaux-Art architectural style pavilions—that were created for Dominion Exhibition at the turn of the last century. This is an outstanding historical and heritage site that the provincial exhibition has taken on to become their headquarters in the future. As I said, it's one of two still existing in Canada. The other one is in the city of Ottawa, and one of very few that continue to exist on the planet.

At one time in the 1880s and 1890s at world fairs in Paris and Chicago these exhibition pavilions were very common, but, Mr. Speaker, there are very few in number now on the planet and Brandon is very privileged to be the home to one of them. And I know in the future it will hold the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba and their partners in very good stead as a office complex, as an agricultural museum and as a tourist attraction for my home community of Brandon.

And I do know that there're members opposite who have spoken with ridicule about this particular building over the years. But I do want to, again,

thank Gord and Diane Peters for their leadership in ensuring that the private component of this exciting initiative is attended to.

I also want to thank Don and Ron Kille who co-chaired the YMCA fundraising campaign for the new downtown Brandon family YMCA. Our government was instrumental in taking a leadership role in providing provincial resources for that project and Don and Ron and their team have been assiduous in seeking a public—or a private component for the support of that particular building, which is nearing completion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I know that my colleague, the member for Local Government, was in Brandon last week and he had a tour of the downtown Brandon YMCA when he was there and he relayed to me how impressed he was at the stature of that particular project in the heart of downtown Brandon.

* (15:40)

And while I'm on the topic of downtown Brandon, Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) and, more broadly, my colleagues in government, for their support of Renaissance Brandon, in partnership with the City of Brandon, and that's a 50 per cent partnership with the City of Brandon for the downtown Brandon development corporation, known as Renaissance Brandon, which is working very diligently to realize economic opportunities in the downtown area.

I also want to commend the member, my colleague, the Minister of Housing, Mr. Speaker-Housing and Community Development, for supporting the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation which also, in partnership with the City of Brandon, is working to renew our core area residential neighbourhoods.

Both of these very, very important community development corporations are making a very positive difference, in terms of affordable housing, in terms of neighbourhood renewal, in terms of supporting those who are less well off, Mr. Speaker, in our downtown neighbourhoods. And their work is very, very important in creating a better Brandon for all people who live in that community.

Mr. Speaker, there are other things I can refer to in the Throne Speech, but I think I've spoken enough. I've touched on a few, I thought, that were fairly

salient, but before closing I do want to again pay respects to Errol Black, who passed away this—earlier this month and again extend condolences to Errol's wife, Margaret, his sons, Sean, Dennis and Thomas, and their families.

Errol was probably one of the most important people in my life. In fact, it's not probably at all; he was one of the most important people in my life. He will be greatly missed in our community. He was always the person I could turn to for assistance and guidance on virtually everything that I've ever undertaken as a politician, whether that was as a student union politician or as a city councillor or as an MLA. Errol's guidance was unfailing. It was always principled. It was always infused with integrity. It was fearless, courageous. Errol spoke truth to power, fearlessly. He challenged people with honesty and dignity. His legacy, I hope, will live on in my constituency association and in myself. I know that all of us on this side of the House had the utmost respect for Errol as a stalwart and as a man of high principle. We all—we will all miss Errol and we will all miss his support and guidance in the years ahead. I can't tell you how much I will miss him personally. It's a tremendous loss and we will never see another man like him again.

So, with those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I conclude. Thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure to rise today and speak to the—put some remarks on the record on the Throne Speech and the amendments to the Throne Speech that our leader's—has proposed.

Firstly, I do want to mention the arrival of our new leader, Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Whyte. I am looking forward to working with him for the next few years and through the next election period when he will become premier of this province.

The—it's always to me been a real privilege—and I've only been here a few years, but it's such a privilege to actually work in this building. Very few people get that opportunity, some of them not for very long when they do get here. They don't—another election, and they're moved out or whatever happens, but it is truly a privilege to be here and I really enjoy the work that I do on behalf of constituents. The—my municipal background, I think, led to me being very interested in doing things to help constituents out and wherever I could I tried to solve some of the problems they had.

It's nice to see you back in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to acknowledge the new pages we have in the House. It's—I'm looking forward to working with them for the coming year. I always appreciate the table officers and the clerks and—but beyond that the total Legislature staff—the people in here that keep this place looking so pristine and clean all the time and the work they put into making that happen. I'm so proud of this building. It—I understand that the scaffolding is coming down around the grand staircase within the next few days and we'll see the full beauty of this building again, and that grand stairway is second to none in the province—or in Canada, I should say.

You know, I've been a farmer all my life. I—when I grew up we had a dairy farm and we were one of the four families that supplied milk to the milk plant in Neepawa. And so, I learned very early the value of hard work, and the expectation was that you were going to work hard. So for many years we had a dairy herd. Then later, about the mid-to-late '60s, we went out of the dairy business, and I was starting to take over the farm at that time and started keeping hogs. And for 25 years we raised hogs on that farm, then, and they paid a lot of bills. It was a small operation, about a hundred-sow farrow-to-finish operation, which was a fairly good size at that time, but nothing compared to what you have today. Unfortunately, at that time there was probably a dozen to 15 of us in my municipality that produced hogs. The regulations this government's put in place have put all those hog producers out of business. There's not a single hog farmer in my constituency any more—or my municipality, I should say, and that's unfortunate. It was small operations, small business, but it created a lot of economy and it's all gone mostly because of regulations. Later, after the hog business was finished on the farm, I went into cattle. And I had a cow-calf beef operation for about 20 years, and just a week—two weeks ago, I sold the last cows out of my herd. And that was kind of a nostalgic feeling. I—actually, for the first time ever in my life, we have not—we're not raising livestock on our farm, and it's another change in how things go in your life and how you move forward. But farming was—I was so proud to be a farmer all my life. It's, I believe, truly an honourable pastime and it was good to me as well.

You know, I—my constituency is called Agassiz now. Used to represent Ste. Rose, but in the boundary rearrangements the last time around there was about—well, there was the north end of my

constituency was taken and split into three different constituencies. The Eddystone area and Ebb and Flow went into the Interlake. Crane River area went into Swan River. And the Ste. Rose-Laurier area went into the Dauphin constituency. And then, I was—I received some more territory at the south end of the constituency and it became the constituency of Agassiz. Those people in that north end have approached me—many of them have approached me—and said, keep representing us, you're putting forward our interests very well and we would like you to keep taking our concerns forward. Those people up in that area are very tough; they're very resilient. They're a long way from all the services that most of us are so used to, and they're used making do, but they also know that they—occasionally, some things have to happen to help them out, and I'm pleased to lobby for them and act on their behalf.

* (15:50)

You know, the AMM are having their annual convention this week just a few blocks from here, 1,000 municipal delegates in attendance, and they have a lot of issues on their books, but, you know, they—the minister, just on the—last week, suggested they were going to start—move on amalgamation of municipalities. And they did that without any consult—consultation. The AMM found out the same way I did—a media release. It's similar to the consultation that took place on the Community Works Loan Program and on economic development corporations around the province.

You know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), on December 21st, 2011, speaking about federal transfers, said, well, I think there is a big concern just about the way it has been done, just dropped on people without any consultation or discussion. And then, after whining about the way the federal government did that to them, he turns around and does the same thing to the municipalities. It's not a very good message he's sending.

You know, they continue to download onto the municipal level of government over and over and over again. The 1 per cent equivalent—PST equivalent, is a total myth. They—it resulted in not one extra cent going to the municipalities. In fact, with the tax increases that went on to municipalities, it probably was a negative number. The 7 per cent went on insurance. Municipal—municipalities in this province carry about \$11 million of insurance. So that was a fairly good grab.

Now, the other interesting quote that I heard in the last few days was the member from the Interlake suggesting that municipalities with less than a thousand people—clearly dysfunctional. They don't have the staff or the resources to lead on a major file like the flood. Course they don't, they balance their budgets every year. But, in spite of that, they still do a lot better than this government on the other side of the House.

The First Nations, ranchers, farmers, property owners are satisfied with how municipalities have handled their flood. They are not satisfied with how the NDP have handled it. Once again, the NDP are trying to blame someone else for their own shortcomings. The municipalities did their job well. They protected their residents throughout the 2011 flood, and I would like to remind the NDP and the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) that most of those municipalities are 100 to 140 years old. Some are more recent, but municipalities are the closest level of government to the people and have served their people well. They are in touch with the residents and they care deeply about their well-being.

Municipalities have provided services and balanced their books. They have kept property taxes as low as possible why—while providing those services. That's in sharp contrast to this NDP government who have destroyed balanced budget legislation and have no idea at all how to balance their books. Manitoba is drowning in a sea of red ink in spite of the longest, largest tax grab since the Pawley government—the biggest tax grab in 25 years. Last spring's budget they raised taxes by \$184 million after promising not to raise them at all, of course, but that really wasn't their fault, as our leader said the other day. And even with the extra revenue, they still table a billion-dollar deficit. That's beyond belief, Mr. Speaker.

They also raised licence fees, permit fees, registration fees, almost any service you can think of by another 114 million and still come up with a billion-dollar deficit. Just can't understand how the member for the Interlake could accuse municipal governments of being totally dysfunctional. He has only to look at his Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and his Cabinet to understand what dysfunctional is.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm on the record as being supportive of some municipal amalgamations, but I don't believe that they should be top-driven. I believe it should happen from the ground up. Amalgamation

should be driven by the wish and the will of the municipalities and the residents, not by the heavy hand of a senior level of government.

I spent many years in municipal government, and over the years I've seen many inventive and imaginative ways of municipalities sharing services, sharing taxes and simply being creative in finding ways of providing services for their people. A number of years ago I was on—a member of a committee, it was called the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation. It dealt with a lot of issues surrounding land use planning and environment. It was co-chaired by Ed Sawatzky and Dick Stephens, both who worked for the Province. There were many aspects of the report that was prepared by the committee, and the recommendation that I think had the most merit was the land use, environmental and water management be co-ordinated on a watershed basis. That committee was made of university profs, engineers, environmentalists, First Nations, municipal reps, agricultural experts and many, many others.

The NDP shelved that report. They paid no attention to it at all. Municipalities, planning districts and most watersheds and conservation districts have straight boundaries that follow municipal lines. If that report had have been implemented, it would've addressed those issues. Each—at each watershed area of the province that dealt with environmental, land use planning and water management in that area, those plans would have—developed by local stakeholders and referred to by local entities as part of their decision-making. That model would have gone a long way toward alleviating—piecemeal approach that this NDP government takes toward local governance and local decision-making.

But, as I said before, this government shelved that report, and Manitobans are paying for the consequences of that decision.

You know, fairly recently I was appointed as the critic for Advanced Education. And I'd been doing—trying to do my homework and that's fairly difficult to do, but I'm getting there. And the—there's a couple of things that are certainly showing up in that area already. The—there's been a—ongoing failed attempt by this government on a student financial aid information system which seems to still be going on. We understood that there was roughly a budget of about \$14.3 million about three and a half years ago, and we also understand that there—that budget has been exceeded and there's been promises of having

that program implemented in 2010, 2011, November, 2012, and, as far as we know, it hasn't been implemented. We tried to FIPPA the amount of money spent to date and the total budget, and we were denied on that FIPPA request.

Now, as I was trying to say earlier, when the—the member for Brandon East was speaking, that's the taxpayers of Manitoba's money. They should have the right to find out how it's being spent, and yet the FIPPAAs were denied on the expenses on that system.

* (16:00)

We continue under this NDP government to also to see our universities in Manitoba drop in rankings across the country, and if they're so good at what they're doing, I think it would just stand to reason that the ranking should be improving. In the category of medical doctor, oh, the University of Manitoba was dead last for the ninth straight year. The University of Winnipeg was 13th among primarily undergraduate universities, down from 10th last year, and Brandon University was 16th, down from 15 last year. Why aren't—under this great management of this government, why aren't these rankings, ratings improving?

You know, I could go on for quite some time about the flood and the lack of activity there. The—I found it very interesting that we used to have a Minister of Water Stewardship in this province who liked to blow about the fact that we were the only province in Canada that had a Minister of Water Stewardship. Interestingly, when the flood broke out, as far as I know, that Minister of Water Stewardship never once made it to the west side of Lake Manitoba. And I don't know if that had a bearing or not, but shortly after that the department was done away with. So I'm not sure whether that minister just got tired maybe of doing that kind of job or what really did happen.

You know, we're accused quite often—and they'll do it again, I'm sure—that we criticize Manitoba Hydro or we criticize Crown corps. We never criticize the Crown corps. What we do is we criticize the political manipulation of those corporations, and if the politicians on that side of the House would stay out of the operations of those Crown corps they could certainly be a lot more profitable than they are and they could be run like, really, like a business.

You know, I listened to the Throne Speech and a glowing story about how many nurses there supposedly were now. Well, my mother is in

Country Meadows Personal Care Home in Neepawa, and right now that hundred-bed personal care home has 10 empty beds in it. It has a waiting list—some of them in the hospital, but they can't move them in there. You know why? Nursing shortage. Now, we've got supposedly 3,000 more nurses; that's what we were told. Where are they? We got nursing shortages all over the place. We got emergency rooms that can't open because of nursing shortages. We've got personal care home beds that can't be used because of nursing shortages. Where are they?

You know, I hear the Filmon government accused of this and accused of that. This is a government over here that wants to live in the past and blame everybody else for their own shortcomings, and they do it continuously. But, you know, I was here. I lived in this province during the Filmon years. I don't remember any nursing shortages. I know our infrastructure was in a lot better shape at the time, like, I don't know where all this is coming from. There was—our hospital had lots of nurses. The emergency room was operational. You know, now we live in fear of the emergency room being closed on weekends.

You know, another thing that has been happening is land-use planning issues, and we have the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation primarily being opposed to subdivisions all over this province for various reasons, but it's—a lot of it's unnecessary. Municipalities look to keep their populations up and now they'll look even closer, because apparently if they're under a thousand people they're going to get axed, so.

But beyond that there's a subdivision on the outskirts of Neepawa—it is part of the town, it's in-within the town limits, where there's approximately 80 lots. And you got to understand that in small-town Manitoba, lots don't fill up really quickly. So the proposal was to do these in four phases, so they did the first phase and they pretty well done the second phase now. Fifteen years ago that this subdivision was started, the last lot out of the first phase was sold this year. So 15 years later the last lot was sold, although they'd sold lots out of the other phases.

So, they have a development agreement with the Town. The development agreement says the lots will be assessed at \$400 per lot until such time as they're sold and then they'll be assessed at the full price, which might be 30 to 35 thousand. The assessment branch comes along and appeals it and wants them

assessed—these vacant lots assessed at that higher price. What it does, is totally do away with developers in small towns ever deciding to go out and create some subdivision.

You know, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) coined a phrase—that I can't really ignore—when he said he had inadvertently misled this House. There are certainly clearer interpretations of those words, but I won't go there. That being said, it appears that the goal of this NDP government seems to be to inadvertently mislead the people of Manitoba to the point where we lose all reference points to the truth. The only thing inadvertent was that the minister actually got caught. In order to mislead us, he must certainly show some ability to lead, and that's never been apparent in his actions.

Mr. Speaker, I can't support the Throne Speech. I will support the very good amendments that our leader has put forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, too.

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the constituents in The Maples to respond to our government's Throne Speech, November 2012. Thank you to everyone who has helped me in my role as MLA. They have made this special task of replying to the speech possible. I am appreciative of my constituents, volunteers and staff for their trust in me and their lasting support and confidence.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his election and wish him well in his new position. I look forward to working with him for the betterment of our great province. I think he may remember he was the Minister of Government Services and I was working in the—Government Services at that time, and we both remember Filmon Fridays.

I'm excited to have the opportunity to continue working with all honourable members of this House, a group that benefits from a variety of backgrounds and diverse experiences. As this Throne Speech demonstrates, we have a plan in place to keep this province moving forward for the benefit of all Manitobans, and it seeks to meet the needs of my constituency and all people all across the province: the elderly, the young, those who are Manitoba-born and those who come from around the globe to make this province their home. This government continues to ensure that a good life remains possible for all.

* (16:10)

I'm very pleased that our government sees immigration as a priority, as outlined in the Throne Speech. I, myself, am an immigrant, having moved here from India. I understand what it's like to move somewhere far away, to another country with a different culture. The Maples is well known for having one of the highest proportions of newcomers in the province. I am sure this is because our community is so welcoming and helpful.

In Manitoba, we rely on immigration to achieve our full potential for economic growth. Not only is this a wonderful asset, but immigrants also contribute greatly to revitalizing our ethnic and arts communities. The cultural diversity in our province is something we should always be proud of. Our strategy for immigration will continue to be a main focus for this government, a priority that I will actively continue to support.

The people of The Maples elected me so I could represent their interests. Health care is a top priority for people, not just in my constituency, but across the province. The Throne Speech outlines how our provincial government will provide faster cancer testing and treatment and provide free cancer drugs for all patients.

Earlier this year, the home care—Home Cancer Drug Plan was launched to make sure that all approved cancer treatment and support drugs are fully covered, with no deductible, regardless of where patients access them.

I am pleased that the Canadian Cancer Society considers our approach to be among the most compassionate and comprehensive model for cancer drug coverage in all of Canada. Already, we have helped over 5,600 Manitobans save \$3.5 million this year alone.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is one of the most affordable places to live in the country. One of those reasons is because we are invested in affordable housing. We have doubled the national average for housing starts this year, a fact that we should be proud of.

We intend on building our personal care homes and supportive housing units already under development. I am pleased that we are meeting the goals of our five-year plan for 1,500 new affordable housing units. We know how important it is that we provide lower income families the opportunities to achieve home ownership and to support the development of housing co-operatives. We will also

help municipalities build this undertaking. We will work hard to make sure that Manitoba remains affordable, with low housing costs and a strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very interested in taking care of our seniors. The government wants to ensure that seniors have options when choosing an appropriate place to live. I previously introduced legislation to encourage municipalities to help homeowners develop a secondary or granny suite. Our government has created forgivable loans to help recover 50 per cent of the costs to build these suites. By living in granny suites, grandparents can take care of their grandchildren and be active role models for them. This is also beneficial for seniors because they can live with their family and be close to their loved ones. I am glad that Manitoba continues to invest in reliable, long-term growth projects such as housing, especially for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, something else that is important to me is training. The Manitoba government maintains training as a priority in improving our workplaces. There is a new post-secondary advanced care paramedic training program and a new principal training and certification initiative and, of course, many many apprenticeships. I'm proud that this government has helped increase the high school apprenticeship by 800 per cent since 2000. This fact clearly shows our commitment and our priorities. We will continue to support these sorts of initiatives in the coming year as indicated in the Throne Speech.

I am proud to be part of a government that supports the people of my constituency. The Maples is a fantastic area in so many ways. We have among the highest population of newcomers from around the globe. We have people of all ages and lifestyles. We come from all over the city, the country and the world to be part of The Maples. It makes me so proud to live here.

I would like to point out some exciting constituency news from this year. In January, Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) announced that we are reducing class sizes to 20 students in kindergarten to grade 3. I attended this announcement which took place in The Maples at École Constable Edward Finney School. In May, community leaders met to celebrate the grand opening of our revitalized track and football field made possible by active and caring Maples constituents. To serve the young families of The Maples a new school was approved for Amber Trails

and the construction of a new park and play structure at Leila and Strasbourg has begun.

This summer, the MLA for Burrows, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I had the opportunity to experience the sport of kabaddi at the Maples Community Centre. The Winnipeg Kabaddi Association's event promoted multicultural understanding, fair play and fitness. And in October I was pleased to be at the opening ceremonies for the upgrades to Seven Oaks Hospital. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, great things are happening in The Maples, making it an even better community than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish by sharing with you some powerful Sikh words of wisdom written in the Sikh holy book, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji: Through selfless service, eternal peace is obtained. May each of us continue to work for the people of Manitoba altruistically and with only the best intentions in mind. If we do exactly this, we will achieve harmony and mutual understanding.

Thank you for allowing me to speak as the representative for The Maples, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:20)

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying a few special thank-yous to the people of Lac du Bonnet, of the Lac du Bonnet constituency for the honour of serving them here in this Chamber. It's a special place and a special honour for all of us, and I know we all appreciate very much the constituents who have sent us here and entrusted us with these responsibilities. So I want to thank them for that.

There are a number of very important issues addressing the people of Lac du Bonnet and I'll be raising those here as well. And I wanted the people of that great constituency to know that I am thinking of them each and every day. I'd like to thank my wife Tracey and my sons Brayden and Jarvis who continue to be my rocks on this new adventure we as a family have embarked on. As many of you know the challenge is to balance life and politics. I am truly grateful for Tracey and my two boys. My mom and dad, Lorne and Lydia, who have been my greatest cheerleaders forever, they have stepped up to help out whenever we have needed them. My in-laws Wilf and Sylvia Groinus, who, I know, have been sounding boards at times for Tracey as well as she has had to pick up my slack at home. This job is

definitely a team effort and I couldn't have asked for a better one.

Thanks to my local PC association. We have quite the group, constantly busy keeping their eyes open and ears to the ground as I have now been the PC candidate/MLA in Lac du Bonnet for a combined 18 months as of tomorrow. A huge thanks must go out to them.

I want to also congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Fort Whyte, on his election and his acclamation as Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister). And as I listened to him speak the other day, I felt inspired and encouraged to continue to hold the government of the day to account. I enjoyed listening to him and I think that this is the type of leadership that we were lacking in this province and what Manitobans need, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few months, the Leader of the Opposition had been able to contact and connect with various communities in Manitoba and therefore lead us into the next election.

The PC caucus, thanks to you for being there. We are truly energized and having a whole lot of fun doing so, and also directly doing the job that we've been chosen to do, and that's be the opposition.

I welcome you, Mr. Speaker, back to the Chamber, as well as the clerks and all of the staff here at the Leg., who, as I, cherish the privilege to come to work in this fantastic building.

I would also like to congratulate and welcome the new pages to the House and encourage them to soak in each and every day here. It is truly an honour to sit in this Chamber.

It is an honourable position to represent people here in the Legislature and it's a job that should be taken very seriously. Not a lot of people get this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to highlight the communities in my constituency and some of the events I had attended these past 13 months.

The LGD of Pinawa birthday parade: This coming year Pinawa's going to be celebrating their 50th birthday. Lac du Bonnet and the Canada Day celebration, both the fireworks and then the parade, it's an all-weekend affair. Thousands and thousands of Manitobans make the trip and specifically to Lac du Bonnet for their fireworks show.

For Canada Day I also had the pleasure of being invited to Grand Marais to join them in their celebration, Mr. Speaker. Grand Marais is not in my constituency, but I know many of my constituents frequent their celebrations as well as they travel to each other's beaches to join in support of their own celebrations. Quite the joint community. I spent some time there with our MP, James Bezan, who had to make his way to the Selkirk Canada Day celebration. I also had the opportunity to spend some time with local elected officials from Grand Marais, Victoria Beach, Alexander and St. Clements.

The Town of Beausejour celebrated their centennial this year, Mr. Speaker. They had various social events throughout the weekend, including the RCMP Musical Ride. For—at one point, lining up for the musical ride at the CPTC grounds, the cars were lined up well over a mile and a half to get into the event. It was quite the successful event and quite the show. That was my first time seeing them.

The Brokenhead heritage museum had many events over the weekend as well, and thanks must go out to Network 4 Change and the help at the various children's events that were put on.

The 4P Festival in Powerview-Pine Falls, what an incredible weekend, Mr. Speaker: slow-pitch tournaments, of course, socials, ball hockey tournaments, fish fries, the whole community gets involved. It was quite a joy to be part of that event as well.

In Sagkeeng in Fort Alexander, the Treaty Days: the dancing in the colourful ceremonial dress, Mr. Speaker, many people had attended from Ontario, Saskatchewan and the United States. Victoria Beach and their various fundraisers for their own sportsplex and their own seniors scene; Lac du Bonnet again for their Fire 'n' Water festival of the arts; and, last but not least, Association of Community Living, the Beausejour branch, for their 50th anniversary, which we celebrated this summer. These are just a few, Mr. Speaker.

The constituency of Lac du Bonnet is richly diverse. For those of you who have not had the pleasure of visiting, we have farming, mining, forestry, fishing, industry, hunting and tourism. We have something for everyone. You see, Mr. Speaker, community, volunteerism and self-reliant: these are all things that help grow a community.

Many of the communities are struggling through some hard times. Community groups are joining

together, trying to find solutions to keep their communities viable. I commend the municipalities in my constituency and surrounding communities on having the foresight to form a municipal working group, which consists of a member from all partnering municipalities which meet quarterly with all councillors.

Mr. Speaker, since the NDP took office in 1999, this government has squandered the best financial opportunity that the province has ever known. They took balanced budgets, they took the opportunity of historically low interest rates, they took record equalization payments and social transfers from the government of Canada, and they squandered an opportunity. Now they're running a one million-\$1-billion deficit. They've doubled the debt since they took office in 1999, and they've brought in \$184 million in new taxes, the largest tax increase in 25 years.

They are taking money from hard-working Manitobans who, on a daily basis, the members from across the way so arrogantly state they are the party that the people they are working so hard for, whether it be home insurance, car insurance, gas tax, hydro bills, manicures, pedicures or haircuts, with no warning. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated during the election he would not raise taxes—a broken promise, one of so many.

When the government talks about reducing spending, it means Manitobans' spending, Mr. Speaker, not this NDP government's. In fact, they plan to give themselves a pay raise while they give Manitobans a pay cut.

I have brought the following question up in the House a few times, Mr. Speaker. September 18th, 2011, the Premier promised that seniors will pay no school taxes on their property taxes. Seven months later, the Premier introduced a budget that hurts families, hurts seniors, volunteers and those Manitobans who can least afford to pay more. So I asked: Will the Premier acknowledge that the budget that he introduced in the spring once again goes back on the promises he made during the election just 13 and a half months ago?

What answer did I get? Budget 2012 does see \$1.6 million in property tax relief for seniors through increasing the seniors Education Tax Property Credit by \$75—a whopping \$75—which equates to \$1.6 million in tax relief, not even 5 per cent of what was promised. What was promised? They promised to take the education tax off of property tax for

seniors, which would have been a savings of \$35 million—\$33.4-million broken promise.

Through the election, I was asked by constituents if our party was going to be offering something similar, Mr. Speaker, so I replied, that promise can't be kept; can't do it. I would say just like the balancing the budget—can't do it by 2014.

They have a spending addiction, Mr. Speaker, and look, they are now wiggling out of that promise. We would have promised that, if it was doable. But, no, that would have been dishonest. Instead, we promised to balance by 2018, something realistic.

Members who had won by votes under 30 should count their lucky stars that their leader made a promise which he knew he couldn't keep—a promise which just might have given those members their seat in this Chamber. They maybe should reflect on that, next time they throw barbed words across the House.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, I am thoroughly enjoying my new portfolio, being the Culture, Heritage and Tourism critic, many of the people I am now connecting with and some I'd already been meeting with since I've been elected. But, first, I would to briefly talk about my past portfolios and the Throne Speech.

* (16:30)

With the Advanced Education and Literacy, I see that we're going to be attracting and supporting international students, in co-ordinated efforts by all Manitoba universities and colleges to promote Manitoba as a destination. Does the Culture, Heritage and Tourism critic—or minister realize that the Advanced Education Minister is now in the tourism game?

Expanded program development and funding for a nurse practitioner program, U of M; the development of groundbreaking urban and inner studies program, U of W; new nursing programs at the university de saint—Université de Saint-Boniface; bachelor of technology in construction management at Red River College; and the first-in-Canada master's of psychiatric nursing at BU, permanent funding.

These are all announcements and promises, Mr. Speaker. Beware; you all know what happened with the midwifery program. This warning goes out to all post-secondary institutions buying into this government's promises. I wish the member from

Agassiz good luck with this portfolio because the minister continues to give us lots of issues to hold her feet to the fire.

Children and Youth Opportunities: Again, I had the opportunity to meet some extraordinary people who are and have our youth in the best interests despite the government's interference. They made a new Cabinet position which admits failure in this department's attempt to help our youth in this province. The 2012 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty identified Manitoba as continuing to have child poverty rates among the highest in Canada year after year, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and this Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) have bragged about their ALL Aboard poverty strategy. Well, the 2012 HungerCount report indicates that there are 63,000 Manitobans using food banks; 47.6 per cent of those users are children. Manitoba has the highest number of children using food banks in Canada. Children cannot afford to wait for yesterday's government to start taking action. Yesterday's government has been toting and its—socially responsibility policies for the past 12 years, and the results speak volumes. Manitoba child poverty rates remain one of the highest in Canada year after year. Food bank use in Manitoba has risen by 56.9 per cent over the past four years. Today, Manitoba children represent 46.7 per cent of the food bank users. Stats Canada reports that Manitoba has the highest number of children in foster care. There are 9,730 children in care within Manitoba. This is an alarming 46.7 per cent increase in six years. These are the facts, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is after 12 years we have more children living in poverty today. From the Throne Speech, I would like to highlight a few things brought up from this department: Well, there is none. There seems to be not much in the Throne Speech in regards to child and youth opportunities. I know that the member from La Verendrye will do well in his role of critic for child and youth opportunities as well as with Healthy Child Manitoba.

I'd like to talk a few seconds about the Education, some of the pieces from the Throne Speech: pursue improved high school graduation rates; introduce new measures to help parents, students, teachers fight bullying. These are two prime examples of a simple cut-and-paste from one Throne Speech to another. Number 3, create a new principal training and certification initiative will

ensure all school have strong leadership. Will they stand up today or tomorrow or sometime quickly and admit that they've been doing—what they've been doing is wrong? By putting in the certificate for administrators, it looks like the NDP are pointing their fingers at the principals in the schools. There already is a certification process. I know that the teachers and principals in our schools are doing a fantastic job keeping our kids safe, educated and moulding them into wonderful citizens despite the interference from this government. It is the government's interference which is contributing to Manitoba's low standing across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I have been given the portfolio Culture, Heritage and Tourism which, as many of you know, Lac du Bonnet is an incredible area of the province. Two initiatives, as I was diving into this portfolio, that were actually brought in by the Progressive Conservative government, were the Manitoba Arts Council and the film tax credit, to name a couple.

Consolidate provincial tourism resources and work with industry to ensure consistent branding and positioning to take full advantage of the potential: That was one of the statements that was made in the Throne Speech. Regional tourism offices get \$35,000 as their budget. Were they consulted before the Throne Speech or was this another AMM scenario? The Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) said, yes, we should have rolled this announcement out differently. This speaks to their arrogance. They don't care what they are saying or doing because they're safe for another couple of years.

As I had mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we talked about the Beausejour Centennial. Well, shortly after the long weekend in August, we hosted in Beausejour, the opening of the Schreyer House and the member from Kildonan actually made his way out to Beausejour. I guess he was subbing in for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), and he did a very moving speech. And, matter of fact, at one time in the ceremony he tried to get the crowd going on a Mno Hiya Lita but to no avail; even his singing couldn't get them revved up.

The one disappointment that I have in regards to the Schreyer House, Mr. Speaker, is Mr. Ed Schreyer did come from the community of Beausejour and Brokenhead and there was quite a fundraising activity from the heritage—from the Brokenhead heritage committee to move the house to the museum

property. They then wrote in a proposal or an application to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, to get the town listed as one of the star attractions on the highway. You know, those really nice blue signs that are on the highway. Well, I'm not sure where the communication went. Maybe the NDP need a little bit of a history lesson on their own side of the House, but they were actually denied. And, to say that the Schreyer House doesn't equate or doesn't meet the level of standards for a star attraction, it's tough to say, Mr. Speaker. But, I think Mr. Schreyer is taking a little bit of a slap in the face with that one.

I would like to talk for a couple of minutes on how this NDP government plays the shell game, Mr. Speaker, trying to confuse Manitobans into believing one thing while they're pulling a fast one behind Manitobans' back.

In published government estimate numbers, or essentially, the plan going forward, the NDP has increased the budget for the Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure Department, but, the amount it plans to spend on roads is down by \$16 million. Last year, the plan was to spend \$366 million and this year, the government plans to spend just \$350 million. This means if the government meets spending needs for long-term projects, it will need another \$16 million from another source—MPI, Mr. Speaker.

Back in 2000, MPI attempted to spend \$20 million on university upgrades. MPI is going to Public Utilities Board less frequently and Public Utilities Board has many new appointees. Six of eight board members were appointed in 2012. MPI has close to 1,900 employees. Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation has over 2,400 and the expertise in this area. So why would this government want to step MIT's toes, unless it is dysfunctional or trying to make more money from the backs of Manitobans—arrogance, Mr. Speaker.

Bipole III is a perfect example of this. That the government would choose a longer, \$1 billion-more-expensive west side route for a hydro transmission line. An article by a former Manitoba Hydro vice-president in the Winnipeg Free Press just a few weeks ago, speaks about government interference in the utility's highest levels of decision making. He talks about bullying and the costly conversion equipment required for the alternate route. He also talks about the reduced transmission capability and the line loss. When is this government going to start

listening to the experts and start saving Manitobans' hard-earned dollars, Mr. Speaker?

Health care—so far in 2012, ambulances have been waiting at Winnipeg's emergency rooms for a total of about 36,000 hours. Now to put that in perspective, that's 1,500 days or approximately four years of waiting. And, our concern is not only with the expensive highly paid professional people waiting, it's also at the expense of highly vulnerable Manitobans waiting in pain. In June of this year the Health Minister said that she would address this issue and she said that she was going to start making progress on it, but there has been none. In October alone, we were in code red here for over nine hours. So far this year, we've been in code red for more than 80 hours. When is she going to start moving on these issues, Mr. Speaker?

I've been in contact with the minister's office on numerous occasions. There's been total disregard for some people's care and wellbeing and when asked to sit down with these constituents, there have been roadblocks, possibly by one of those 192 communicators.

* (16:40)

I had a call just the other day that a constituent has been waiting patiently for quite a long time. He was scheduled for a knee replacement early December to finally relieve some of the pain. He was contacted by the Grace Hospital that all surgeries were being cancelled for remainder of December, and he might not now get his surgery till February at the very earliest. He called to find out the reasons why. The Grace Hospital replied: it's due to cuts; if you don't like it, contact your MLA. Months ago, the Minister of Health said she was making progress. Is this progress, Mr. Speaker?

I'd also been contacted by a constituent whose wife had suffered, or was diagnosed with, central pontine myelinolysis, which is a complication of treatment where patients with profound life-threatening hyponatremia, which is basically low sodium, have been corrected too rapidly. We are waiting to get a response from the minister whether she will sit down with this family or not.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I extend my invitation again, as I did last year, to the honourable members of Logan, Thompson, Dauphin, Kildonan, Kewatinook, Seine River and any other member to come for a ride with me down provincial highway

road 304 to experience first-hand the trip from Powerview-Pine Falls on the way to Bissett. It's hard to believe that with all the money the mining industry pours into our Manitoba economy we would expect those people to risk their lives on that road.

As you all hear in the petition section of our daily duties here in the House, I have a couple, which you will continue hearing well into the spring session and possibly into the fall: No. 520 between Lee River and Pinawa-PR 520 connects cottage country to the Pinawa Hospital and as such is frequently used by emergency medical services to transport patients. As well, Provincial Road 433, Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years. New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth and, of course, has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the Granite Hills Golf Course. This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality. Also No. 11, finish it beyond the tracks in Pine Falls, that's just a little bit further east, and you know what I'm talking about, from Highway 59 all the way to Pine Falls and then it just stops.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of the amendment and against the Throne Speech. The Speech from the Throne is a setup for many more new hidden taxes this government is going to bring forward in the 2013 budget. The PC Party is energized and ready to lead this province to increased prosperity through fiscal responsibility, balanced budgets and targeted investments in infrastructure and social services.

Have a wonderful Christmas, Mr. Speaker, unless this government is opposed to that name. Thank you.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak in another Throne Speech debate. I consider this really to be the most important debate that we have. And certainly the budget has a fair amount of significance as well, but this really is a debate about our vision as a government. It's a debate about our vision as MLAs, and I certainly will be outlining our vision for this province, Mr. Speaker, in just a few moments.

I did want to, however, comment that we've had some significant anniversaries in my constituency. This year is, for example, the 50th anniversary of R.D. Parker Collegiate. I'm a proud graduate of

R.D. Parker Collegiate. We recently had celebrations marking that significant anniversary, and what was really noticeable, Mr. Speaker, was the degree to which R.D. Parker grads have really now gone on to some very significant roles: the MP, the MLA the school board chair and the mayor, the president of the steel workers and the general manager of Vale are all RDPC grads, and there's actually some well-placed people in this Legislature, our Clerk as well, that are RDP grads. As you can see, it's part of the R.D. Parker takeover of the province here, and I did want to remark on that because it's a very significant anniversary. I also want to remark by the way that it's the 50th anniversary of the United Steelworkers of America—Local 6166. I worked at Inco before being elected, and I've always said I was very privileged to work underground. I've never claimed to be a professional miner. In fact, my shift boss, after the election—it's a true story—came up to me and he shook my hand and he said he voted for me. And I thought at first it might have been something I said in the election, but then he—then without a pause he said: I thought you'd make a better politician than a miner.

So, Mr. Speaker, after the nine elections and having some period of time of representing the good constituency of Thompson in the Legislature, I'll let the people of my constituency speak on the politician part, but certainly I have a lot of respect for the men and women that work in the community and the many members of the steel workers.

And there's a really important anniversary as well, too, that I think we should all be celebrating, and that's it's the hundredth anniversary of northern Manitoba this year. A hundred years ago, Manitoba—*[interjection]*—absolutely; it's important to all of us. Manitobans had the foresight to extend the boundaries of this good province to the 60th parallel, and, in fact, much of what we've seen over the last number of years in terms of development, I think, should be of really a significance to all of us.

You know, a hundred years ago it was the hundredth anniversary of the town of The Pas, actually. At that time there was the construction in the early stages of the Hudson Bay rail line. This wonderful building, the same era as well, was part of our vision, Mr. Speaker. There was a sense that the future of Manitoba really faced north, and I always say that, when they built the building and they put the Golden Boy on top of the building, there's a good reason why it faces north. So much of our potential is in northern Manitoba. And I do want to remark, by the way, that I think a lot of our best times are ahead

of us because we've seen some significant progress in recent years, but I think if you were to go throughout northern Manitoba now, you'd really get some sense of the fact that we really are living up to that full potential.

So I did want to remark on those important periods, Mr. Speaker, and I did want to mention something as well, too, when I began my remarks, too, because I was thinking about this recently. I went to an event in my community. The Army Navy Air Force had a theme; it was the '80s theme. Some rather interesting costumes. I'd forgotten, actually, some of the styles of the times, some interesting music. And then it dawned on me that, you know, the Army Navy had sort of one night that was the '80s night, but we have—we've got people that have gone one step further. It's the PCs, because every night, every day, 24 hours a day, is '90s day in the PC caucus. I mean, you know, I'm really amazed when you look at it, you know, and I certainly welcome the new Leader of the Opposition.

I know that's the fourth, I think, since we've been in government, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), formerly member for Portage, and I do know that he brings with him the experience of being part of the Filmon government. I remember sitting across the way as an opposition member when he was a minister. And, you know, I got to give him credit too. He's pretty upfront. The only thing I know about him, that—that the former member for Portage, now member for Fort Whyte, he calls it like it is. And how did he describe the Filmon government? Was it—[interjection] Yes—oh, not did he like it; it was like best government ever.

You know, I mean, Mr. Speaker, I got to say, it's been—it's been actually—how many years since the '99 election? It's actually been a greater period of time than the election '99 was after 1988. And I sat 11 years in opposition. And let me tell you one thing about being in opposition: You know, you've got to represent your constituents; you've got to fight the government if they have initiatives that are negative for the province, and God knows we had enough of that in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. But what also you have to do as well is sometime, just along the way you have to recognize that there's some messages that might have been sent to you in the election where you ended up not being in government anymore. But what's so remarkable about the Conservatives in this House is not only they don't get the results in 1999, they're continually trying to re-fight the '99 election. If you actually hear a lot of

their questions, it very much is '99 all over again in the PC caucus, and actually, quite frankly, as a New Democrat, that's fine. You know, they can be stuck in a time warp. Actually, I'm being generous because a lot of times I think their political philosophy is more like the 1890s, Mr. Speaker. But the reality is, when you've got a new leader, you know, the new old leader, the old new leader of the opposition, saying that the Filmon government was, you know, this was the golden age, you know, for the province of Manitoba. Well, okay, that's a vision. Well, for some, it might be a nightmare as well, a recurring nightmare. But it really does put in place what their vision is. They want to take us back to the '90s.

* (16:50)

Well, let's look at some of the things, you know, you can compare between now and then. Now, let's put in a comparison—I think we've had—what?—29,000 jobs created over the last number of years. We've had 30,000 more Manitobans—you know, net total 30,000 more people coming into this province than leaving the province. This year we're going to have—I think we're in the top two or three in terms of growth in Canada. We're above the national average.

And, you know, what's happening tomorrow, by the way? It's kind of a big day in my household: IKEA's coming to Manitoba. You know, we got the Jets; you know, we got the Human Rights Museum built. You know, you go around this province and there's building cranes everywhere. My community, the UCN campus; The Pas, the new facilities there at UCN; I mean, the new Red River College construction. You know, I don't even recognize Portage Avenue anymore. When you go from the MTS Centre right down to the U of W, there are really good things happening in the province.

Now in 19—in the 1990s, I want to ask members—this is a trick question, I know—okay—oh, I've—sorry, I forgot to mention Hydro. You know, we did build the Wuskwatim dam. I want to ask them, what did they build in the 1990's? Well, you know, no answer. I mean, I can't think of one significant thing that they built in the 1990s. You know, there were no building cranes. There was no growth.

I mean, the No. 1 discussion if you'd go to—you know I remember going to the chamber of commerce events in Winnipeg, and everybody'd be talking about how much the value of their house had dropped. It was dropping—you know, it's interesting, the member for Fort Whyte—I had a friend, I remember, in the 1990s—that's all he kept talking

about. He bought a house in Lindenwoods, and it kept dropping year after year after year.

Now what's been happening? Because of the confidence in this province, and because we've got growth back, you're actually seeing growth not only in terms of rising home prices and the prices of business, but you're seeing construction. We've got record construction in terms of housing in this province.

And, if you look at many of the members in this House, particularly in the suburban areas of Winnipeg, new developments. I mean, there are a lot of good things happening in this province.

Now, I must've missed something, because I haven't heard a single Tory MLA in this Throne Speech reference any of the good things that are happening. I mean, you know, it's almost as if—I mean, if you have this as a weather map, there would be like a big rain cloud, you know, right on top of the PC caucus, because I don't know what they don't see that's going on around them.

I got a kick out of, too, members talking about highways. I mean, I love talking about highways, but I also, by the way, find it rather remarkable that the members opposite can get up and even have the nerve to lobby for more highways. I mean, they—not only do they vote against every budget that's brought in—record spending on highways.

But I want to put on the record how much they spent in the 1990s. What was the capital budget? And I know the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) and many other members on that side, can say, well, well, it's before my time. Well here's what it was. They had \$85 million for capital—85—and we were just being criticized for having 350. Well, for the member opposite, do the math. We've quadrupled the capital budget, Mr. Speaker. We have a long-term highway plan, and in every area of the province, we're doing more today than was done in the '90s. In the last three years of our highway construction program, we spent more than they did in the entire decade they were in government.

And I got to say to members opposite, it was interesting. I was at the AMM yesterday, and I was talking to one of the councillors from—actually they were from Lac du Bonnet's area, and he said, you know, I'll give you credit. He said, you've done more in our area than we had—and by the way, we had a PC Minister of Highways in '99. He said, you're

doing more. And no, Mr. Speaker, we're not done yet—a lot more to happen.

But, you know, this is very much—this is part of their vision. I mean, I don't know if they won, they'd have reruns, you know, of Connie Curran. Maybe they had a Connie Curran theme night. You know how many nurses we've added back: 3,100 additional nurses since 1999. They fired a thousand nurses; we've added 3,100. Doctors: we're up 500 doctors since '99, Mr. Speaker.

And I got to say to members opposite, because, you know, one that we have not done: we've not privatized Manitoba Hydro. But I was at a meeting yesterday with AMM, and from the—a lot of municipal leaders from the southeast, and, you know, Mr. Speaker, I had to say, because: We want better cellphone service. What are you going to do about it? And I said, well, I wish we still had the phone company. You can thank the government of the 1990s that got rid of it, because, maybe, we could have done something, although we are supporting those communities in lobbying the federal government to get the regulatory requirement to put the cell phone services to a legitimate point. But this was the vision of the 1990s.

I want to talk, by the way, also about the flood because you know what, they had a flood to deal with and there were a lot of good things that happened in that flood, the Z-dike, the work that was done, but do you remember what the Premier of the province said in the 1990s? Gary Filmon, okay, what did he say? You know, people that live in a flood plain shouldn't complain. I got to tell you, whenever I hear members getting up asking questions—I mean I respect when it's legitimately on behalf of individuals and constituents, Mr. Speaker, but I got to tell you one thing, our Premier (Mr. Selinger)—no one on this side has or ever will blame the flood victims. That might have been the vision in the 1990s, but when we are dealing with flooding situations, what we've done, we don't blame the victims. We put in place more than a billion dollars in terms of fighting the flood and assistance and we're not done yet. That's the Manitoba way.

I want to also talk, by the way, of what they did in the '90s in terms of the flood mitigation because we've spent a billion dollars. It's one of the reasons this flood and the 2009 flood have had far less impact than had happened in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker. So, again, yes—you know, and they get up and they say, oh, we're—we have a spending problem.

Spending on what? On highways? Oh, wait a sec. They like that, right? Are they going to get up and say we shouldn't spend it on disaster assistance or fighting floods or flood mitigation. Well, we'll see on that.

How about health care? Are we spending too much there? Well, I mean, we know what they did with health care in the '90s. They cut it. How about education? I mean when they were in government, there were no such things as increases in education funding. It was -two, -two, zero. I mean how about Filmon Fridays? I mean, I—you know, at what point, Mr. Speaker, do they realize that when—if they're having a '90s night over there, it's really—it should be held on Halloween because it was a horror story for a lot of Manitobans?

But I don't want to—I don't want to dwell—I don't want to be dwelling on the 1990s. They can refight the '99 election all they want, Mr. Speaker, bring it on. What I want to say is whenever I travel this province, I see a huge amount of optimists, and you can start by coming across the border and driving on Highway 75 which was a disgrace when members opposite were in government, and we're not done yet. But we have now upgraded the vast majority of Highway 75. You can go from Highway 1. You can go out to Brandon. You can visit fine citizens of Brandon, and by the way, as you may have noticed in question period, I got a lot of faith in the people of Brandon.

But you know what, look at the improvements that have taken place in terms of Highway 1. Look at the improvements on 59, on 6, on 7, on 8, and Highway 10, the Centreport Canada Way, which is part of our tremendous vision, the work we've done throughout the Interlake, the work we're doing—working with the growing communities of Steinbach and Morden and Winkler. We're one of the few provinces where rural communities, rural centres are growing, Mr. Speaker. You can come to northern Manitoba, and even when we face tough times that we've got right now in Thompson, what's going on? An \$82-million investment in a brand new campus for UCN, a brand new rec facility which we helped fund.

You know if you go to any area of this province, the government is working in partnership with the people. That's the way it should be. Now, members opposite have every right as members of the opposition to criticize even when there's not a lot to criticize; I understand they're trying hard to find

something. But you know, I would think some time along the way, they would wake up and smell the coffee because the reality is this province has changed a lot since 1999, and the key message to them, Mr. Speaker, I think, for Manitobans in election after election is we don't want to go back to where we were then. We have a province that's growing. We have a province that's developing. It's the second youngest province in the country.

We've got tremendous diversity. People are coming from all over Canada, all over the world to this great province and, yes, it's our 100th anniversary, Mr. Speaker, but I got to say one thing, as much as we've done now, there's so much more potential ahead. That's why I'm so proud of this province, so proud to be part of a government that's part of making history. We're not going back. We're going forward. It's a really bright future for this province, and I wish for once members opposite would get onside and start by voting—

* (17:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) will have 13 minutes remaining; the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation will have 13 minutes remaining.

And also, as previously agreed, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) will have 28 minutes remaining.

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

CORRIGENDA

On November 21, 2012, page 63, second column, fourth paragraph, should have read:

It wasn't us who coined the phrase, Manitoba miracle. It was Maclean's magazine that called it the Manitoba miracle. And what is the Manitoba miracle, Mr. Speaker? It's people working hard. It's not necessarily us; it's not necessarily the opposition. It's Manitobans who believe in the future, who came here from many, many places, who lived here since time immemorial, who worked together in a collaborative fashion, the Manitoba way—the collaborative fashion to make things happen.

On November 22, 2012, page 112, first column, third paragraph, should have read:

True that, says the member from Brandon East. He certainly had a captive audience on this side of the House. I wish I could say the same for the members on that side of the House. I've seen happier faces in a dentist's chair than I saw behind him yesterday.

On November 26, 2012, page 170, first column, first paragraph, should have read:

Training and Trade, I have the privilege of going to a number of dinners. Now some people might say,

really, just looking at you we never would have guessed that. But I have the privilege of going to a number of gala dinners where we celebrate our business community. And every time I go to these gala dinners to celebrate our business community or every time I go to gala dinners that are supporting a worthwhile cause and community organization in our community, our business community steps up to the plate and they donate a lot of their money and resources and value in kind to support these worthwhile causes.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 27, 2012

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