

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	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
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine	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	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
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Arthur-Virden	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 18, 2013

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.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 203—The Nurse Practitioner Day Act

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I move, seconded by the MLA for St. Norbert, that Bill 203, The Nurse Practitioner Day Act; Loi sur la Journée des infirmières praticiennes, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Crothers: This legislation recognizes and promotes awareness of the critical role of nurse practitioners in creating a more collaborative and accessible health system for Manitoba families. Nurse practitioners work in a variety of health-care settings, including emergency departments and QuickCare clinics, and are integral to our Province's goal of providing all Manitobans with a primary care provider by 2015.

With this bill, today and every November 18th thereafter will be known as nurse practitioner day across the province.

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

Further introduction of bills?

Bill 202—The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook), that Bill 202, The Participation of Manitoba in the New West Partnership Act, be read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: It's not the first time that the bill has been on the docket, but it certainly is time that we did become part of the New West Partnership. It's obvious that Manitoba is not able—has not been able to compete effectively, and this here would be a big step going forward. It would be just one of the pieces of the puzzle that will bring Manitoba into this particular century and actually express the economics that we know are here, that we can be a have province instead of a have-not province.

So, in saying that, I expect everyone in the House to support this bill going forward. Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail tax—sales tax is 6 per cent.

The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross shorter-cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

This petition's signed by K. Zentner, S. Horvath, L. Sawchuk and many more Manitobans.

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition's submitted on behalf of T. Isaac, R. Makowski, R. Tanchak and many other fine Manitobans.

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 provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will hurt Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

* (13:40)

This petition is signed by D. Gillies, J. Glynn, B. Bollman and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector,

especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

This petition is signed by L. Toews, C. Kratavicius, L. Penner and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

And this petition is signed by J. Parry-Hill, R. Retlant and W. Benn and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And this is the background for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito,

Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

The retail sales tax is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to the Manitoba provincial borders.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by R. Schlorff, B. Walters, S. Wollmann and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some guests. I would like to draw honourable members' attention to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Nurse Practitioner Association of Manitoba, who are the guests are the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Selby).

And also in the public gallery, we have from Springs Christian Academy 29 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the honourable First Minister.

On behalf of all members here this afternoon, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Infrastructure Spending Funding Commitment

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): If one was to try to evaluate what was the lowest priority of this government over the last four years, the conclusion that they would have to draw is that the lowest priority has been in one department, one specific department where the government has underspent its budget consistently, by 27 per cent, in fact, since this gentleman became Premier, and that department would be infrastructure.

Now, last week the government changed the story a little bit—well, quite a bit, Mr. Speaker—and they said their new top, most serious, really, really and for real priority was going to be infrastructure. Now, that is a little suspicious and it could just be another ploy to sell Manitobans that they need a PST hike.

So I want the Premier to clarify that the Throne Speech commitment to \$5.5 billion over five years is actually for infrastructure, new money, new projects.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition had read the Throne Speech, he would have noticed that it is for new projects, incremental funding, core infrastructure, roads, sewer and water, flood protection—flood protection for which we've already spent one and a quarter billion dollars to protect Manitobans, with recommendations to spend up to another billion dollars of which we've already made an advanced commitment of \$250 million for the people in the Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin area.

So this money being spent on infrastructure will move us forward, create good jobs in Manitoba for young people, strengthen our economy. It will benefit the private sector who ship the majority of their goods down Highway 75 into the United States market, and the member opposite will notice that was our first major announcement. We spent \$125 million on Highway 75. We—now we've committed to another \$250 million on Highway 75.

Federal/Municipal Contributions

Mr. Pallister: Wordy answer, wordy Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. The reality is this government needs 192 communications staff for one reason, and that's because they're always changing their story.

Now, this Premier has said, and he said in the Throne Speech, \$5.5 billion; \$5.5 billion he said and tried to surround himself with the credit that might go with spending that enormous amount of money over the next five years and taking it from Manitobans. The reality isn't what the government tried to portray.

The reality is this \$5.5 billion is a fabrication in a sense, Mr. Speaker, because it isn't coming from the provincial government. It's coming from the federal government as well. It's coming from municipal governments as well. It's coming from the well-worn pockets of Manitoba taxpayers. Just one pocket, three governments, this government wants all the credit.

So I have to ask the Premier: How much really, really is coming from the provincial government?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in the last three years we've spent \$1.6 billion on infrastructure in Manitoba. That's more than the entire period when the Leader of the Opposition was in government. The entire government over that period of 10, 11 years spent less than we've spent in the last three years on infrastructure.

The five and a half billion will certainly take advantage of any matching money from the federal government on the Building Canada Fund. That will allow us to do even more in Manitoba. Of course, we'll take advantage of federal dollars on their soon-to-be announced infrastructure program.

Our money will continue—our money will flow into very key core infrastructure projects, improving roads like Highway 75, improving roads like Highway No. 10, improving roads like Highway No. 6 in the Interlake, improving roads like Highway No. 9 up through the Interlake as well.

*(13:50)

And, Mr. Speaker, when they were in office they cancelled the twinning of Highway No. 1 to the Saskatchewan border. We built it.

New Projects

Mr. Pallister: In the last two years that Premier and that government cancelled \$1.9 billion worth of infrastructure [*inaudible*] Oh—Sir Walter Scott said, oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive.

This government has had a lot of practice at deception. This Premier said, I'll hold the line on

taxes, and didn't. He said, I'll balance the books, and doesn't.

And now he says the same thing he said in each of the last three throne speeches, that he's going to invest in infrastructure. But he doesn't. He hasn't. And in the last four years he's taken \$1.9 billion out of that budget and spent it on other things that were a higher priority. Last week, \$5.5 billion, he said. Last week, \$5.5 billion; that's now less. And I ask him how much less, and he won't answer the question.

I'll ask him this. He said last week these are new projects. Are they really, really new projects?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition had to withdraw his press release last week when he said that projects were cancelled, and then he repeats the same mistake in the House today. Obviously, he hasn't learned anything about how he miscommunicates the reality of Manitoba.

We ramped up \$1.6 billion of infrastructure investment over the last three years, more than was ever done when he was in office. When he was in office, they raised the gas tax and they cut the highways budget. All the money that we are raising is going into core infrastructure, highways, sewer and water and flood protection, all things that the member opposite would cancel. That's what he's promising, across-the-board cuts. He would not build Sage Creek school. He would not build schools in south Winnipeg. He would not build Highway No. 6 or Highway No. 9 or Highway No. 1 going towards the eastern border. All of those would be cancelled under his program of austerity.

We will create good jobs for young Manitobans. We will invest in infrastructure. We will have steady growth in the economy. That's what we've—

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

Plum River Bridge Funding Announcement Timeline

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, they've actually cancelled \$1.9 billion worth of infrastructure work just in the last four years—\$1.9 billion.

And this Premier wants to go back to the future. He wants to go back to the future. So what does he do? He tries to sell Manitobans, in his Throne Speech yet again, that PST's really, really important to him, and he needs the PST because it's really, really important to him to invest in infrastructure,

and then he goes out within hours and announces a project at Morris which includes the Plum River bridge, half built already. And I'll table a picture of it so that the government can have a look. Half built already, approved funding for the second phase in 2008. By any definition that's not a new project; that's an old project, an old project re-re-reannounced by an old government.

Is this an example of a lack of foresight by the Premier or a lack of integrity? Or is it an example of both, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have to say we're making progress, because on June 25th, when the Leader of the Opposition got up, he didn't even recognize that Morris was in the constituency of Morris. He did not recognize that Cartier and Headingley are in the constituency of Morris. And he put those communities at risk when he endorsed his MLA and members of his community standing in the diversion when ice was coming down the river that put those communities at risk.

We've spent \$125 million on Highway 75. We've committed to another \$215 million on Highway 75, our major trade artery into the United States, where two thirds of our exports go. It will bring steady economic growth to the province of Manitoba. It will create good jobs for the people of Manitoba, a direct contrast to when the member opposite was in the House and in the government, when they actually reduced highway spending, when they—

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

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

Mr. Pallister: The Premier's not an expert on job creation; he's an expert on non-job creation. The reality is, under his strategic approach, we are 10th out of 10 on new jobs over the last year—10th out of 10. This is not a record to trumpet; this is a record to be ashamed of and the Premier should be ashamed of it.

Now, the reality is he did not address the point. He has re-reannounced a bridge that has been built, Mr. Speaker, and the funding for that project was advanced in 2008. The construction company hired to do the work has it on their website a long time ago. Not only was it contracted out, it's been costed out, and it was approved five years ago.

So that's where this government's at. Their new-found enthusiasm for spending money on infrastructure goes to this point, that they would go so far as to introduce a bridge that is half built, that got \$5.5 billion—no, it's already been approved.

Now, how many other projects is the Premier planning, in the coming weeks and months, on re-re-re-announcing?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, \$215 million additional on new projects on Highway 75, to be audited and verified by the Auditor General of Manitoba, a very significant contrast to what they did when they were in office. They reduced highway spending. They said they would twin Highway No. 1 to the Saskatchewan border; they didn't do it. They said they would build the Brandon hospital; they didn't do it. They said they would do all manner of new projects to support the people of Manitoba on infrastructure, and they were cancelled.

Major among those cancellations, they cancelled the entire health capital budget in 1995-96 budget. Right after they got re-elected, they cancelled the entire health capital project, which meant no personal-care homes for people when they needed it in Manitoba, no hospitals for people that needed it in Manitoba and no emergency repair to new hospitals and existing hospitals.

That was their record. Our record will be verified and will continue the trend of building a better Manitoba with jobs for young people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, with a final supplementary.

Infrastructure Spending Funding Commitment

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I understand the Premier's desire to go back 15, 25 years in time. He may have had some integrity then; he does not demonstrate it now. He cannot be trusted.

What have we learned? His old story was that he took \$2 billion out of the infrastructure budget for other things. His new story last week: Infrastructure is really important to me. That's deliberate dishonesty, Mr. Speaker: the old story, \$5.5 billion that he's going to invest; the new story, much less. He won't say how much less. That's a distortion of the facts: the old story, that he's going to

invest in new projects; the new story, that he's investing in old projects.

Now, will the Premier admit that this is a sham, this is nothing but spin, this is cloaked in deception? Will the Premier admit what Manitobans are coming to understand with each word that passes through that man's lips, that he cannot be trusted?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in that long, torturous preamble to his question, the Leader of the Opposition said two things. He said we didn't build infrastructure and then he said we built infrastructure and we reannounced it. Maybe he could make up his mind before he gets up on his feet again. He said last week in his press release that projects were cancelled and then he hastily withdrew the press release and redid it, and then he made the same mistake in question period again today.

We built \$1.6 billion of infrastructure over the last three years, more than they did in the entire time when they were in office, Mr. Speaker, and we've committed to a solid program for steady economic growth going forward of \$5.5 billion of new infrastructure and good jobs for young Manitobans as we skill up another 75,000 workers to enter the labour force in the next eight years. Young people deserve a chance to have jobs in trades. Young people deserve a chance to work on infrastructure projects.

And, by the way, Mr. Speaker, not only did they cancel highway projects, but they let the Jets leave Manitoba. We brought them back.

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. We're wasting precious time in question period.

The honourable member for St. Paul has the floor.

Mining Industry Manitoba Ranking

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, perhaps the Premier could also tell us where the Selkirk hospital is that he announced nine times, Mr. Speaker—nine times.

* (14:00)

In a 2012-2013 mining survey report, it placed Manitoba as ranked 21st out of 96 worldwide jurisdictions measuring policy attractiveness, tax rates and potential investment. Manitoba was ranked first in the world in 2006-2007 and has done nothing but fall since that point. With the increase in the PST and the drop-off in mining exploration, this will only continue Manitoba's descent as a competitor worldwide. Clearly, this NDP government cannot be trusted to ensure Manitoba mining stays competitive.

How could this NDP fail the mining sector by placing Manitoba below Botswana?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I don't know what map of the world the member opposite is looking at, but if he would look at a map of the world and look at Snow Lake and Flin Flon in Manitoba, he would see the largest mine in the history of the province, Lalor mine, under construction and, in fact, producing tonnage today—the largest.

He would also see a mine that was talking about closing it, perhaps, going a while ago, Vale, proceeding, Mr. Speaker, and looking for partners for investment in further nickel production in Thompson, Manitoba, and he would look at the continued capacity of the San Gold mine which is producing, probably, this year its largest amount of gold ever in Manitoba.

Mining Exploration Development Concerns

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, Mr. Speaker, mining exploration requires large tracts of land to find future mines. According to the mining association, Manitoba—in 2005-2006 there were 5,640,203 hectares of total land in good standing. By 2012 that dropped by two thirds—by two thirds—to 1,860,000 hectares of land in good standing.

The question, then, is: How could this NDP fail Manitoba mining, or is it just further proof that this NDP government cannot be trusted when it comes to mining in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I heard something completely different when I met with the mining association and the chiefs that phone the—that form the Mining Advisory Council last week. For the first time in history, they have a council of all of the mining—major mining companies in Manitoba and First Nations to work out a go-forward strategy for

revenue sharing, for procurement and for training for mines in Manitoba, and if he wants to phone them today I'd be happy to give him their number. He could talk to them and could talk to people who are right on the ground instead of doing his research in Botswana.

Mr. Schuler: I'd like to table a document for the minister's photo album of shame, if we could have that tabled, please.

Mr. Speaker, Natural Resources Canada reports Manitoba dropped to fourth lowest in mining exploration, deposit appraisal and mine development expenditures. Manitoba will have 17 per cent of the investment of Saskatchewan in 2013, that's 17 per cent. This NDP government cannot be trusted with the future of mining in Manitoba.

How could this NDP government fail Manitoba mining in such a catastrophic fashion?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased that the Province of Saskatchewan has signed an agreement to buy Manitoba hydro. For the first time, they're spending \$15 billion on buying hydro and other clean energy from this province, and members opposite not only want to stop Hydro, they want to privatize it, and Saskatchewan's now going to get clean, efficient, cheap hydro from Manitoba.

Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I want to warmly welcome the nurse practitioners who join us today in the gallery. I want to thank the president, Brenda Dawyduk, the Nurse Practitioner Association of Manitoba president, and all nurse practitioners for the excellent service they provide to Manitobans in hospital, in community and in clinic.

Mr. Speaker, ambulance off-load times in Winnipeg have been steadily increasing over the last few years. The NDP government committed to address this issue, and then it got worse.

What does this Minister of Health—what is she doing to address the steadily increasing ambulance off-load times?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I thank the member for recognizing the great work of nurse practitioners in this province. Of course, this is nurse practitioner day officially as of today and for every day, November 18th, going forward, and I do want to

mention while I have the floor, as well, that those nurse practitioners have now seen 50,000 people at our QuickCare clinics across the province.

Mr. Speaker, nurse practitioners are a very important part of what we're doing when it comes to emergency rooms and making sure that people are getting the care they need when they need it, the right care at the right time. One of the most important things we're doing is making sure that people have a range of service so that those most urgent cares, those people who need urgent medical attention can go to an emergency room. For other people, there's—

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

Mr. Friesen: You know, for a government that says that they're focused, I think the minister completely missed the question I asked. So let's try again.

One year ago the Minister of Health says she was working very diligently to address the issue of ambulance off-load times. New information shows that in the first eight months of 2013 the fines levied against the WRHA by Winnipeg fire and paramedic service for off-load delays at ERs totalled \$1 million. That's in addition to all the fines last year of \$1.2 million. The total fines for waiting too long to off-load patients is going up, not down.

How can the minister be trusted when they keep saying that things are progressing when, really, they're regressing?

Ms. Selby: I thank the member for the question, and I do have to put some facts on the record, though, Mr. Speaker. For the over 50,000 people who visited the Winnipeg ERs, the vast majority, 75 to 80 per cent, are seen within that target period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are times when the ER can get backed up. It may be because some people perhaps should be redirected to less urgent places if they can go to a QuickCare clinic or perhaps an access centre. But the health-care system doesn't go on a schedule according to what's most comfortable. It goes according to need, and that means that there are times, be it a car accident or other emergencies, where, unfortunately, we see more people coming to the emergency room with urgent care who need to be there, and our nurses make that decision of how to triage them, and, occasionally, that does mean—

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

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, what this minister is not saying is that new information is showing that ambulances are waiting longer and longer to off-load patients at ERs before getting back into service. In 2011, the average ambulance time at a hospital was 66 minutes; 2012, it rose to 75 minutes, and the most recent numbers for 2013 are 78 minutes. And I want to table a document today showing the steadily increasing ambulance times at hospitals, and that means ambulances unavailable and unable to respond to new emergency calls.

One year ago, the minister of Health said that they were diligently working on driving down the off-load delays. It's a year later. Is the minister still working on it, and isn't the real story here that patients and paramedics and Manitobans just can't trust this minister?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important when we're talking about emergency care to keep facts on the record and not do useless fear mongering that needlessly scares people.

Mr. Speaker, there was always a paramedic available in Winnipeg, be that with an ambulance or one of our firefighter paramedics. But when people call 911 they need to know that a paramedic will respond, a trained health-care professional who knows what to do in an emergency will respond. And, again, I say 75 to 80 per cent of our ambulances are off-loading within that target time, but occasionally there are emergencies that may back things up.

Mr. Speaker, we want people with the most urgent care to be seen first, not the two-tier health-care system where whoever pays [*inaudible*] gets to go the front of the line.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Shawn Lamb Payments Government Knowledge

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, Shawn Lamb, who was recently convicted of manslaughter, was paid for information on more than one occasion.

Was the Minister of Justice aware of these payments?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think it's really important that we consider the impact of these crimes and the uncertainty on the families of the women who were

killed, and I think it's very, very important to understand that police made a difficult decision.

* (14:10)

And I look at what Superintendent Smyth had to say at the press conference the police service held. He said this wouldn't be something we do routinely. It's the first time in my knowledge we've entered into this kind of tactic, but we were prepared to take an extraordinary measure in this case.

This is an extraordinary circumstance. I won't second-guess the police.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the first question, so I'll ask another one.

Did the Minister of Justice approve the payments to Shawn Lamb?

Mr. Swan: It's important for the member for Brandon West to understand the independence of the police and the independence of the prosecution service.

I can tell the member for Brandon West very clearly the Attorney General of Manitoba does not get involved in providing direct advice to police. The Minister of Justice does not give specific direction to Crown attorneys on particular cases. That would be political interference, Mr. Speaker. It would be entirely inappropriate and incorrect. That has not happened in this case, nor has it happened when this minister has been in this chair.

Mr. Helwer: Indeed, it would be inappropriate, but the question was: Did he know about the payments and did he approve them?

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Justice feel that criminals such as Shawn Lamb should be allowed to profit from their crimes?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice believes in justice for Aboriginal women who go missing and who are murdered. This Minister of Justice believes in the independence of police and the independence of prosecutors.

And I would ask the member for Brandon West, if that's the question he wants to ask in this House, is he going to criticize the police and is he going to criticize the Crowns and is he going to say for \$1,500 that two families should not know what happened to their loved ones?

The police have told us it was a difficult decision. The Crowns office did provide advice to

the police. This has provided closure for two families in tragic situations. It's resulted in a 20-year jail sentence for the individual who has now accepted responsibility for their deaths, and, Mr. Speaker, I believe that's the right—

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

Drug Activity in Schools Incident Reporting

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Education if he could tell parents, students and teachers what kind of information was going into schools about the deadly drug fentanyl. I asked him three times and he refused to answer three times, but the issue of drugs in schools is something that's important for the safety of our students and to ensure that they have a safe learning environment.

Can the Minister of Education advise this House, in fact, tell parents and teachers and students: How many drugs have been found in our schools in the last school year, and how many instances have there been of drug issues within our schools?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for the question. To be honest, if he was really interested in safe schools, he would have voted for Bill 18 last *[inaudible]*

Mr. Speaker, I think the member probably knows that in 2004 we introduced the Safe Schools Charter, require schools to have codes of conduct that prohibit students from using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs at school.

We passed the Safe Schools Charter then. We continue to work on mechanisms and resources for schools and educators, for students in addition, to make sure that our students have safe and secure classrooms to visit every single day.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, he passed the policy, but we want to know, in fact, whether or not the government is actually keeping track.

We've heard in media reports that students were asked—or students were asked in Winnipeg about the issue of drugs in school. One of the grade 12 students in the Winnipeg School Division said, it's something that we see every day; it's a daily occurrence. Another student said, just recently my friend walked into a washroom to see some girls snorting cocaine.

So we're simply asking on behalf of parents. We want to know how prevalent the problem is. He says he's passed something, but is he actually keeping track?

Can he tell us how many instances of drugs have been found in our school in the last school year? Surely, the Minister of Education would know the answer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allum: Again, I thank the member for the question. I think he also knows that we have put forward the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program and other programs like that.

Healthy schools are something that's a priority to this government. Healthy classrooms are a priority for this government. We're investing in education. We're investing in classrooms, we're investing in gyms, we're investing in science labs, and we're keeping our schools safe and secure for all students.

That's what parents are concerned about. I don't think he is.

Mr. Goertzen: Clearly, the Minister of Education has absolutely no idea the answer to this question and perhaps he can just say that. But it's a very important issue for parents. It's a very important issue for students. It's also an important issue for teachers.

Surely, the Minister of Education, who's responsible for the safety within our schools, would know how many instances of drugs have been found within those schools in the last school year. If he doesn't know that, he can put away the talking points, he can put away the glib comments; parents don't need to hear that.

Can he just answer the question: How many times have drugs been found in our schools in the last academic year, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Allum: It goes without saying that on this side of the House we've invested in schools over the last 15 years to create safe and healthy classrooms for every single student in the system. That's not going to change.

And when they had a chance on that side of the House to support our budget measures, to invest in schools, to invest in class sizes, to invest in gyms, to invest in science labs, they chose not to do it. So it leaves me under the misapprehension, Mr. Speaker, that while the member of—opposite talks a good game, he doesn't actually believe it.

PST Increase/Infrastructure Spending Government Promise

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, when I asked a very simple question last week of whether the NDP government was going to use the additional money from raising the PST for new infrastructure spending or just replace existing spending with it, the Premier didn't give a firm commitment that the PST money will be additional infrastructure dollars above and beyond spending in previous budgets.

Again I ask the Premier: Will the additional PST money be new infrastructure dollars and not just replace existing infrastructure dollars so that his government can deceptively use the additional PST money for all sorts of other purposes?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have made it very clear in the Throne Speech we're going to ramp up five and a half billion dollars of new expenditure on infrastructure, core infrastructure, new expenditure, incremental expenditure, on new core infrastructure. Core infrastructure means highways; core infrastructure means sewer and water; core infrastructure means flood protection for Manitoba communities. And that's very important priorities for Manitobans.

These resources will allow us to be able to address those important priorities, in contrast to the members opposite who wanted to cut all of those budgets. In addition, they wanted to cut health spending on personal-care homes and on other facilities for health care. They wanted to cut funding for new schools and repairing existing schools.

By allowing us to raise this revenue and 'deding' it to core infrastructure, we can pay for those new projects while protecting schools and hospitals. That's our objective, Mr. Speaker. That will make for a stronger Manitoba, steady economic growth and good jobs for young people.

Infrastructure Spending Federal/Municipal Contributions

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last week when the Premier announced that his government was going to spend \$5.5 billion on infrastructure over the next five years, it quickly came to light that many of the dollars he was talking about were federal or municipal dollars. The Premier was—the Premier's propensity to assume provincial 'taxmayers' money is his own money has been extended to a new level.

I ask the Premier: What part of the \$5.5 billion in infrastructure spending proposed is from provincially derived revenue and what part is, in fact, expenditure of federal and municipal governments?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Five and a half billion dollars in our budget on infrastructure. We've always said we'd be pleased to get a federal match on specific projects, and we look forward to the federal government announcing the Building Canada Fund so we can get a better match. This will allow us to do even more additional work in Manitoba.

As we ramp up that five and a half billion dollars of expenditure, it will create thousands of new jobs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And the research shows that investment on infrastructure has a very positive return for the economy. When you invest in infrastructure, you create jobs, you grow the economy, and that's what we want: steady economic growth, new jobs for Manitobans, new opportunities for young people in the trades. Whether it's electrical trades, carpentry, highway work, whether it's plumbing, whether it's any of the new trades, those things are important for the future of the province.

*(14:20)

At a time of global economic uncertainty, at a time when the Canadian, North American and global economies have not recovered as rapidly as people have anticipated, we're embarking on a period of economic growth in the province which will create new jobs—

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

The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

PST Increase/Infrastructure Spending Request to Table Projects

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, instead of answering my question directly, the Premier did a real wiggle on that one.

Mr. Speaker, because of the widespread confusion over just how the Premier and his government plan to spend the additional money generated by raising the PST, with about 51 proposals being put on the table to date and with a lack of credibility as to whether his latest proposal is, in fact, his final decision, I ask the Premier: Will he table today the full list of all the projects on which he proposes to expend the new infrastructure money, the PST money, and tell us, is this his final decision?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've announced some very significant investments in infrastructure: Highway 75, an additional \$215 million. We've said we'd spend more money on the west side of the province on Highway No. 10. We've said we'd spend additional money on Highway No. 6 up through the Interlake. We've said we'd spend additional money on Highway No. 9 that goes up to the Gimli area and, of course, Highway No. 1 going east, after we twinned Highway No. 1 going west when the opposition said they would do it and then failed to deliver on it. They cancelled it. The only political party in this House which has cancelled infrastructure projects are the PCs, the Progressive Conservatives.

Our projects have gone forward. We've delivered on all of them and we will deliver on five and a half billion dollars more as we go forward. And there will be new jobs and good jobs for young Manitobans.

Manitoba Hydro Announcement Saskatchewan Power Sale

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, there is excitement in the air. The Conservatives want to turn off the lights in Manitoba—click—but we want to keep the lights on both Saskatchewan and Manitoba—click, click.

On this side of the House we know that Manitoba Hydro is a key economic driver in the province of Manitoba, creating jobs and providing training opportunities while keeping rates for Manitoba families and business among the lowest in the country. We know that export sales are important as we move forward with renewing the province's aging power infrastructure and building new dams and transmission to ensure we don't run out of power in 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro tell the House about the important announcement today?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): I want to thank my friend across the way there for the question. Kind of explains why there wasn't a Hydro question coming from the Conservatives today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro power is in high demand, not only south of our border but west of our border as well. Today we're very pleased to announce the single largest power sale agreement between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This sale will help keep rates low for Manitoba families and for

Manitoba businesses. We signed an MOU with this that will provide in the future a 500-megawatt purchase.

So, Mr. Speaker, in stark, stark contrast to members opposite, this side of the House continues to invest in Manitoba Hydro to build our economy, to provide jobs, unlike members opposite who said, let's not—

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

Food Safety Act Impact on Community Events

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Obviously cheaper than free, Mr. Speaker. Brad Wall said, surely, we can't produce it for that kind of fee. At that kind of a deal, we can't pass it up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, fall suppers have been a rural tradition in rural Manitoba for years. Local organizations have raised money, allowed people to share their cooking and baking and come together as a family socially. In June 2009 I asked the government if their food and safety amendments act would affect fall suppers. This government said no, nonsense.

This fall the Laing family attended their community fall supper only to find that the usually display of pies were not there. What was happening? They said the food safety act was the reason.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Why is this government sabotaging fall suppers in rural Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Let me say, first of all, if I could get the attention of the members opposite, let us show our appreciation to the agriculture producers of the province of Manitoba for the food they produce and for the betterment of the economy of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we hear always so many negative comments from the members opposite, and I want to share the information of how valuable the agriculture is in the province of Manitoba. That is a \$10.1 billion industry in the province of Manitoba, and I want to thank the producers for their involvement, for the betterment of the economy in the province of Manitoba and for the people and supply food for our industry.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Eichler: All the farmers really want to do is share that food with their friends socially. That's what they want to do, Mr. Speaker.

I'll give the minister another opportunity here. A lady from his area went to a church event, wanted to donate a Jell-O salad, was refused. Why? Because of the food safety act.

What do they have against rural Manitoba? What do they got against a fundraiser in a local area provided by safe food within their own area? What is it, Mr. Speaker? Get in tune with what's going on.

Mr. Kostyshyn: And, obviously, it's a tradition that's been carried on for a lot of years. But let's not be fooled by the fact that food safety is a No. 1 of public interest in the province of Manitoba and across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, yes, I've been to a number of the fall suppers, and let me tell you I do agree with it. But there's also been circumstances where people have gotten sick—that food safety. And this is a priority when the government of Manitoba believes in food safety. And we will continue to be in the better interest of public safety and food safety from the people that attend those functions now and forever in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's time for members' statements.

Nurse Practitioner Day

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I want to call attention to the House that—to a very important and growing group of professionals within the health-care field, those of nurse practitioners.

Today has been proclaimed nurse practitioner day and recognizes the significant contributions of Manitoba's dedicated nurse practitioners, as they attend to patients in communities and organizations every day. And they come from far—across Manitoba, including my own constituency of southern Manitoba in Morden-Winkler.

Nurse practitioners are a group of professionals within Manitoba's field of health care have quickly become an integral part of the delivery of vital health-care services in our province. There are 118 nurse practitioners working who have seen their

scope of practice continue to expand in order to better serve Manitobans. With that expansion of their scope of practice comes an increased recognition of the training and capabilities of these fine professionals.

Under the current NDP government, there are 19 rural emergency departments closed, or operating under reduced hours. There are multiple family physician vacancies. There are wait times for treatments that have put our province at the bottom of the barrel. This substantial gap in service has been mitigated somewhat by the fine work and dedication of groups like nurse practitioners.

Progressive Conservative Party supports enabling nurse practitioners in order to improve access to timely and quality care for all Manitobans. And we want to take this moment to commend these health-care professionals for their commitment and dedication to caring and serving Manitobans, and, as an opposition party, want to continue to bring forth concerns pertaining to the slowness with which the nurse practitioners are able to find employment across the province and enter into practice.

And, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that not only are there announcements that there will be more practitioners, but we want to make sure that nurse practitioners can find places of employment across the province when they're done that training.

On behalf of our province, we want to thank nurse practitioners in all areas of Manitoba for the vital role they play in stabilizing the health-care system and ensuring all Manitobans receive the health-care services they rely on. Our party recognizes the challenges of our health-care system and supports nurse practitioners working to their full potential, in order to ensure patients receive the care they need, when they need it.

Thank you.

Remembrance Day: Royal Canadian Legion St. James Branch

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): This year, as in previous years, I was privileged to join the Royal Canadian Legion, St. James Branch, No. 4, for their Remembrance Day parade and service. The procession began at the Assiniboine hotel and continued along Portage Avenue to Bruce Park, where the service was held. It was then followed by an indoor program at the legion lodge, and I was honoured to participate as a wreath layer at the service. It was indeed a moving ceremony that

allowed all in attendance time to reflect on the courageous sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform.

* (14:30)

Bruce Park is home to a cenotaph, originally erected in 1936 to pay homage to fallen soldiers of the First World War. The monument stood for 50 years before being replaced in 1990 thanks to funding from the Royal Canadian Legion, St. James Branch. Now the cenotaph stands for the memory of those who died in the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and to Canadian peacekeepers.

Every year since having moved to St. James, I have been struck by the turnout for this Remembrance Day ceremony. It could be its beautiful setting with the cenotaph standing on the hillside, Truro Creek running nearby and a forest of trees as the backdrop; however, I believe it is truly a reflection of the commitment from St. James community members. Whole families come to show their respect, as well as community groups who understand the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on the sacrifice made by our veterans. I ask all members to join me in thanking the Royal Canadian Legion, St. James Branch, for ensuring the memory of our veterans lives on through their annual Remembrance Day service and year-round through the Bruce Park cenotaph.

Thank you very much.

Mennonite Heritage Village Museum

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's an honour today to inform the Manitoba Legislature and its members that 2014 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum located in the city of Steinbach.

The museum was first conceived through a board that was established in 1958, and the museum followed a few years later with a house barn, school, church and the Reimer General Store. The Mennonite Heritage Village started with the idea of telling the story of the first generation of Mennonites that arrived in the 1870s and the simple agricultural lives they lived. The most iconic symbol is that of the windmill on the museum grounds which is a replica of the original 1877 version which once graced the village of Steinbach. The museum has grown since its early days and today holds almost 16,000 artifacts, many of which are reflective of the life for Mennonite immigrants who came from Russia in the 1920s and the 1950s as well.

Situated on 40 acres of land, the museum depicts a village street that is indicative of Mennonite villages throughout southern Manitoba in those early days. Special events throughout the year such as Spring on the Farm, Fall on the Farm, and Pioneer Days bring to life what times were like for those early Mennonite settlers.

The museum exists to preserve for future generations the story of what life was like for those early Manitoba settlers. It shows, in the most real way, the challenges, the struggles, the aspirations and the successes of these people of faith who laid the foundation for the modern and thriving communities we see today. The Mennonite Heritage Village is a place for all Manitobans, and all those who visit from other parts of Canada and from around the world can come and learn and experience a unique time in Manitoba history.

The 50th anniversary is a time to thank all those who have, over the years, had the vision and the dedication to make the Mennonite Heritage Village the Manitoba landmark it is today. This includes the many staff, donors and countless volunteers to the museum. On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, we invite all Manitobans, Canadians and the world to visit the Mennonite Heritage Village in 2014 as it celebrates 50 years and looks to the future even as it preserves the past.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Flin Flon Culture Days

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, this year the citizens of Flin Flon celebrated their fourth annual Culture Days. Residents from all around Flin Flon have enthusiastically embraced this arts and cultural celebration and their events are now nationally ranked among the top 10 Culture Days in Canada. This is no surprise since there's always such strong support for cultural events in northern Manitoba.

Held during the last weekend of September, Culture Days is the nationwide celebration of old and new traditions. It's about preserving culture and customs in Canadian communities, promoting new cultural events and organizations and raising awareness about arts and culture in local neighbourhoods.

This all started as a non-profit, grassroots campaign to make culture a part of people's everyday lives. This one weekend of free community events is meant to encourage Canadians to discover their

cultural spirit and passion during the whole year. The communities of Flin Flon and Bakers Narrows together hosted about 80 free, hands-on events to help residents explore their cultural heritage. These events celebrate every part of life in the North. The Flin Flon Arts Council, Culture Days organizer Crystal Kolt and so many local partners and volunteers are at the heart of the success of the our cultural days.

I had the opportunity to participate in what is slowly becoming the signature piece of Flin Flon's Culture Days: Dancing Down Main Street. Dancers of all ages come together in a half-hour long, choreographed dance down Flin Flon's Main Street. This event has been recognized nationally by Culture Days as one of the best.

Culture Days celebrates all forms of culture. It knits our community close together by showing us the value in every day of activity and gives local artists the opportunity to showcase their expertise. Whether it's learning how to build a teepee or how to tuft caribou hair, singing and dancing, or even panning for gold, Culture Days teach us the value of the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bruce and Ursula Taylor

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It is important to recognize and thank the people who have dedicated their time and energy to volunteering with many organizations in Manitoba. I hold a special place in my heart for those volunteers who devote themselves to community services in their latter years.

I would like to thank the dedicated team and volunteers in my 'constitu' who are retiring from their extraordinary services. This year my community has chosen to honour Bruce and Ursula Taylor of Swan River, outstanding volunteers, as they retire from more than 16 years in volunteering in the Swan Valley Food Bank.

Ursula started her extensive volunteering career in 1978 with numerous charities and joined the food bank back in 1997 as a co-ordinator. Ursula won the Premier's Volunteer Service Award in 2012 and also was a recipient of the Diamond Jubilee presentation. Her great work in the Swan Valley Food Bank has been truly recognized. Her husband, Bruce, started volunteering at the Swan Valley Food Bank with his wife, Ursula, who has already volunteered for more than 40 hours a week. He and Ursula both have

became full-time volunteers once they retired from Manitoba Hydro in 2005 and after 37 years in customer service.

Bruce has since become a pivotal member of the food bank. He is also responsible for the building maintenance, managing the inventory and organizing and distributions of food, the blankets and clothing to the less fortunate in the Swan Valley. Bruce will regularly head back to the food bank after he's left work for the day, to make up emergency hampers for people in desperate need.

In 2010, Bruce was instrumental in planning a much needed addition to the food bank. He spent his summer hours working side by side with other volunteers to plaster the walls, put up the roof and sand the floors of the food bank to the new addition. He and Ursula have made it a priority to deliver hampers to families who cannot do this for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, this is how Bruce summed up the reason for his extraordinary dedication: When I deliver a hamper to someone's home and see the appreciation in their eyes of the recipient, I know it does much more for me than it does for the person receiving the food. We will greatly miss Bruce and Ursula's work on behalf of the valuable people in our community, which is why our community is recognizing them as a Swan River outstanding volunteers. Their work has made a better life for thousands of people in our community and across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): On House business, I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on November 26th, 2013, at 6 p.m., to consider the following reports: (1) the Auditor General's Report, Annual Report to the Legislature, dated January 2013, regarding Chapter 4, Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Program; and (2) Auditor General's Report, Follow-Up of our December 2006 Report: Audit of the Child and Family Services Division Pre-Devolution Child in Care Processes and Practices.

The witnesses will be the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Family Services.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I'll try and make it a brief 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying when we adjourned the other day, that the NDP have made a lot of promises. They've made a lot of promises that they haven't kept, and Manitobans are questioning now—every time they do make a statement of any kind, they question whether it's true or it's not true.

* (14:40)

The—when we talked about the livestock, as I was talking about in—on Friday, over \$8 million was collected. Should've been close to \$10 million in the pot and, at this point—and it was collected in order to promote the slaughter facility in—slaughter facilities in the province of Manitoba, and many times we heard from the minister and also from some of his staff, that we're looking at all possibilities in the province. We are willing to invest, and they did make an announcement they were investing \$960,000 in a particular plant in Carman. And, to this date, as far as we know, that money still has not been disbursed, the plant is two thirds built and the money still hasn't gone out there. No other slaughter facility in the province has received any money from this particular organization and the information that we have is very clear, is that they are out of money. They have no money. They have a piece of property on Marion Street, but they have nothing to show for

the money that they collected on the backs of hard-working Manitoba ranchers and farmers.

So this is just one example of what we can expect from the ministers on that side, from the NDP government. They talk about agriculture being one of the main drivers. We listened to the minister today saying how much money that put into the economy, and yet he doesn't stand up and fight for the province—for the producers of the province of Manitoba. It's a shame. He should be ashamed of himself.

We look at some of the other things that they say they're working diligently at, and one of them is to look after the impoverished children in the province. And, across Canada, fewer children live in poverty in the last five years, but Manitoba 5,000 more children live in poverty than they did in 2005. Manitoba is tied with British Columbia for the highest child-poverty rate in Canada. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker, and what we find is that a good percentage of these children, a large percentage of these children, are Aboriginal. We hear that the—often coming from the other side of the House—that we're here for the poor people of province of Manitoba and, quite frankly, they're here, but they're living off the back of those that are impoverished.

The jobs and economy—we have a new department with a new minister for jobs and economy, and still she remains the same as the last minister, with zero respect for Manitobans. They're going to raise the PST one point, 14.3 per cent raise in the PST by breaking the law. She has no respect for Manitobans, no respect for the law of Manitoba and, quite frankly, we have no idea where that one point in the PST is really going to go. We've heard many, many stories—it's going to infrastructure and today we've heard now that there's a reannouncement of a reannouncement of a reannouncement that was already financed five years ago, and that's where this money is supposed to be going. It's clear that they're grabbing the money but they're not telling Manitobans where it's going to go. There's no indication of what core means; when they talk about core infrastructure, there's no definition of core whatsoever.

And, in raising that PST, Mr. Speaker, the NDP ignored the advice from their own Department of Finance, when it comes to respecting balanced budget legislation. These are the experts. These are the bureaucrats that know exactly what's going on. They know what the law is. They know that you

have to honour the law. They gave the best advice that they could possibly give to the individuals that they are working with and for, and they get ignored. So again there's no respect. There's no respect for Manitobans; there's no respect for the bureaucracy that's serving Manitoba; and there's no indication of where this money's going to go.

If they were talking about infrastructure, you would've thought, oh, would they've had perhaps meetings with the municipalities, with the businesses, with the labour leaders? They should've taken these steps before they implemented that 14 per cent tax hike. But, no, they know better. They know better when it's on their Cabinet table, rather than those on—that use that money on their own kitchen tables. Those are the people that make the real decisions in the province and they've had to cut back. But not this government; they'll just spend that money or say they're going to spend it on a reannouncement, reannouncement and reannouncement on a project that was already funded.

To date, only one third of the government's announcements and ribbon cuttings—and they've had over 160 of them this year so far since the increase of the PST has been announced—only one third of those ribbon cuttings has been on core infrastructure. If we can define core, one third has been on core infrastructure. The other two thirds aren't. Since early this past summer, Manitoba's had the highest inflation growth in Canada. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? That's because they've not been able to pay down the debt. That's because they're chasing people out of the province, businesses are leaving, unemployment is up. The spenDP continually tout lower utility costs as an advantage, and we agree. They would be an advantage; however, the tax regime that we have here in the province of Manitoba far outweighs any of the compensation that you could have from the lower utility rates.

The NDP lost 4,300 jobs in the last month, in the past month of October, 4,300 full-time positions, while Canada had a net gain of 214,000 jobs. That's not helping the economy. It's clear that the one point in the PST has had a detrimental effect, as well as the bad management, and they can tell—say all of the things that they want to say, but their track record for the last four years is a pretty good indication that the people in Manitoba aren't buying it. They're not believable, Mr. Speaker, and the economy, the economy that's driven by businesses, small-business owners, big businesses are not buying into it either and they're finding a place where they can make a

profit and provide employment—and profit's not a dirty word. It really isn't. Taxation, on the other hand, could be classified as a necessary evil if, in fact, it was used for what it was supposed to be meant to be used for. But, at the same time, it's not being used in this province the way it should be, and it's leading Manitoba into a dark, dark hole.

When we look at the Family Services and Labour, Manitoba was again ranked as the child poverty capital of Canada. That's something to be proud of. Let's just walk out there and just throw our hands up and praise that we are the child poverty of—poverty capital of Canada. Food bank usage, it's skyrocketing, and the root of the food bank usage is low income and poverty. Brand new data released this month shows that Manitoba has demonstrated the greatest percentage increase in food bank usage than any other province in Canada. It's up 48.8 per cent, or an addition of 19,765 assistances. The national average is 23.3 per cent during that same period. We should be proud of that. We should be proud of that record. Every NDP should be jumping up and saying, hey, we're getting there. We're cutting it down to—oh, we're only twice as bad now.

Under the Finance Department, let's just take a look at that. Under the NDP, Manitobans have had the largest and the broadest tax hikes in 25 years. But where's it going? We really don't know. In fact, the increase in the PST gave the NDP a 17 per cent raise over the next three years. But it's clear that the NDP cannot be trusted to keep their promises to spend the PST increase on infrastructure, and they've had many different definitions of infrastructure in the past week, and in the past summer they had many, many other uses for that PST. They actually have about 22 priorities right now, Mr. Speaker, and none of them are realistic.

We've been calling on the NDP to undergo a comprehensive review of all government departments to see where savings may be found. But, finally, the NDP are taking our advice. The tax increases affect Manitoba's low-income families the most. That's why the government should raise the basic personal exemption, and we've suggested that to them. We've sat on this side of the House and made some very, very good suggestions to how they could save some money, help the low-income, help the poverty-stricken people, keep the people out of the food banks, give them a hand up not a handout so that they can maintain a bit of dignity and become

very, very useful in the—in society and an active member in our workforce.

* (14:50)

The NDP has twice the budget today than it inherited in 1999, and it still can't balance it without taking out a second mortgage. This cripples the province for any type of growth into the future, Mr. Speaker. We've experienced the lowest interest rates in recent memory or even the long-term memory, as this is the lowest rates that we've ever seen, the highest transfer payments from the federal government, and still we can't manage our business in the province.

They talk quite a bit about the health-care system, and we've heard that they're working diligently to keep the front-line services there. They're not going to fire a hundred thousand nurses and 50,000 doctors and gosh knows what else that they're going to try and fire. The fact is they've closed 18 ERs in rural Manitoba that were open when they came into power.

Have you ever tried to access an emergency care in rural Manitoba? Nearly impossible. We listened to the member of the Interlake the other day talk about we have some of the best outfitted mobile hospitals. He was referring to the ambulances. We've gone to hallway medicine. We've gone right out to highway medicine. What he failed to say was that they can't man—they cannot man these ambulances or they're sitting at the a—sitting, waiting and wait time at the Health Sciences Centre or some other hospital and ending up being fined over a million dollars that we're paying in fines because they are not back out on the road.

Manitobans wait an average of seven weeks for an ultrasound, five weeks longer than what the NDP said they could or should. MRI wait-lists are even worse in Manitoba, waiting an average of 15 weeks, 17 at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, seven weeks longer than the NDP-promised eight weeks. Manitobans' current wait—currently wait for four weeks for a CT scan. The NDP promised two weeks.

Can we believe anything that they say? The median wait for a hip replacement currently is 19 weeks, while for a knee replacement it's 23 weeks. That's only after you finally find someone that will take a look at your knee. It takes probably in the neighbourhood—and I can look back in our family right now, someone who's waiting, and they haven't got into the waiting list yet but they've been doing

this now for four and a half, five months, and they haven't got to see the specialist yet. When it comes to wait times to between appointments with a specialist to actual treatment, it's 17.8 weeks. Canada's average is 9.6. We can't even hit the average, Mr. Speaker.

So, really, with just a few things in conclusion, with the few things that I have put on the record, Mr. Speaker, but one of the themes that is constant throughout the regime of this NDP is that they can't be trusted.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): There was a delayed reaction for the applause for the member there. I'm not sure. I think they were stunned that he was actually finished, and I think they were—and then—in then—and I'm a little surprised about that myself because when he started his remarks today, he said that he would be shorter and, of course, as usual, he over-promised and then under-delivered.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm, of course, proud to stand in support of the Throne Speech today. It reminds me that we remain among the most responsible governments in Canada. We remain among the most progressive governments in Canada, and we certainly, bar none, are the most courageous government in Canada.

It would be easy, Mr. Speaker, to go out and promise the moon to constituents across this province, to pretend that you can do everything and with a magic snap of your fingers deliver the funding to do so. We know that in the next election campaign the members opposite are going to go out and they're going to knock on—go from door to door. They're going to knock on doors as we hear them often doing, and they're going to promise this and they're going to promise that. And, just like the member before me, they're going to over-promise and then they're going to under-deliver and then they're deeply going to disappoint the people of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in my new position and I'm honoured to do so. It's a great privilege to stand as the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning, but I'm very mindful of those who came before me, and I want to spend just a few minutes talking about those remarkable folks.

For me, that immediate predecessor is the person who held the seat of Lord Roberts and who preceded me in becoming—when I became MLA for Fort

Garry-Riverview, and that's none other than Dr. Diane McGifford. She was a—the longest serving minister of Advanced Education in the country when she completed her term. She set the standard for post-secondary education in this province. She made it affordable and accessible for students while still ensuring quality in the classrooms of our post-secondary institutions. We expanded our college sector and we created the University College of the North during her time. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand on her shoulders today.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the member from Brandon East and also applaud him for the fantastic work that he did as minister of Education in the year—early years of our administration. The member from Brandon East, I believe, oversaw the amalgamations of school boards that helped us to not only save time, save money, but reinvest those resources back into the classrooms of schools across Manitoba. So I want to compliment him for that.

I want to compliment my colleague to my right, the member for Gimli and the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson). He did an extraordinary job, and, as a fellow historian, I'm so pleased that he brought history back into the classrooms of our schools. But he did more than that, Mr. school. He made sure that there was an emphasis on arts. And he made sure there was an emphasis on music. And he made sure that quality in our education was first and foremost. And he made sure, as a teacher himself, that our teachers understood that we stood shoulder to shoulder with them in bringing quality to the classrooms in schools across this province.

And then, of course, I want to acknowledge the fantastic work of my predecessor in Advanced Education, the honourable member from Southdale and now the Minister of Health (Ms. Selby), who left a solid foundation for me in the Advanced Education side of the department. She did a wonderful job of maintaining a tradition of Dr. McGifford before her, and she made sure that we had among the lowest tuition in both universities and colleges in Canada. She made sure that it was affordable for students to go to school. She made sure that there were new programs and new facilities across every educational campus in this province, to make sure that every student who came into our universities or our colleges were awarded the highest possible quality of education.

And then finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge, and maybe perhaps acknowledge most of all, my immediate predecessor in the Education portfolio, none other than the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). She was an outstanding leader in the field of education, it goes without saying. She delivered on a whole host of initiatives. She was a change agent both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. She was a champion for safe and inclusive schools. She was champion for the quality of education inside our classrooms by reducing the size of our classrooms from K—from kindergarten to grade 3. And, most of all, she created safe and inclusive classrooms for our students and was a champion for bringing human rights into every classroom in every school across this great province.

So, Mr. Speaker, yes, she will continue in that role, I'm pleased to say. She and I attended Collège Churchill this morning to kick off antibullying week. I was able to make an announcement to ensure that there would be lockdown drills now done twice a year in our schools to make sure that in the event of an emergency, our students, our staff, our administrators and schools were well prepared.

And then my honourable colleague, who's my legislative assistant for safe schools, though she's more my mentor than I'll—she'll ever be my assistant, I want to say that she also made an announcement on the Kids Help Phone number, which is an anonymous and confidential phone and online professional counselling service for youth that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and we're partnering with the help—Kids Help Phone folks to do that. Kids will be able to call, Mr. Speaker, with questions and concerns about issues such as sexuality, body image, dating and relationships, mental health, online safety and bullying, of course.

* (15:00)

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, then, when I was with the member for St. Vital today, I was thrilled to be at our side, making sure that all of our students, every kid in this province is—has a safe and inclusive education, so that when they want to go to school and they want to learn and they want to plan a future, that there's no harm done to them and, in fact, they live free of those kind of pressures and those kinds of concerns that make life miserable. I'm happy to stand with the member for St. Vital and I would take one of her than 20 of them every single day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I said that I was happy to stand in support of the Throne Speech, and I really—

when it comes in contrast to the folks across the House, I would say that it's pretty crystal clear to me that we're a party with a plan and they are the no-plan party—no plan whatsoever.

The truth of the matter is that Manitobans know exactly where this government stands, and Manitobans don't have a hot flying clue where that side of the Legislature stands on any issue, except empty promises, empty rhetoric and empty promises to the citizens of Manitoba.

We need to remember exactly what they did in office during the '90 years. The member—the Leader of the Opposition got up—this was a hoot—the other day, and he says mister—he asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—he says to him, well, is past behaviour the predictor of future behaviour? This, coming from the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), is, I think, to all of us a head shaker, high comedy and really quite beyond belief.

So, when we're just talking about education alone, let's talk about their record for just a minute. When the opposition leader was in the Filmon Cabinet—and he was the—in 1993-94, they cut education by 2 per cent. In 1994-1995, they cut education by 2 per cent—actually 2.6 per cent. I should've had my glasses on just to get the numbers. Yes, 1995-96, they were especially generous and they froze education funding. But then the grinch came back in 1996-97 and cut education by 2 per cent. And then, well, they really went out of their way with generosity in '97-98; it was frozen at zero per cent. That's quite a record of achievement, isn't it? It's something to be proud of.

So when the Leader of the Opposition, the member of Fort Whyte, gets up and says, is past behaviour a predictor of future behaviour, well, I guess in his case it's absolute—the answer to that is absolutely yes. They're going to go out and cut education. And when they do that—when they cut education funding, then they lay off teachers. And then they lay off teachers. And when they lay off teachers, class sizes grow bigger. And so they're involved in this endless paradox of making sure that the quality of education declines, instead of improving.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've made it our business since 1999, in the 14 years since we've been elected, in the four years that we've been democratically elected to govern this House in this province, by the way, we've made sure that quality comes first, every single time.

So what's an enterprising Education Minister to do, Mr. Speaker? He comes in and he says, well, you know, I want to build more schools, and the immediate reaction from staff is, we're already building new schools. And he says, okay, well, we've done that. Maybe we should make—hire more teachers, and they say to him, well, new—we already are hiring more teachers. And so he says, well, maybe we should make class sizes smaller for younger students from K to 3, and the answer is, we're already doing that.

And so the enterprising new Cabinet minister comes along and he says, you know, I think we ought to build more gyms—we ought to build more gyms—active living, healthy living, making sure that our kids have an active education. And the answer comes back, just like the other ones are: we're already doing it. And so you say, well, maybe we need to concentrate on the sciences. Maybe we should be building more science labs at schools. That's what the new Education Minister says to this staff, and you know what they said? They said, well, we're already building new science labs. So there's another one.

So let me just get this straight: building more schools, building new schools and expanding schools, hiring more teachers, decreasing the size of classes from K to 3, building new gyms, building new science labs; you have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, if there's anything left to do after 14 years, and, thankfully, I'm pleased to say that there is more to do. Much accomplished, as we on this side of the House like to say, but still more to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that in making these particular improvements in schools, we also improved outcomes as well, and I'm pleased to note that graduation rates for June 2012 was 84.1 per cent, which was up 13 per cent from 71.1 per cent graduation rate in 2002. In a decade we raised it more than 13 per cent. But we've done a lot in that area. We intend to do more and we particularly intend to do more on Aboriginal education in particular.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our antibullying legislation protects all Manitoba students, and the member from Steinbach got up today and he talked about drugs in school, and that's a concern. I have three kids. I wanted to make sure that schools were safe from drugs. I wanted to make sure that they were in a safe and inclusive environment. I think we—most of us probably do either have had kids in the system or

they finished the system, or we have nephews and nieces, grandkids, whomever in our school system, and we want to be sure we have safe and inclusive schools for them. That's why we passed the antibullying legislation to begin with and we said yes to gay-straight alliances, and yet on the other side of the House they said no. They said no to young, vulnerable students who needed their protection, and when the time came to stand up for those students in particularly vulnerable positions, where was the menace—member from Steinbach? He wasn't there. He voted against it. He was there, but voted against it—just to be accurate. Where was the member from Tuxedo? Where was she? In that particular—in her particular riding in particular, and you say where were you when you had to stand up for gay, lesbian kids, transgender kids, make sure there are gay-straight alliances or a variation thereof in schools in Tuxedo, where was she? She voted against it.

And so you have to ask yourself what is the thinking on that side of the Legislature? What is it that they think they're going to do to enhance the safety and inclusiveness of schools and at the same time vote against Bill 18, the most progressive antibullying legislation in the country, bar none.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another of the things that we've done in the past is that we passed legislation to keep kids in school until they're 18, and I can't emphasize how important this particular commitment is. And I was at—out last week and I had a chance to speak to a group of educators and I had to concede that I wasn't really all that great of a high school student. Actually, I was pretty poor and I admit that openly. I've admitted it to my own kids so that they would understand that, in fact, I was no genius from the ages of 13 to 18, anything but. And—but I came from a family where education was at a premium. My dad was the first to be educated, to receive a university degree in his family, and he made sure that all five kids in his family did get a university degree. So I was in no danger of dropping out by the time I was 18. Not every kid, frankly, comes from that kind of background, that has that kind of support and that kind of tradition for staying in school until they're 18.

And so what we're saying to kids, Mr. Speaker, is we really want them to stay in school. We want to work with them and we want to work with their parents to make sure that they stay in school, they embrace the love of learning that all of us certainly on this side of the House feel and that they make sure

that they put themselves in a position to be able to have a happy, friendly, productive, successful family and career going forward, and so I am very pleased by that commitment as well.

* (15:10)

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech offers up any number of great commitments by this government going forward, and all they do is they build on a really strong foundation, and I spent quite a bit of time today talking about that strong foundation that we have in education. But let me just say—talk about a few of the things—we talk on this side of the House about being focused on jobs and the economy, on a skills agenda, and at the core of that agenda is education. And that's why we're focusing on a variety of new improvements to our schools, both in the K-to-12 system and in the post-secondary system—education system, to make sure that we have quality in our classrooms and that we have the tools, resources and the infrastructure to make sure that we take advantage of the quality of those classrooms.

So take, for example, the proposed new Skilled Trades and Technology Centre at Red River College, Mr. Speaker. It combines education, the skills agenda, professional training—all leading to a good job, a good career and a healthy family. That's the continuum of education that we're interested in. That's the commitment that we've made and that's exactly what we're going to proceed on going forward. Now, the new centre at Red River will accommodate close to 1,000 new students every year. It will offer training and high-demand trades such as carpentry and electrical as well as heating, ventilation and conditioning, and we're going to launch this program in the next little while with a view to getting the centres—the centre built and then getting students trained so that we can make sure that we live up to our commitment to create 75,000 new jobs for all—for—in the province of Manitoba going forward.

We're also making improvements at the University of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, especially with the redevelopment of Taché Hall. I was pleased to see in the Throne Speech the announcement that this year the University of Winnipeg will be building a new rental housing development, providing more good quality options for students and families in the heart of downtown. We're not only educating kids downtown but we're giving them a place to live and work as well. That's a huge improvement, and

I want to thank the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross) in spearheading that particular initiative in her former capacity as the minister of Housing and Community Development.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, we're working on the K-to-12 side and we're making sure that we improve the quality of education because, at the end of the day, schools are the foundation of our success. Education is the foundation of personal success and quality education is what makes for personal success, and I'm pleased that we're involved in all three of those elements.

Last year, under the—my predecessor, the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), the former minister of Education, we took a look at the math curriculum. We knew it needed some improvement. We worked with educational partners from the U of M and the school boards and with teachers, and we went along to improving the math curriculum in our school system, all designed to make sure that our students are equipped with the latest knowledge, the latest information and the latest pedagogy for learning.

This year, we'll be doing the same thing for the language arts curriculum for all K-to-12 students. The new curriculum will improve students' foundational literacy skills along with the ability to think critically and communicate effectively, and we'll be doing, Mr. Speaker—and I think this is an underrated part of it—we'll be doing the same in French as a first language on the Franco-Manitoban side of the equation, and I'm very pleased that both French and English, the badge of Canadian citizenship in 21st century and the badge of Manitoban citizenship in 21st century, will be taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we're focused on jobs and the economy, on a skills agenda and on education. We intend to move forward with that agenda whether the opposition is for it or against it. I got a feeling that they're going to be against it. They've made it crystal clear that they want to take us back to the discredited politics of the 1990s—worse, it could be the 1890s—but the discredited politics of the 1990s. In the last election, as I've said before, our motto was: Forward, Not Back. The opposition continually has as a motto: Back, Not Forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be the new Minister of Education and Advanced Learning for the Province of Manitoba. I'm proud to stand on the shoulders of those who preceded me in this particular area. I'm

proud to stand with my colleagues and to fight the good fight on behalf of every Manitoban and to make sure that when we go out each day, we go out to serve the citizens of Manitoba first and foremost, and to make sure that our kids have a productive, successful and happy future.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker. I support the Throne Speech without hesitation.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, good afternoon, and it's my pleasure to rise and put some comments on the record with respect to the Throne Speech which was read just last week, and I thank my colleagues for their warm applause. It's good to be back in the Legislature, and it is always good to be here again. We have a great privilege when it comes to being able to be in this position to represent our constituencies in this place, to allow their voices to be heard, to allow their concerns to come forward.

I have the pleasure of representing the beautiful constituency of Morden-Winkler, and I continue to believe that I just have the best constituency to represent, people who work hard, people who are very family-oriented, people who strive to make a difference in their communities and to lift each other up, people who work hard behind the scenes not calling attention to themselves, but working hard in any case to make their communities better places to live and to work and to raise a family.

And, Mr. Speaker, I welcome you back as well to this place. It seems that we were only here just so recently.

I also want to thank my family, my wife, Shelley, and my three children, because we understand—for any of us who are in this place and serving in this way it takes infrastructure support back home to be able to do this and our families do pay a price for the time that we spend away. And I want to share with my colleagues this afternoon part of that being away means that we miss some very important events, and I got a message just two hours ago, Mr. Speaker, that my 16-year-old had just passed her driver's test. So I know that that's a big issue. I know I've heard members across the way refer to this same thing when new drivers come into the family. I know that Madeleine was very, very excited to give me the news this afternoon she had passed. She was a little uncertain as to what the outcome would be, although we never doubted her, and so now I will live with some low-level trepidation as to the security of my vehicles in my

garage. But in any case—and you know, and the fact that we're paying more in MPI rates to license vehicles also causes me some concern, as I know it causes concerns to other Manitobans, but, in any case, I do congratulate my daughter on passing her test and that's a very exciting event in the life of a teenager.

I want to also welcome back the table officers who work so hard in the Chamber for us, as well as the Chamber staff and our pages, and welcome these new pages to the Legislature as well as the legislative staff that works in this building but outside of this Chamber, outside of our view, but not outside of our recognition. And we realize that many people when we are in session here are working equally hard to make all of these things go and move ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we have in this Chamber, in this fall, a government that has clearly lost credibility and is trying desperately to change the channel. They are trying to get on a new message track, and that really was in essence what the Throne Speech was about last week. It was about trying to change the channel, trying to get off this track that we have been on since the government introduced a PST hike to 8 per cent and then incurred the wrath of Manitobans in a six-month, record-long session of the Manitoba Legislature where voters and constituencies were contacting their MLAs. They were writing letters. They were emailing them. They were phoning them. They were coming to community events. They were coming to their constituency offices. They were showing up at rallies and they were sending a strong message that this was not the mandate that they had given to this NDP government. As a matter of fact, it was Gary Doer who used to say in this place that voters didn't elect him in order to raise taxes on them. It's too bad that Mr. Doer could not have left that sticky note behind, a memo to the incoming Premier (Mr. Selinger). Somehow that message got missed in the taking of the new duties by the Premier, and that's too bad. It's too bad for all Manitobans because we're all left holding the bag for a higher PST and the implications of a higher PST in this province when every other province and jurisdiction around us seems to be going in a different direction.

* (15:20)

We don't see Saskatchewan raising their PST. We don't have Alberta raising their PST. North Dakota is not raising its state tax. Minnesota is not raising its state tax. We are caught offside by a

government who chooses to raise a PST. As I said, it has implications for every Manitoba household, for every Manitoba wage earner, for every Manitoba senior, for every Manitoba business and every Manitoba industry trying hard to do business here in the province. And I welcome the opportunity to put a few words on the record this afternoon with response to this.

And it's interesting, in all of this attempt—this desperate attempt to change the channel, that this government has taken a new interest in the area of infrastructure, that suddenly they have woken up and smelled the coffee and now they want to focus on infrastructure and, Mr. Speaker, we understand Manitobans see through this strategy. They understand that this government couldn't be trusted to not raise taxes, and so this same government can now not be trusted when they stand up and proclaim with a loud voice that now it's all about infrastructure all the time. And it simply isn't true.

So we heard the Throne Speech last week and it takes me back, actually, to my high school days. I had an English class with a teacher named Ms. Guenther and she made us study Shakespeare, and I learned to love Shakespeare. And we studied a play, one of Shakespeare's comedies, called *Much Ado About Nothing*. And for those of you who know this, it's a joyful Shakespearian comedy that ends with multiple marriages and no deaths, unlike many other Shakespearian plays. But, in this case, this Throne Speech may actually be a play that ends in the demise of an NDP government that has expressed that it is long past its best-before date, and just like the play *Much Ado About Nothing* is light and fluffy but doesn't have a lot of content. Well, that was the same case with the Throne Speech, where what they lacked in quality, they more than made up for in quantity. And at times I actually felt sorry for the Lieutenant Governor, who is charged with delivering this onerous task of speaking for so long and being able to communicate so little in essence to the Manitobans who were actually waiting to hear something of substance in that speech.

Now, there was no absence of terms like focusing on this and focusing on that. As a matter of fact, I think the government might have indicated in excess of 20 priority areas in which they were prepared to focus at this time. And, of course, that's—I mean, that's a cause for concern because, as our leader clearly pointed out last week, anybody who's focusing on 21 things is not going to be able to

accomplish anything meaningful, anything of significance. I remember playing in one of those football leagues in university where you just kind of do this pickup football game, and the quarterback—I wasn't a good receiver, but he kept saying you have to focus from the time I release the ball. And I was focused on everything around me and who was playing around me and chatting, and I never caught the ball, and he kept saying you have to focus, from the time the ball is released.

And I thought the same thing as I listened to this government. There's no ability for them to demonstrate that they will be able to focus on all of these things. What was needed was for this government to actually get on a new track, for this government to actually begin to operate with transparency, to actually begin to measure expenditures, to be able to weigh projects by the virtue of their merit, to adjudicate projects according to criteria and not swing-riding criteria. And yet we didn't see any indication. As a matter of fact, we've said it before and we'll say it again this afternoon, that past performance is the best indicator of future performance, and in the case of this government, this is a government that has been dishonest with Manitobans and there is every indication that they will continue to lack honesty and forthrightness as they go forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to me, as a newer MLA in this Chamber, I know that a number of my colleagues and I came into this place in the fall of 2011 in a much shorter fall session, I should mention. I think that one might have only been about 10 or 11 days, but I remember at that time being struck by the fact that a government could run in excess of a \$500-million deficit and then fail to even achieve that target. In other words, set the bar low and then somehow try to get underneath it, fail to clear the hurdle of an exceedingly low and increasingly low target.

And yet what happened just now, just a few weeks ago? The Minister of Finance stands up and he delivers a message to Manitobans. And what does he say? Well, he says, well, listen, you guys. I just wanted to let you know that I told you the deficit would be \$504 million this year. And the third quarter results come in—and you could imagine this would not have been a comfortable conversation for the Finance Minister to have in his closed office with his many staff and his ADMs and his deputy minister, and all his political staff. He's saying, really? I have to go out here and say this now? I can't

imagine—I would love to have been in the room for that briefing that they did with the minister. And he came out of there sheepish and indicated, we missed it by that much. It was not \$504 million. In actuality, it was \$689 million, third-quarter projection of deficit.

And, Mr. Speaker, keep in mind this is a government that now has record sources of revenue, a government that raised the RST—or expanded the RST to generate, I believe we used the—were using the figure of \$128 million first go round. And then with the PST hike the next year round, another \$277 million of revenue, generating in excess of \$400 million per year, receiving the highest transfers in the history of Manitoba from the federal government. And with all of that at its disposal, it misses its own deficit projection by \$125 million roughly—a huge, huge miss. It's this kind of setting the bar low and still struggling to get over and not being able to get over that causes Manitobans to lose confidence in this government, and I assure these members on the opposite side that Manitobans, in increasing numbers, are losing confidence.

And the arrogance of this government is demonstrated when they stand up repeatedly and indicate that the high deficits won't be dealt with, they won't be addressed, and instead we see bills that contain a get-out-of-jail-free clauses for ministers, bills like the new interchangeability formulary, Bill 45, and the bill for the Jockey Club of Manitoba that includes provisions that no legal action could be launched and that the minister could not be held accountable for any reason. That's arrogance, Mr. Speaker. And the message that Manitobans are delivering in increasing numbers is that we simply do not believe you anymore. You cannot be trusted any longer.

You know, for all the words of this Throne Speech—and there were many—the words that were missed were words like debt and deficit. Those terms were not present anywhere in this Throne Speech, and I thought it so interesting. Even going back a year, I remember when the Finance Minister then got up and—about a year ago, it could have been two years ago—and in the Throne Speech, instead of saying in certain and concrete terms when this government would finally move to address the structural deficit and move it to zero, then the Finance Minister instead said that this NDP government was increasingly closing the gap between expenditures and revenues—was increasingly closing the gap between expenditures and revenues.

And if that isn't a lack of clear language, I don't know what is. No indication of when the deficit could be reduced or eliminated, instead that they were moving in the direction of closing the gap. I mean, that would be like a convicted murderer who is then picked up again for a suspected murder and says, you know, I'm increasingly closing the gap between murders and non-murders. Well, I mean either you did or you didn't, and I think it's very, very strange when the government lacks clarity in their language.

* (15:30)

And in any case, Mr. Speaker, I had to take issue with something that the previous speaker just said, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). He stood up and in his opening comments he said there's no government in Canada that is as courageous as the government of Manitoba—no government—and I will note now as I noted just after he spoke it, that as he said it there was such a lacklustre response from his colleagues who looked up and looked perplexed and looked completely out of it and said, do we really have to clap when he calls this government courageous? This government, who went to every door and said they wouldn't raise taxes and then did, and then raised—expanded the RST. This government that didn't have the respect to approach municipalities and tell them about mandatory municipal amalgamations, this government that had a record number of speakers come to committee on Bill 20 and Bill 18 and talk about how those bills could be substantially and substantively improved for the real benefit of Manitobans, for Manitobans when it came to finance, for Manitobans when it came to creating schools that were really safe places, and they discarded it—every single suggestion to improve those bills. Not one of those suggestions was acted on, a government that acts in arrogance. This government that continues to run deficits in excess of \$500 million and then missed their own spending projections by hundreds of millions of dollars, this is not a government that exudes the character quality of courage, but instead it is obvious that it is one that is weak, that is tired, that is out of ideas and that exhibits cowardice.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the PST increase, we know what a bill of goods Manitobans were sold. We were all here in this Chamber. We all saw. It was only last spring when this Finance Minister stood up and he says it's going to be a PST increase. Oh, and we know it's going to be hard, but it's for a reason and it's for flood mitigation, and, you know, it wasn't

more than a few days after and we were able to show that this same government had never made a priority of flood mitigation. As a matter of fact, in this province for all the money that this government has collected and spent in 13 budgets, less than 0.5 of 1 per cent was spent on flood mitigation, and so when they stood up and claimed it was about that—it's funny because if they had the courage of their convictions they would never have changed their message track. If they had really believed that they wouldn't have gone back into the back rooms, closed the doors, barricaded themselves inside with half of them holding the doors shut and emerge with a new message: it wasn't about flood mitigation, it's about infrastructure.

And there we sat for a few more days in the Chamber while they tried to make the case: it's about infrastructure. And we showed, the opposition party showed how it couldn't be about infrastructure and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition has shown again and again this week how even though so many areas of government operation and department by department this government overspends its budgets, yet that is not the case when it comes to infrastructure.

This is a government that has underspent its allocation when it comes to infrastructure, last year alone, \$1.7 billion allocated for infrastructure spending and \$500 million in expenditures left on the table. My colleagues and I could sit down this afternoon and we could make a short list of projects that could have actually gone to in the province of Manitoba, and this government that says it's all about infrastructure all the time under-spends, under-delivers. They over-promise and they under-deliver.

As a matter of fact, to go back to something else that the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) said, I would say about the only place that this government under-promises and over-delivers is in the area of deficit projections, because there they tend to under-promise and then, much to the chagrin of Manitobans, oops, it's going to be higher than we thought. It's going to be \$689 million, not the 504 that we initially projected. But, oh well, times are tough, life is hard. That is the message that the government can use to say oh, it was a difficult decision to raise the PST. That is one small point of agreement that we can have as parties. Yes, it is difficult. But the fact of the matter is it is not difficult for these ministers and their ministerial allocation and their car and their staff and their benefits; it is difficult for the Manitobans who are made to live

with the implications of an environment that sees an 8 per cent tax hike.

And this former minister of Housing should know that there are so many Manitobans who live in situations where they require quality housing, who might be job insecure or housing insecure, and for that government to imply that somehow this kind of tax hike doesn't paint a target squarely on the back of those kind of Manitobans—paints a target on the backs of those Manitobans who are increasingly seeking the services of food banks—as a matter of fact, in the province of Manitoba, almost half of the users of food banks are now children. For this government to somehow try to squirm and weasel out of a recognition that they take this and put it squarely on the backs of these Manitobans is shameful—is shameful. For a government who purports to help the poor, who purports to give a leg up to the disenfranchised, how much better evidence could there possibly be that they are going wholesale in the other direction?

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was really interesting what the government didn't talk about: for all the words in the Throne Speech, no indication of debt or deficit. And oftentimes, when there's a long, long speech, you start to transcend the words of the speech and you think about what's not being said. And so we have, after 13, 14 years, a government who says they're focused on what matters most, and yet they don't focus on the deficit and the debt of the province of Manitoba. What—are they holding that back for another time? I cannot imagine that. And I would challenge these ministers and these members on the other side to go back and find the throne speeches of other provinces in Canada and find those other throne speeches and begin to do a word search and see if you locate another Throne Speech that doesn't mention deficit and debt. Because it seems that every other jurisdiction is focused on that because they understand—they connect the dots—they understand that the very social services that we need—the very social services that we need to be strong and acting in the best efforts and interests of Manitobans are threatened by any government who will not match revenues to expenditures year after year after year.

And wasn't it interesting that on the very same day that this government get—got up and delivered a Throne Speech that was absent any mention of deficit and debt, the Finance Minister for Canada gets up and delivers a speech and says, we must understand that it is of critical importance to all

Canadians to drive down deficit. He actually articulates a plan to get to zero.

And you know what Manitobans were left with at the end of the day? They could see the media report. They saw the Throne Speech. They lined it up against the other speech and they said, how is it that we could not be talking about deficit and debt?

And here's where the great disconnect comes in. Every Manitoban understands that in their own personal finances they are obliged to match their expenditures to their revenues. They have to do it, because if you don't do it, the bank comes calling, you reach the end of your line of credit, the bank calls your loan, you don't get the kind of loan advantage you need to build your business or to meet your bills and there are consequences.

And what does this government do when it increasingly comes to the end of its fiscal rope? It just increases taxes. So the next time that that member—Fort Garry-Riverview—wants to claim that his government is courageous, he should remember that courage would have been matching revenues to expenditures like everyone else does, not taking the easy way out, the opportunistic route and saying, oh, I know an easy place to find some money. Let's just raise the tax on Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I have to say, representing the constituency of Morden-Winkler, there were other things that were absent in this Throne Speech. And I have to say that one of the things that was absent is basically almost any mention of life south of the Trans-Canada Highway in this province. We saw such a neglect in the words of the Throne Speech for—or even—*[interjection]* Yes, for sure, or even east of the 59 Highway, we could say. We have communities across this province who are firing on all cylinders, where the population growth, according to Stats Canada, exceeds 20 per cent on the last five years. We have areas where industry and business are contributing to the finances of this province.

* (15:40)

As a matter of fact, I've been going and seeing the personal success—the personal success—of business and industry in communities like Morden and Winkler and the RM of Stanley, and I can tell you, and I would be happy to say in this place, that those businesses and industries who are thriving and who are doing well and who are expanding, do not—when they're discussing the issues with me—put the

reason for their success as this government's PST increase.

They talk about working hard and getting ahead because of their labour force, because of their ability to take on risk and manage it, their ability to articulate new areas of expansion and to move with innovation into them. And they do so in an environment which is increasingly difficult, that is plagued with red tape, where they can't get the approvals even though they're trying to work with those areas who are there and doing enforcement.

They're trying to broker better conversations with regulations to say we want to comply, help us to comply, enter into the conversation with us, let us know what it means to comply with this so we can do business. And too often we hear about approvals that just don't come, or changing guidelines or changing criteria, and that's not the kind of thing that helps business proceed.

But, Mr. Speaker, getting back to my point, I wanted to say this: absent from the Throne Speech was any significant mention of my constituency. And I know constituencies of many other of my colleagues—my colleague from La Verendrye, my colleague from Lac du Bonnet, my colleague from Brandon, my colleague from Portage la Prairie, colleague from Midland—these are areas of the province that are doing very well but neglected to a great degree by this government.

Absent from the Throne Speech was any mention of the fact that in my own constituency, Morden, Winkler and Stanley are about to host the Power Smart Manitoba Winter Games this next spring. Why would the government not mention the fact? That's a big deal. We're about to welcome thousands of athletes, my communities are about to put up thousands of volunteers who are going to make these the best games ever, and yet they neglect to actually mention the fact.

Absent from the Throne Speech is any indication of the kinds of successes that are going on at Boundary Trails Health Centre, led by local doctors. They're quick to take credit for things like the CancerCare hubs and yet they're very slow to acknowledge that the program started in Morden and Winkler by doctors like Cornie Woelk, doctors like Bob Menzies, people who identified the need for cancer-care services, who won innovation awards and worked and worked with that minister until they could finally get the attention, and now they're all too

happy to try to duplicate the model and yet they're slow to give credit where credit is due.

And, Mr. Speaker, we understand this is a government that is bottom of the barrel, they are poverty capital of Canada for two straight years, their inflation rate is twice the national average. I already indicated food bank usage is up. And I'm happy to hear them chirping along the way because I think that's tacit agreement that I hear when I'm talking about the lack performance in their record. I'm almost sure that's what I'm hearing in the background.

And, you know, the labour force statistics—I know that my colleagues across the way get the same labour force statistics that we get here, and I did the math on that. And, you know, indeed, there it is, right at the top of the page, it says clearly 4,300 jobs lost in this province, October—from September to October. That's the kind of results.

And every time that they talk about results, I hope that those kind of numbers resonate in their ears because that's what you get when you ill-advisably raise a PST; you get more cross-border shopping, you get more online shopping, you get more large purchases being made in Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Minnesota. You get that kind of environment, and this government is going to be saying, oops, how come those projections of income with the PST never materialized? They are driving revenue out of the province, not into it. They find themselves at loggerheads with every other jurisdiction in the area; they increasingly find themselves offside.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech was an opportunity to show new direction. It was an opportunity to show vision. It was an opportunity to show transparency and honesty and forthrightness. And it was a missed opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I must support the motion introduced by the Leader of the Opposition, that because of the PST increase, because of the disrespect exhibited to Manitobans, because of the high food bank usage and because of the fact that this government has lost the confidence of Manitobans, it cannot be taken at its word, it cannot be trusted, and that's why I must support this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member opposite speak, I'm surprised he's not supporting the

Throne Speech, because as he spoke, he referred to all the investments that we have made. In the 15 years that we've been government, those investments include: investments in Boundary Trails Health Centre, investments in the infrastructure of the roads that go through his fine community, investments in new schools.

It's happening. The immigration policies that are happening, that is also impacting what's happening in his community, that he was crowing about—all of the success. He does need to acknowledge that that investment happened without his supports. Those investments happened because this government included in its budget, and in its Throne Speech, a vision for all Manitobans that included Morden-Winkler. What did he do? He voted against it. What does he do? He criticizes us.

So, we will continue to work across Manitoba with everyone and address the issues on what matters most to families. What you heard in the Throne Speech was a plan, a plan to support Manitobans, everyday Manitobans. What we're looking at is ensuring that we have a steady economy as well as good jobs for families.

I listened intently to the member opposite as he talked about poverty in our communities, and we acknowledge that there is poverty. But he—we need to get some facts. There has been some improvements that have happened, but we're not satisfied. We have a lot more work to do. But this Throne Speech lays out that plan, that we are going allow us to address the issues of poverty. We're going to ensure that with our plan we will achieve the goal of making life better for all Manitobans.

I want to take this opportunity and thank the good people of Fort Richmond for allowing me to represent them. Fort Richmond is an extremely diverse community; we welcome many newcomers to our community who have chosen to settle there. This government has made a number of investments. We've made investments at Saint-Avila school, with their water stewardship program. We've made investments at Fort Richmond Collegiate with our—the development of the new science lab, as well as the new gymnasium. Those investments are going to make a difference.

The one investment that you can see throughout the city of Winnipeg is the brand new stadium. That investment is in the heart of Fort Richmond, at the University of Manitoba, where the Blue Bombers have played—

An Honourable Member: Sometimes.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I think not to the level that we thought they would in the brand new, beautiful, shiny new stadium, but we have hope. And there is a lot of opportunity for them to improve—

An Honourable Member: They can.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: And they will.

But we also have opened up that stadium to the amateur sports, as well as to the university, and that is exciting for young youth football players to play in that magnificent stadium. It gives them hope and provides them with an opportunity to dream one day of playing for their very own Winnipeg Blue Bombers, which that will be very helpful to all of us when they are there.

But, as we go across the province, we can look at the investments and the commitments that we've made. We have not gone across this province and said that we were going to cut \$500 million from the budget, and then not explain what we were going to do. What we told Manitobans is, we are going to make a very difficult decision, and with that very difficult decision, we are going to invest in the province of Manitoba. And with that investment, it will improve schools, hospitals, roads within our province, as well as flood protection.

And as we continue to do that, we're going to create more jobs and opportunities for all Manitobans. But in order to provide more jobs and opportunities for Manitobans, we really have to look at ensuring that we're providing a good start for the youngest Manitobans, and that's by investing in early learning and in our child-care strategy.

* (15:50)

And so there are two consultations that are happening throughout the province right now. One is by the member from St. James. She is going around and she is speaking to child-care providers, as well as parents, and hearing their stories as well as educators within the universities and the post-secondary facilities and hearing their stories about what do we need to do to better support child-care centres across the province. As that is happening, the Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities is having his own consultations called early-starting early and starting strong, and that's essential. As we bring those two consultations together, that will help us build on what already is a

very successful child-care and early childhood development strategy that we have.

And over the years we have supported expanding affordable child care and that makes sure that that supports our steady economy. That makes sure that there is good quality child care provided for the children. We've ensured that it's the lowest child-care fees outside of Winnipeg. We are opening a thousand spaces this year, and when we have—and since we have achieved our goal of 6,500 new spaces, now we plan to add another 2,000. We've also committed to enhancing a thousand new nursery school spaces and that has exceeded our target.

I have to tell you that as of this year we are funding 28,000 child-care spaces province-wide. That is more than 12,000 since 1999. We also launched the first of its kind—the child-care registry—in 2011, and that has also helped to assist the placement of over 6,400 children within our province. This registry is acting as a tool for many families across the province, but we haven't stopped there. We are also supporting the workforce of early childhood educators. Wages for front-line child-care workers have increased by 54 per cent since 1999. We've added—we've invested \$2 million to add 70 training spaces. This now brings the total number of early childhood educators trained each year to 135.

You also heard in the Throne Speech last week that we've also made investments to expand the early childhood educators program, that it will focus on francophone and rural members. This will yet again help support our workforce, creating good quality jobs, ensuring that there's good quality child care available to individuals.

I have sat here for, well, a number of months, and have heard the members opposite talk about poverty and their interest in poverty, and it's a new interest. I don't think they would—that they would dispute that at all because when they were in government what they did to help support poverty: zero. They made it worse. They clawed back the National Child Benefit. They didn't increase minimum wage. They reduced employment and income assistance by \$150 a year. They didn't make those investments in education.

But what I can tell you is that with this plan that we have outlined and the vision in the Throne Speech of 75,000 jobs by 2020, that is the best way out of poverty. Supporting families, encouraging them, giving them opportunities, acknowledging that

some individuals have barriers and working with them to overcome those barriers and challenge them to find that employment that will best meet their needs and support themselves and their families, that's what we need to do and what we have heard in this Throne Speech is exactly that.

We've talked about how do we best support individuals. You've often heard me speak about BUILD, and BUILD is, again, mentioned in the Throne Speech. There's a partnership between the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and BUILD where they are going into First Nations communities, training individuals and providing them support, and with that they will be addressing and improving the heating systems within the homes there. They're looking at the development of geothermal. That is a difference for them as individuals and for their community, but also ensures that they are providing some economic development within their communities, and that's to be celebrated.

As we move forward and as we have the conversations about what do we need to do to better support families, I have confidence on this side of the House that we have a plan. And that plan is supported by a number of community agencies and businesses and, as we move forward, we're going to work with them to ensure that we are providing those opportunities.

We—you've heard that there is a commitment, and we are just finalizing our commitment of building 1,500 more affordable housing units within Manitoba, as well as increasing the 1,500 rent geared to income. There was an additional commitment in the last budget that we talked about 500 more social housing units and 500 more affordable housing units, ensuring that families have a roof over their head. A stable and strong community is part of that puzzle and part of the success of helping to support individuals.

We also know that restoring and enhancing benefits will make a difference as well. So that's why we restored the National Child Benefit. That's why we have developed the Opti-Care Program for individuals. That's why we have ensured that as individuals transition from social assistance to employment, that they will have some of those initiatives or some of those benefits transferring with them so they can continue to support their families and they can have that step up as they move forward. I must tell you that within our Rewarding Work strategy, which is exactly that—helping individuals

transition from social assistance to employment—that I am proud to say, since 2007, 10,000 Manitobans have entered the workforce. Now, that is an accomplishment not only for the individuals that have made—taken that risk—and that's what it is for some of the families, it's a risk. And, as they move forward, they are supporting our communities, they are better supporting their families and they are having opportunity and hope. And, as we move forward, that will be really important.

We are making a lot of investments in training and education, and those investments exactly help build the foundation for individuals to find employment. And some of those initiatives include our essential skills, and the first group of people that we are working with are the single parents. Single parents are coming out in droves and listening to the strategy. They're motivated. They're interested. They are committed. They want to provide for themselves. They want to see what opportunities are made available to them. And as we move—as we go forward, those opportunities are going to provide them with training, with employment and will also ensure that as they go on that journey, that we're providing them with necessary child care to make that difference.

As I said earlier, that we are focusing on ensuring that there are 75,000 more Manitobans working by 2020. And when we are working with those individuals, we're not telling them where they should be working. We're helping them, through our essential skills, identify what are their interests, what are their skills and what are their abilities. But, before we get there, we have to make sure that we're addressing the graduation rates for Aboriginal Manitobans, and that will happen by our commitment to a new school in Frontier. That will help—that will also be supported by our commitment to have more Aboriginal teachers in the school system. That will make a difference. All of this has to work in conjunction with our partnerships. So, as we move forward, we are going to have to continue to look at what partnerships are going to be effective.

I need to put another fact on the record, that the latest statistic shows that there are one third less Aboriginal people off reserve living in poverty than what there was the previous year. That is no—that's not a number to celebrate; that does suggest that we are going the right way. We have a lot more work to do. But I am very confident with our strong employment strategy and having a steady economy, ensuring that we are providing those building blocks

that that's going to make a difference and people will continue to see the benefit.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, As we—as I—the new Minister of Family Services, I've spoken to many individuals who are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead, and I, too, am excited. But I think one of the best ways that we can better support families is ensuring that they have the necessary supports. That includes stable housing. That includes employment. That includes education and training and child care, and we're committed to doing that and we're going to have to do it along with them and ensure that as we do that that they will find and see the benefits and instilling hope and opportunity. Those are very easy words to say for many of us, but for people that have been living in poverty for a number of years or some families for generations, it does not feel that easy. There seems to be many barriers for them.

So I am very confident that with this plan that we have outlined in the Throne Speech that we are going to continue to support families to have a better life, that we are going to continue to ensure that there are opportunities for our young people as we move forward, that there are going to be strong and effective educational institutions for individuals and that this is a plan that includes all Manitobans. When you look at what the plan is as far as the job opportunities, we're not ensuring that they're only in the urban communities. We ensuring that they're happening across the province. They're going to happen in the rural areas. They're going to happen in the northern areas like many of our initiatives.

So I stand in front of you today saying, without a doubt, I support this Throne Speech, this plan to build a better Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise and put a few words on record regarding our leader's amendments around the Throne Speech.

But before I get into that I would like to thank a few people in the House here. Certainly you, Mr. Speaker, who have shown a great deal of patience during the last session, which was a trial to us all, and to the House staff and the table officers who had to spend their long summer here as well and—but I can assure you it was for a good cause. We certainly feel it was, anyway.

And I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my wife and family. It was a tough summer for them

in that I wasn't there a lot of times when they certainly would have appreciated me spending more time with them. But they understood why and certainly were very encouraging and very supportive of the whole process, and I will touch briefly a little later on what has happened in our own family and some of the reasons why I'm proud to be here representing this constituency, the constituency of Portage la Prairie. It is one that hasn't experienced the dramatic growth that we have seen in southern and some other parts of rural Manitoba, but it continues to improve and build on its strengths. It is certainly one of the more picturesque constituencies containing both the river and lakefront right in the city of Portage, one that, frankly, I think most people never even notice because they either go around the city or they go right through the main drag—which is Saskatchewan Avenue—and don't see the most beautiful part of the city of Portage la Prairie. And also the RM around the city, which I represent, which includes part of Lake Manitoba and some beautiful beachfront and some very picturesque and quality farmland—and I know the Ag Minister earlier today seemed to be very happy to have the wonderful numbers that come from agriculture in Manitoba this year in terms of supporting the economy. But I wouldn't be too quick if I was him to take credit for what Mother Nature has provided us because, certainly, the farmers work very hard, but without the right co-operation we simply can't count on that. This year we were also fortunate in some cases to have the good pricing that we rarely get to see that goes with a good crop. So for many people this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with good prices and good yields in the same year.

And it was interesting to hear the previous member from Fort Richmond talk about all of the things they are working on, and I, too, work in that area with housing community development. The so-called poverty files are something that we touch on all the time, and I would certainly agree with her on one point: there is a lot more work yet to be done. In fact, we've been bringing forward some issues around the use of food banks, the poverty numbers in terms of the average income that have been really increasing ever since they took government, and they keep saying, well, we're working on it and we're making progress. And yet, when we look at the numbers, we don't really see anything to indicate any major change. And, in fact, when you look at the Throne Speech, I would say that is one sector that got the least attention of anything in the Throne Speech.

And, as my colleagues have mentioned earlier, they had so many priorities in the Throne Speech it's pretty hard sometimes to even identify if they had any specific issue that they were pushing in this area.

We certainly talked about, well, things like RentAid that were increased—wasn't it about \$25 a month?—which not quite probably covers the increased tax bill that most of these people got. And, in fact, it's pretty hard to imagine that anyone actually netted out—when you look at the year with the increase to the PST and the broadening of the PST—that anyone actually that has limited or are—limited income or pensions that are limited actually netted out further ahead because of the budget that we saw in the last two years or any particular benefit from this particular Throne Speech. And, in fact, we're seeing more and more people saying, we're worse off than we were before and, how can we—you know, how can we make ends meet? Well, they end up, in many cases, going to food banks and that's what generates those huge numbers we're seeing—45 per cent increase in the use of food banks, of which many are children.

And, frankly, I am really struggling to say how is this putting families first. How are you putting families first when you're putting more pressure on those that are in the most vulnerable types of families in the province? And they seem, frankly, startled that we have discovered that this is going on. This is certainly—it's so blatant that it's very difficult to ignore.

And we have certainly worked very hard with these groups to try and find some solutions. We've actually put forward some very solid suggestions—increasing the personal exemption, so that people at the low end of the income scale don't pay tax until much later, which certainly helps many households.

And, when it comes to a housing issue, of course, the housing allowance was something that we were very happy to join with many other groups and—in the suggestion that it should be increased, because it hasn't been increased since 1993; it's far too long a period. And they have stuck a couple of Band-Aids on it here and there, trying to make it look better, but they actually—when you look at it, many people that do qualify for these additional supports aren't getting them, because no one in the system is actually helping them.

And, in fact, there was a fairly interesting series of articles in the Free Press when some of the Province's own staff talked about how difficult it is

to make sure that everyone actually is getting the supports they deserve and getting solid supports to get out of a welfare situation and back producing—how many difficult barriers there is in the whole process. And I made that comment to some of the people in the food banks, and said, oh, yes, we've had that discussion with some of their staff. They suggested that we should—that they should hire some more staff to help people navigate the system. Now, is that really what we want to do, is hire more staff to help them navigate the system, or actually make the system work as it was intended and reach out to these people and help them get out of poverty situations and get back in the workforce?

And the minister made reference to a program that's been going since 2008, and we have looked very hard to find any substantial numbers that actually have been improved by that, and we really can't find a great deal to—of evidence to support that. But, in the process, of course, we've talked to a lot of people that were impacted, and I can give you a specific example of a young mother with two children—two dependants on her—and she was, in fact, back in school and trying to improve herself so that she could get a quality job in her life and move forward, and her kids were in child care. But she was living in Manitoba Housing, which should've helped her in the process. Manitoba Housing had an outbreak of bedbugs in that facility and, of course, the minute the child care, the daycare, found out that they had bedbugs, those two kids were not allowed in anymore, even though there is a protocol in place that's supposed to allow people—allow the child carers to actually work within that. They have waiting lists—they have waiting lists in excess of 10,000 people; they don't deal with problems like that. They simply say to the kids, I'm sorry, we can't take you anymore. Without child care, she couldn't stay in school. She's right back where she started from, simply because Manitoba Housing couldn't deal with the problem, so she lost her opportunity at that point to move ahead. I certainly hope that the problem's dealt with.

* (16:10)

And I did want to touch a little bit on the issue of bedbugs, because it's something that actually has been a growing problem in the last 10 years in this province, and it is actually the point in some regions that it is hard to imagine how bad it has gone. And I did take the time this summer to go visit some of the people that had phoned me with issues, because that is my critic's role, and it is, frankly, appalling—the

conditions that we actually are providing—and these are Manitoba Housing facilities. There are certainly not—specific only to Manitoba Housing. There are certainly lots of other facilities that are having issues with bedbugs; they actually seem to deal with them.

So then it got me digging a little deeper into what's going on in the Manitoba Housing system when it comes to dealing with bedbugs. And they do send a few staff every year to be trained, because there is a training process for pesticide applicators in the province. But it isn't necessarily those staff that are actually doing the application, and that makes you wonder if it's being done correctly.

Certainly, you hear lots of hearsay from the people that are impacted, that they come in with the spray bombs and the traps and they spray around for a few minutes and then they set a few traps, and then they leave. And they don't do it on a systematic basis and, frankly, in many cases they do a couple of rooms at this end and a couple of rooms at that end and in between the problem gets worse. They simply chase them out of one place to another, and that's not dealing with the problem. And, in fact, some of the people this summer—and we did hear a little bit from—in the press about one individual who had been moved over there to help with the spray program, who had've been a discredited individual within the sheriff's service and they simply had to find some place to park him until such time as the issue that he had over there, which was—may lead to charges, may not, it's simply—at this point he's away from work with pay, and they moved him over there and started putting him to work.

And then they discovered, well, perhaps he shouldn't have been doing this because he has some issues with—that relate to his previous charges that would put him at—or put other people at risk being alone with him, so they stopped doing that. But, in the meantime, he was working unsupervised in this position within Manitoba Housing, going from apartment to apartment with a legitimate reason to come into those apartments with no one in direct supervision and, frankly, absolutely no training in doing what he was supposed to be doing. So we paid for that privilege and, in the meantime, of course, nothing got done in terms of dealing with bedbugs. They are, to a point, in some facilities now, where they not only are costing people jobs, they are probably starting to contribute to their health issues. And actually we saw a report that came out of the University of Manitoba earlier this year that

indicated very clearly it's a major health risk to be living in a Manitoba Housing home.

So, clearly, they are not up to the standards of the average across the province. And certainly—though maybe it wasn't a fair comparison because we weren't always comparing apples to oranges or apples to apples in that particular case, it has every reason to indicate that there are lots of issues. And as part of that, the mental health issues were brought forward. And, frankly, I think this government should be ashamed of the way they have dealt with mental health issues. They have not put enough resources into it, not only out in the community itself to deal with it, but, I mean, they have put in the emergency, so it tends to be crises management, that's for sure. But what we have seen—and I sat through Justice Estimates from my colleague from Brandon West and we asked a lot of these questions of the Justice Minister as to what kind of resources were being put into dealing with mental health issues in the penitentiaries, in the Remand Centre, and the answer was very disturbing. Basically, not only are very limited resources being put in there—and we couldn't get good numbers around those at all, whether that means they just simply didn't want to share them with us or whether they simply didn't know the numbers, but they don't track a lot of the mental health needs that are in the system.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And we know from other provinces, for instance, that as many as 60 per cent of people in the justice system are diagnosed with mental health issues. And there—that's just diagnose, we know that there are probably a significant number that are yet undiagnosed with problems in the system. So with not tracking it and not working with it and not putting enough resources in it is a guaranteed formula for failure, and we certainly hear from lots of people that youth issues with justice are increasing dramatically. The numbers were up very much in the last little while, and we're not putting the resources that we need in that area. And once they end up in the justice system we're clearly doing nothing to help them deal with these problems and move forward, so it is cause for a great deal of concern.

I did, too, want to mention a little bit about the infrastructure promises that were made as part of the Throne Speech. And, as many of you know, our constituency of Portage was front and centre in the floods of 2011, and we could not help but stop and wonder; many promises were made, many of them at

press releases, frankly, in the constituency—and I had a chance to attend one or two—and lots of promises were made that I can tell you, to this day, have not ever been lived up to: promises on compensation in some cases, promises on mitigation. And one of the questions I have the most difficulty answering, to those especially that live around Lake Manitoba, is why do we have channels built, emergency channels built, at the north end of Lake Manitoba, that are plugged? They are not in use, and yet the lake continues to be high, in fact, so high that we're always at risk in every storm front hits that will actually do more damage to the beach and more damage to the cottages around the beach and more damage to the farmland that backs them up.

And why are these things—why have these things been built and they're not in use? Because they weren't planned well, because they weren't put in the right place—no one seems to be prepared to speak about that. But we know that we have seven- to nine-year plans into the future and that committees abound, trying to plan the best use of that, but—use of these facilities—and to try and deal with mitigation.

I do hope we actually see a—this commitment actually come to fruition because when you look backwards, it's not very convincing. You look back at things like in 1999-2000, where commitments were made to actually rebuild the dikes on the lower Assiniboine, and then after one year they were abandoned. They did one small section and the remainder did not get done. And, frankly, had that been completed, a lot of the problems that occurred in 2011 and in years since would not have been difficulty because we would have increased the capacity of the lower Assiniboine, from the 18,000 cubic feet per second and falling, numbers that we're seeing now, to over 30,000 that was part of that particular plan, and certainly would have put a lot less stress on Lake Manitoba.

And, of course, we have, on the books for many years, to do something about outlets of Lake Manitoba, and that still remains to be seen. And then we have on the books improvements to the Shellmouth Dam, which were funded by the federal government, and they did their share, in terms of acquiring the property that is needed, way back in 2004, and yet we have seen no commitments, no action by our Province, to do their half of it, which was increase the capacity of the structure.

And, in fact, if you talk to some of the engineers in that section now—and some are getting fairly vocal

about this because they're very disappointed that something hasn't been done—that following 2011, we may not actually be able to do that without further improvements to the existing structure because that existing structure took quite a pounding in 2011, and certainly it's not in good a condition as it was before. So we're actually losing ground; we're not making any particular progress.

Now, certainly we would all like to see as much of Manitoba protected against floods as is possible, and actually moving to take action on these things is probably essential. But we may be looking at—backwards in terms of the target because one of the big factors in how much water we have to deal with at the low end of the system, like we are here in Manitoba, is how much water comes from our neighbouring jurisdictions, whether they be states or be provinces. And a big part of that is actually a little calculation that engineers have used for many years, called the drainage coefficient. The drainage coefficient numbers were—are something that is actually based on data from 60 years ago. And what it included in that data is not only the amount of drainage that has been done on the farmland or on the land itself—and certainly we know that's been a changing target—but also the types of agricultural practices that are taking place on that land.

Well, I don't have to tell anyone in this room that understands what's happened in agriculture in western Canada and northern United States, the nature of the cropping practices has changed dramatically. Fifty years ago, on every farm you found at least a quarter of that land in hay and pasture land to support the livestock enterprise that was a big part of those operations in those days. That's almost entirely gone, other than in a few specific regions. And we've also moved from a full-tillage situation to a zero-tillage situation. And actually one of the downsides of zero tillage is actually its great water conservation characteristics, which actually help with drought, but what they also mean is that you have more runoff from major rainfall events. So what we should be looking at is the new numbers, as to what we will see in terms of drainage coefficient and how much water we have to deal with.

* (16:20)

And so I have a number of friends from past experience that have been working in this field for quite a while, and I talked to a few of them. Have we done any work on recalculating these numbers,

which are obviously out of date? And I've found that there is some unpublished data out of western Canada, done by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, a group that used to be part of PFRA, that actually has recalculated for the Qu'Appelle Valley area, which is certainly an area of great concern in western Manitoba—it's one of the areas that actually contributed in major way to 2011 flood. And the new numbers that they have are four times the old numbers. So clearly we're not looking at where we should be in terms of flood mitigation, we're looking at where we were. And that's out of date before you even go out to make improvements on the structure.

And not only did I have a opportunity to talk to this gentleman, but I talked to the US Army Corps of Engineers to see if they in fact had done any work in the northern interior United States, to see if they, too, were concerned about this, if they shared my concern. And they did. And certainly their work, which isn't exactly Red River Valley, it's more the Devils Lake area, which is very similar in many ways to what we see coming up the Souris—their new numbers are 3.88 times the old numbers. So clearly there's a great deal of—a good deal of alignment in those numbers, which makes me very concerned that what we're planning for in terms of flood mitigation here is, in fact, a completely different situation.

Now, moving on to some of the other things we heard in the Throne Speech, we heard a lack of commitment to seniors, no renewal of a strategy to deal with the Alzheimer's patients. And certainly that's been on the increase. I hear that a great deal from our personal care homes in my constituency and in others, that we need a better strategy and a better plan to deal with the number of patients that we are seeing now with regard to dementia. We haven't put in anything new; we build one of two additional spaces, we renovate what we've got, but we really have not moved forward and we're seeing a lot more patients arriving with those issues and we need to move forward on that as quickly as we can.

And I did want to talk a little bit about the education system and drugs in the schools. And I know that the new minister in that area didn't want to talk about numbers, and I'm—suspect that it's because they don't want to collect numbers. But it is a significant problem in almost every community, even in rural communities.

And I promised my oldest daughter I wouldn't embarrass her, so I'm not going to give great deal of difficulty. But she and a group of her friends in our

high school were so offended by the prevalence of drugs in the school and the open offering of drugs—in fact, almost an abusive, bullying-type situation with some children that—pursuing them to almost force them to make a purchase so that they wouldn't be embarrassed that they weren't part of the cool crowd—that she actually went down on her own, without me giving her any advice in this regard, to see the principal. She and her friends went down to see the principal and said, what can you do about this, it's so blatant. And he said, well, you know, we can't do this and we can't do that, we can't search lockers—that's protected. And she just didn't—she wasn't satisfied with that, so I gave her a phone number and I said you talk to this MP who has some experience in this area and see if in fact there isn't something that can be done.

And so she went ahead and contacted him on her own, and he responded, and I credit him for doing that, saying, well, in fact, your principal's wrong, you can actually search the lockers if you need to, if there's due cause. And so she goes back to the principal who was, frankly, a little concerned now that he might actually be forced to do something with this problem, and he says, well, if we do that, we have to report that to the education system that we've actually taken this action. He said, I don't want to do that, because they'll come down on me. So that's where it ended, and now the problem seems to have somewhat alleviated itself because certainly there was a lot of attention in the school because of that.

But it certainly indicates to me that not only are we not dealing with the issue of drugs in schools, we are not reporting it because it will cause grief in the system. And that to me is absolutely the worst reason to not report it. So we need to get something in place that actually helps track this so that we can make a measurable improvement and, frankly, give the principal and the teachers the support to have faith that if they take action, they will not get in trouble and there will not be grief for them in the system. So something that we need—we certainly need to improve.

So I guess, in summary—and there are so many places we can go here, not only with the issues with crime, issues with local government—and I am blessed, frankly, with a constituency where we don't have any amalgamations, but I have lots of people that have been involved in the municipal system that are friends of mine from previous involvement, and, frankly, the chaos and the consternation that is going on in many rural communities, particularly small

rural communities, because of this amalgamation process will be setting back community relations and government relations for many years to come.

Now, if government had any sense, they would go slow on this. They've already done a fair bit of damage, but if they were to back off and say to people, okay, we'll give you some more time, let nature take its course, because, certainly, many communities are now talking about what can we do in terms of shared services.

And the constituency I represent is actually a really good example of what can be done, because the city and the RM actually share a lot of services. They have cost- and revenue-sharing agreements that they put in place over a number of years that show how communities can work together and not compete for the resources that are there or compete for the businesses that are there. But I can tell you that that agreement, which is 12 years old now, took them 10 years to hammer out.

Now, here we are talking in a situation that in less than a year and a half we've got to have this done. That is not a realistic timeline, especially when there are, in fact, already some service-sharing agreements between municipalities that are out there that you have to void, and so those ones actually have to—they have to go back and start again, and in between we're not sure that there's any consistent plan to this. We may actually see a number of municipalities having to either create additional services like fire services, fire prevention services, right from scratch if they don't end up on the right side of any municipal amalgamation or at least sign agreements that don't necessarily make a lot of sense in terms of the distances involved. So there's an awful lot of things to do.

I would certainly encourage the government across the way to take a really good look at the amendments our leader has put forward, particularly those that relate to the housing problem that we're seeing, and encourage them to support the increase in the housing allowance which we were happy to support in conjunction with the End Poverty Now group, which is really grassroots and very widespread. That is a good first step. It is not the only step and, as the minister earlier said, I know we all need to work on that on both sides of the House.

I did want to make at least an additional comment. There were certainly some members that said, well, we vote against everything that they bring forward. Our job is to put—is to be critics of what you

do. It's to hold your feet to the fire. That does not mean making your life easy. It means that we should make your job as responsible as possible, so voting against some things is certainly what we have to do to do that.

And not only do we vote against them, but we continue to ask questions about them, and you just seem to hate any questions that come close to the truth that come up in question period. We heard that today where there were some very good questions put forward and the answers went nowhere near the question. I do hope you're going back after that and saying to your people that provide you with the briefings, what's the right answer to that question? I hope you're learning something in the process, that you're not just hiding your head in the sand, because we all know what happens when you hide your head in the sand: something else gets exposed, and that's—you're certainly not going to enjoy that.

I was particularly disappointed today when we heard the very simple situation about what's happening in some of the rural communities when it comes to the fall supper, and I was involved with Keystone Agricultural Producers when that bill came forward. We expressed our concerns and we were certainly given lots of assurances that this wouldn't be what was happening and that we wouldn't see fall suppers suffering because of this and being put at risk and the communities that get support from them being put at risk because of this new legislation. And today we're all getting lots of complaints about this. We're seeing more and more that they didn't want to live up to that promise either, which was one that would be relatively easy to live up to. So I certainly would encourage the members across to do something different in the way they approach this and go back and rethink what they—the vague promises they made in the Throne Speech and perhaps take some proper steps to deal with some of the problems and not try and hide them, which is certainly what we're seeing.

Now, I guess, in conclusion, I would certainly be happy to support my leader's amendments regarding the Throne Speech. I think he's got some very good ones there and that we are certainly trying to be positive and constructive. There were some suggestions of alternative approaches in there.

So thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll provide someone across the floor the opportunity to say yes to all our suggestions.

* (16:30)

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I state the solid reasons for supporting this year's Throne Speech, please allow me to thank many, many Manitobans. As we all know, the Philippines was 'visted' by a catastrophic typhoon over a week ago with ferocity and destruction unheard of in ages. Many Manitobans, along with people and governments all over the world, responded right away. Our provincial government provided financial assistance of \$200,000 on top of \$100,000 already committed a month earlier. Colleagues from this Legislature also provided financial contribution to people of the Philippines affected by this strong typhoon. The Filipino community thanks them all deeply for their care, concern and generosity. Their kindness, combined with those of many Canadians, will help immensely in the relief and rehabilitation efforts in that area. The devastation to life and property is unspeakable. Millions were displaced from the homes and communities they lived in.

I know of several people in Manitoba who were affected by this tragedy. Besides loss of property and dwelling, two of our church members lost loved ones. One member lost a cousin to the earthquake last month when she was hit by a crumbling school building wall. My sister's husband lost a brother and his two grandchildren at the height of the ferocity of the typhoon. I heard another member of the community lost 30 members of his family in this tragedy. The outpouring of support and sympathy are heartening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please allow me also to express my appreciation for the valuable support we MLAs have received from you, as well as from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, her deputy, her research officer and clerk assistants, as well as committee clerks. You, Mr. Speaker, together with the table officers, are all very sharp and without fail will immediately call our attention for words of omission or commission here at the Chamber or during committees.

I also wish to welcome the new pages who will be assisting us this—in this Chamber. We appreciate their valuable support and services and wish their stay here will be memorable and enjoyable for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to declare my appreciation for the assistance provided by my new deputy minister, assistant deputy minister and S.A. in my new Department of Multiculturalism and

Literacy. And not to be left out are the huge support from the constituency assistant and executive assistant. Our constituency office is always busy attending to issues and concerns of constituents, be it related to immigration, welfare assistance, housing, family services, employment and training, education and health. My executive assistant, Levy Abud [*phonetic*], provides me with valuable support during events and meetings well beyond office hours, which include many instances of weeknights and weekend days and evenings.

With the dedication of staff and many community volunteers in our constituency, we will pursue our constituency's third annual job fair early next year. We were fortunate to have the support of over a dozen employers in the past, which was attended by several hundreds of job seekers. Some of the employers were even from outside Winnipeg. We expect more employers to participate in the 2014 job fair.

The opportunity to serve my constituents in the greater community in my capacity as an MLA and minister of the Crown will not be possible without the support of the constituents of Logan. In 2011, they have elected me to return to this Chamber to represent them and be their voice in this government for another term. I take that responsibility very seriously. I am fully aware of the uncertainty of tenure of elective offices, and so with whatever time that was entrusted to me, I vowed to do my best in representing Logan constituents and advancing the mandate of the Department of Multiculturalism and Literacy.

I would like to express my appreciation for the support and friendship from each and every member of my caucus. My colleagues have strengthened my resolve to give the best service to my community. They are all dedicated community workers and volunteers, mindful of the best interests of the province, and committed to make Manitoba the best province to live, work and raise a family.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the chance to put in a few words of support for this year's Throne Speech. What a joy and privilege to be able to declare my support for the 2013 Throne Speech, as read to us by His Honour Philip Lee on November 12th.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I fully welcome steady economic growth, building a stronger province for the future, more training opportunities and

generating good jobs for families, that is announced in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support protecting families and businesses from an uncertain world economy, and all too frequent flooding, and making life better for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I support a new five-year 5.5-billion plan—dollar—\$5.5-billion plan that will build roads, bridges, flood protection, and municipal infrastructure like water and sewer.

I fully support making Manitoba one of the most affordable provinces with a high quality of life.

In the past few weeks I have been reacquainted with several leaders of the multicultural community. I thank them for their passion in working to strengthen their communities and address the pressing issues.

I started getting to know the other half of my department, Literacy, the morning I was sworn in to my new role. I met adult learning and literacy practitioners as well as some of their students during their annual conference. I heard personal accounts from students of how their lives and that of their family have changed as a result of finishing GED or taking literacy classes.

Mr. Speaker, I can fully relate to the students' stories and experiences. My mother was not allowed to attend school along with her sisters. Her father believed that a woman's place was only in the house and it was a waste of time and resources to send his daughters to school, so only boys in the family attended school. My mother grew up without knowing how to read and write. When she married my father, who was then a theological seminary student, my father knew my mother was smart. It did not take long for my father to teach my mother how to read, write and do simple arithmetic. As a result of being functionally literate, my mother said a whole new world was opened for her. She can now read the Bible, Filipino magazines, billboards, bus directions, and even sign her name. It was like, according to her, having sight restored after being blind.

The adult literacy students' accounts I have heard the day I was sworn in—the day after I was sworn in were as dramatic and emotional as my mother's, though in a different way. These students are now able to pursue higher learning or have obtained responsible positions at work and have been role

models and inspiration to their family and community for turning their life around. Their stories are now my inspiration.

I think this government—I thank this government for putting in the resources to pursue these life-changing programs all over the province.

As referenced in the Throne Speech, literacy and adult learning continues to be a priority for this government. Adult literacy refers to the skill base that enables people to participate in and adapt to change in the workplace, the home and community, and it provides the foundation for further learning.

As expressed by the students themselves whom I have met on that auspicious morning, higher literacy skills lead to reduced poverty and improved health and well-being of individuals, families and communities and give individuals the ability to take full advantage of current and future employment opportunities.

* (16:40)

I am pleased that for 2013-2014 my department is funding 34 agencies throughout the province to provide tuition-free literacy programming for Manitoba's adult population.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited to share with you that the Department of Multiculturalism and Literacy, in partnership with the University of Manitoba's Continuing Education and Extended Education, has developed a new online course, which is Adult Literacy: From Theory to Practice. This course will be offered for the first time in January 2014. This course will be a core competent—a core component of a new credential for adult literacy instructors. The course will also be valuable professional development for all adult educators and workplace trainers, continuing our commitment of high standards of training for all adult educators.

Adults with strong literacy skills who have completed high school have better health, increased earning power, and enhanced personal empowerment. When the adult learning centre structure was formalized in 2003, many other jurisdictions looked to our model and have subsequently adapted it for their adult learning programs.

Mr. Speaker, we have imposed important conditions and controls over adult learning centres with special attention to finances, teacher credentials, and program quality, as well as legislating a

program-based funding model rather than funding on the net—on the per student basis. This has helped to make our adult learning centres and their learners successful in continuing education and improving job skills.

Mr. Speaker, last year alone, 1,356 adults obtained a high school diploma, with hundreds more continuing their high school education through various adult learning centres around Manitoba. Now these learners have the ability to further pursue their goals. Once they have their high school diploma, they can choose whether they want to go on to post-secondary education, continue skills training, or enter the workforce. For this reason, as minister, I recognize and value the importance of adult literacy and learning and commit to working closely with my colleagues to further our government's pledge of 75,000 new workers by 2020.

Of course, it's important to take into consideration that 40 per cent of learners in adult learning centres identify themselves as Aboriginal. We need to continue to develop programming and curriculum to be responsible and relevant to this important segment of the population.

Two programs that I would like to highlight that encompass the learning continuum model are Urban Circle's and Kelsey learning centres. Urban Circle Training Centre in Winnipeg offers classroom instructions incorporating teachings and practices of the First Nations and Metis cultures in Manitoba. The program provides opportunities to complete high school, including an apprenticeship stream and the ability to proceed to post-secondary education and/or employment. Urban Circle also offers the following certificate training programs: educational assistant, family support worker, early childhood education, and the mature student high school diploma program that they can transition into as part of the grade 12 career development course. The learners participate in a six-week employment practicum tailored to student employment. Through the employment practicum many learners are able to transition more directly into permanent employment.

Kelsey learning centre in The Pas is a one-stop community education centre that provides course offerings for adults to complete high school and obtain prerequisites for a post-secondary education at the University College of the North, such as Bachelor of Nursing program, trades, and law enforcement. The courses offered also assist adult learners to employment at Hydro, Hudson Bay

Railway, Tolko and other employment in the community. Through these excellent examples and many important organizations who are helping adults take advantage of jobs and opportunities that would not otherwise be available to them, I want to commend the teachers and instructors and staff in Manitoba's adult learning and literacy programs for their professional and caring approach.

I know several of my colleagues who also want to put in their strong reasons for their support of this Speech to the Throne, so I am cutting short my prepared speech to hear them. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I appreciate the minister, who I was once a critic of, cutting her speech to a minimum there, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that as we're standing today and we're speaking to the Throne Speech and, of course, the fantastic amendment put forward by our leader. But, before I get to the Throne Speech, I'm going to, of course, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time and the, again, the patience, as some of my colleagues have—had mentioned earlier, also to the table staff and all the staff of the Assembly. Welcome to all of the new pages, who are going to spend the next while with us throughout this session, and I know that they're going to learn a lot, and no doubt in the future start setting their pathways to their future careers as well.

At this time, I'd like to also thank the constituents of the Lac du Bonnet area stretching from Garson-Tyndall all the way up to Bissett which includes Beausejour, Pinawa, Powerview-Pine Falls, Victoria Beach, Sagkeeng, Little Black River, Manigotagan, Bissett, and all of, of course, the rural people outside of those centres as well.

It's interesting that today I get a chance to speak to the Throne Speech which, as many of our colleagues on this side of the House had mentioned, it had a lot to do about nothing, and I know that many of the members on the government side as well had mentioned the amount of volunteers that it takes to not only help each and every community thrive, but the fact is, is we are No. 1 in that department in the country. In regards to volunteers, we're No. 1 in the volunteer department. *[interjection]* Thank you. I think we're good. So, to carry on, we were just testing the mike here, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the clerks for keeping us on topic of that. As well, as I was mentioning, the volunteers in the communities—despite this government and despite the various things that this government has done in regards to the

ongoing deficit and the increasing debt over the past 14, 15 years that they've been in power—the many, many volunteers that it takes to not only grow a community but also to keep that community going is quite substantial. We need the people to be staying here in this province and there's many, many actions of this government that are driving people outside of the—out of the province.

* (16:50)

In regards to staying in the province, during the last election, 2011 election in October, many of the—all of the members across the way—57 MLAs—they went door to door and they were door knocking and making various promises.

And one of the biggest promises that they made—and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had stated this on more than one occasion—was that the thought that they were going to raise various taxes and fees or the PST in general was absolute nonsense. And each and every one of their MLAs went door to door. I know that the candidate out for the NDP went around my area, and they were touting the fact that they were going to be balancing the budget by 2014 and they would be doing that without raising any taxes.

So what had happened almost five months after that, the 2012 budget came forward and that was one of their—the starts or the beginnings of their broken promises, Mr. Speaker: \$184 million in increased fees and expansion of the PST.

One year later in 2013, they ended up raising the PST by that one point from 7 to 8 per cent, which was a 14 per cent increase, which equates to about \$277 million. So, when you add that to the 184 in the year previous, we're looking at roughly \$500 million or half a billion dollars. And when you do the basic math—and I know that some of the members across the way have had problems understanding that part, but when you take the \$500 million in increased revenue from that PST and the expanded fees that were increased the year before in 2012, you divide it by the 1.2 million people in the province, and you're roughly getting \$400 per Manitoban on a year-to-year basis that this Province—this government is actually putting in their back pockets. They're basically taking that \$400 per Manitoban—or in my situation, a family of four, so that's \$1,600—they're taking it off the kitchen tables and they're putting it right into the Cabinet tables.

I know that members across the way have heard that quite a few times, and they're going to continue

to hear it, because the fact is is that they're not going around and they're not actually having consultations or having conversations with those Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. They had broke their promises in the 2011 election by increasing these fees, and they're making it tougher on hard-working Manitobans and on a day-to-day basis where they're going to have to come up with this extra money to try to—whether it's to put their kids through education or into any kind of extracurricular activities such as dance or hockey or any kind of other sporting activities, arts, culture.

Speaking of that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just chat about the Throne Speech for a second here and take a look at what exactly was [*inaudible*] the past minister for Culture, Heritage and Tourism that was up speaking before and now, of course, throughout the fall here in between sessions, they went ahead—the government went ahead and they did a little bit of a Cabinet shuffle. And they actually forgot a little bit about one of their portfolios, and that is the Culture, Heritage and Tourism piece. They've actually gone ahead and labelled a new minister—given him a new portfolio, which is going to be quite entertaining over the next few weeks, I'm sure, if not maybe a few months, when we get to have conversations back and forth, but they've actually left the word heritage out of his new portfolio.

So we're going with a minister who once was in charge of local governments and felt that it was unnecessary to have consultations with various municipalities throughout the province. Now we're taking him and putting him into a different portfolio and just getting rid of heritage altogether, so it really speaks volumes on where this government's priorities are.

I know that a few of my colleagues on this side of the House have—had mentioned the various priorities, and there was 21, 22 priorities listed or spoken about in the Throne Speech. And it is—it's tough to understand how a government can have so many priorities, and so, usually, when there's that many priorities, pretty much none of them are going to get accomplished, Mr. Speaker.

It's going to be quite the show, I'm sure, this coming spring when we have Budget 2014 because last budget we were looking at a projected deficit of \$504 million. Well, the third quarter report had just come out and the past Finance minister had basically tabled that they've missed the mark and their projected deficit, as far as we know as of right now, Mr. Speaker, is going to be \$689 million.

It's a runaway train. It's hard to believe that this government stands up every day in the House and speaks to how caring and how their making these decisions for the betterment of Manitobans when we continue to see the deficit and, of course, the debt in general, increase year after year after year.

And, as far as a plan goes, I know that some of the members across the way have spoke of plans: we'll come up with a plan. Well, we haven't seen a plan. We talk about the different infrastructure that they have promised in the Throne Speech, and with those infrastructure promises we see a lot of repeats, reannouncements. I know that one of them that will be affecting our area, or in my constituency, will be Highway 59, twinning Highway 59 from Brokenhead north. Mr. Speaker, I've seen the survey stakes out there quite a, for quite a few years, and it just seems that it's another—it's just a fitting time to reannounce that. But it'll be interesting if anything ever gets done there besides the—besides sending out the surveyors to survey the area once again.

Now I did touch on the past minister of Local Government and talked about amalgamations and forced amalgamations in the last Throne Speech, and that's why it brings us to this year's Throne Speech as well. We see a lot of promises and threats from last year's Throne Speech, and we don't see a whole lot of work happening there, Mr. Speaker.

We managed to, in our constituency with Victoria Beach, we were able to dodge, I guess—dodge the forced amalgamation push from this NDP government. And what did that come down to? That came down to a lot of hard work by the residents, the permanent residents and the seasonal residents of

Victoria Beach, and, of course, the hard work from the mayor and—or the reeve and the council. They put in a lot of time to basically educate and consult with their people who actually had voted them in, unlike this government. This government says that they're open for business and they want to have those consultations with those stakeholders and those municipalities, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, those conversations just did not happen.

There are various other municipalities within the province that are looking to start the work on amalgamating, but instead of going and taking those resources that they were doing, that they were instilling on the forced amalgamations, they were—they could have been putting those resources into those municipalities that actually wanted to start crossing the t's and dotting the i's, Mr. Speaker, and making sure that that process was done properly and effectively and, of course, thoroughly as well.

We're looking at municipalities that are, you know, well over 80 to 100 years old, and to irresponsibly expect them to force a plan and to amalgamate within the 10 months or by this, early this coming December was just unspeakable, and it speaks volumes to this makeup of this government.

And so, with that, I am seeing the time is—

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) will have 15 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 18, 2013

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