

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 20, 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 and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### **Bill 18—The Business Practices Amendment Act (Improved Consumer Protection and Enforcement)**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Sport and Consumer Protection):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy (Ms. Marcelino), that—sorry—Bill 18, The Business Practices Amendment Act (Improved Consumer Protection and Enforcement), now be read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lemieux:** The proposed amendments expand the examples of unfair business practices and clarify when a business takes advantage of a consumer. The proposed amendments will provide more flexible and responsive tools for the director to use in enforcing the legislation.

This legislation continues this government's leadership in the area of consumer protection and builds on our efforts to protect Manitobans from being taken advantage of. Our government stands with consumers, and we hope that the opposition will do so as well.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, petitions. The honourable—bills?

##### **Bill 205—The Seniors' Rights Act**

**Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods):** I move, seconded by the MLA for Midland, that Bill 205, The Seniors' Rights Act, be now read for a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Cullen:** As we all know, Manitoba seniors have played a very important role in Manitoba and continue to be a very important part of our population. This bill would establish rights for Manitoba seniors. The bill lays out which rights should be protected under legislation. The bill also calls on the government to report if seniors are not being provided these important rights.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to future debate on this bill and hope we can attain some positive consideration from all sides of the Assembly. 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—Referendum**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, 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 is submitted on behalf of P. Michalski, B. Michalski, T. Nohlgren and other hard-working Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** 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's signed by P. Hall, B. Hall and G. Hyrich and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping**

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

And these are the reasons for that 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 is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rate 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.

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

\* (13:40)

And this petition is signed by G. Forest, B. Grosky, and L. Scoll and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for the 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 rates 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.

(4) 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.

And (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 D. Harder, B. Potter, A. Hiebert and many other Manitobans.

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Mr. Speaker:** I am pleased to table the annual report of the Office of the Children's Advocate for the year ended March 31st, 2013.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I have guests in the gallery I'd like to introduce to members.

Draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of Advocis, The Financial Advisors Association of Canada, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also in the public gallery we have with us today 45 grade 9 students from Kildonan-East Collegiate under the direction of Mr. John Thompson and Mr. Luke Klassen. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome all of you here this afternoon as well.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Municipal Amalgamation Provincial/Municipal Relations

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is forcing local governments to amalgamate, most of them against their will, 84 of them. And the government has advanced false arguments to support their disrespectful agenda. They claim cost savings and improved services but provide no supportive evidence.

Besides, when it comes to good money management and improving service, this government is hardly a best-practices model. Local governments have always balanced their books for decades in the past, while this particular government has doubled our provincial debt and exempted themselves from the consequences of our balanced budget law.

So what right would this government have to proceed with a forced amalgamation plan when it has failed and the governments it is amalgamating have succeeded for so long?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I gave the Leader of the Opposition three opportunities to correct the record yesterday. I'd like to circulate this photograph of a bridge. And yesterday we identified that this bridge was the wrong project in the wrong decade in the wrong century and that the Leader of the Opposition was misleading the House and the members of the public when he said it was a project that, in fact, we were trying to count twice in our program for jobs and the economy. And I wanted to give him the opportunity to correct the record. That project was done well over 20 years ago, was completed, completely different from the project we've announced for the Plum River. And it is a project that we are proceeding with, a completely new project.

I wanted to give him the opportunity to do that because, with respect to his question, these investments in infrastructure are what allow municipalities to have stronger communities. They're allowing municipalities to grow their economies. When they have good roads, when they have good sewer and water, they have good jobs for the citizens in their community and they can grow their economies, and municipal mergers are a part of that story.

**Mr. Pallister:** This bridge was fully costed and fully funded five years before the Premier tried to wrap himself in credit for claiming he would build it.

If the Premier wants to make integrity an issue, I urge him to run on it next time. The NDP did not run on forced amalgamation in the last election. There wasn't a word about it, not a word about it until the eve of last year's AMM meetings.

The municipalities had it sprung on them without any consultation and it was followed immediately by insulting press releases that attempted to portray local governments as incompetent, and that was followed by a barrage of

bullying and labelling, and the NDP used words to describe duly elected local people like dysfunctional and insolent. Now, this is the government that is demonstrating insolence and dysfunction by dictating to and disrespecting duly elected local representatives and those who duly elected them.

What right does this Premier have to shut down century-old governments without even letting Manitobans have a vote on the issue?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities play a very important role in the Manitoba economy, and that is why, over the last five years, we have raised \$1.2 billion in gas tax revenue and invested double that, \$2.5 billion, in infrastructure in Manitoba, and a good deal of that money has been—all of that money has been invested in one municipality or another in Manitoba.

Again, the member opposite was incorrect in his assertions that we weren't doubling our investments in infrastructure in Manitoba. He picked the year when we diverted additional resources to protect Manitoba communities from floods and provide compensation to them. Again, I want to offer him the opportunity to correct the record on his misleading and inaccurate information about what has been invested in rural municipalities, rural Manitoba, as well as our big cities in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Just a few months ago the Leader of the Opposition said he did not oppose municipal mergers in principle; now he's flip-flopping again, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Pallister:** I like the mergers a lot, Mr. Speaker, when they come from local people who understand the issues and they're not dictated to by that man and his cronies who don't understand democracy. And what is undemocratic here is a Premier who claims he has the right to close down well-functioning local governments but did not ask for that right in the last election, did not run on it, nor did any of the local politicians who were duly elected by their ratepayers. No one ran on this.

Now, the Premier and the NDP seem to believe that they're above the people, that they're self-appointed judges, self-appointed jury, self-appointed executioner of almost half of Manitoba's local governments, and they are wrong to place themselves above the people of this province.

Now, if the Prime Minister of this country was to decree that Manitoba had to join with Saskatchewan in a forced amalgamation, that would

be disrespectful. How is the Premier's actions on this issue any different from that? Totally disrespectful.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems to be occupied with doing something with the Senate without the consent of the provinces. There's not really—there's not necessarily any difference in the approach there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba we have some tremendous growth stories in rural Manitoba. We have communities that have stronger population base, growing economies. We have some other communities that want to be able to be part of that.

Municipal mergers, school board amalgamations, RHA amalgamations allow for the opportunity for resources to be diverted right back down to where the citizens live to improve their municipal garbage collection service, to improve their municipal waste management systems, their municipal infrastructure in terms of sewer and water and their roads and their recreation programs, and those resources make a difference in people's lives.

We have an immigration program in Manitoba where 37 per cent of all the newcomers coming to this province are moving outside of the major cities.

We want rural Manitoba to grow, which is why we doubled our investments in infrastructure compared to the gas tax, which is why municipalities last year got a 12 per cent increase for—

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

\*(13:50)

### **Municipal Amalgamation Deadline Extension Request**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** Well, the disrespect and the bullying continues from this government to local governments and to the residents of those local governments right across this province: no prior consultations, no respect for taxpayers, no respect for municipal councils and certainly no respect for the complexities of communities.

Will this Minister of Municipal Government extend the deadline for amalgamations by at least four years to allow ratepayers to have a say in the municipal elections in the fall of 2014?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government):** Mr. Speaker, it's quite something to listen to that question. More than 50 years ago, Duff Roblin was given a report in 1964 that said

municipal boundaries were 50 years out of date back then.

Our government is absolutely committed to working with local municipalities to grow our economy and to provide jobs for Manitobans. We believe that the municipal governments should be stronger, they should be more efficient, they should be sustainable. We're open to working with each and every municipality to make sure that they are in a good position to take advantage of the economic opportunities that we're going to be creating in this province over the next number of years.

### AMM Convention

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, new minister, same old disrespect for local governments, same old bullying tactics.

Amalgamations were not in this government's election platform in 2011. Certainly, the municipal councillors did not run their campaigns on forced amalgamations. Just because this government has no conscience, does this not allow government to impose their lack of respect on municipalities.

Will the Minister of Municipal Government actually listen to local municipal governments at the AMM convention coming up next week?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, I very much look forward to talking with reeves and mayors and councillors next week in Brandon. I look forward to that. I have always looked forward to AMM conventions. And not just during AMM conventions, Mr. Speaker, I'll meet with any reeve and mayor and their councils any time to talk about growing Manitoba's economy and to talk to them about creating jobs.

And you know what else I'm going to mention to those reeves and mayors when I talk with them? I'm going to say that this government was the government that saved them \$22 million a year when we equalized hydro rates between Winnipeg and rural Manitoba, and I'm also going to slip into that conversation that members of the Conservative Party opposed that.

**Mr. Pedersen:** It's also the government that imposed an illegal sales tax on the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, no consultations, total disrespect, name-calling, threats and intimidation, chaos, turmoil, the list goes on. Is it no—it is no wonder many municipal officials are openly questioning whether or not to even seek office next year in October of 2014.

When the Minister of Municipal Government addresses the AMM convention next week, will he finally reveal his plan of eliminating any municipality under 3,000 residents?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, add that column—add that little preamble to the long list of conspiracy theories that members opposite have come up with.

Mr. Speaker, in 1997 it was their government that established in The Municipal Act the threshold of 1,000. It was their government who did that.

We're moving forward at—with this amalgamation initiative so that municipalities can be put in a better spot to take advantage of infrastructure dollars that are going to be available, so they can take advantage of economic development opportunities that will be available, Mr. Speaker, and that they can take advantage of job creation programs that will stimulate our rural economy to make it a better place to raise a family and open up a business. Our government's—

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

### Flooding Infrastructure Investment Priority

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** The government's stimulating people in the rural areas to move to other provinces, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem.

The flood issue is what I'd like to address now. The Premier raised it, so I'll go on that.

The last two years the NDP has under-spent their infrastructure budget by just under \$1 billion. Now, that's the only department this government's under-spent in. This is a spending-addicted government, but that proves that for at least the last two years infrastructure was not a priority. So it's hard to believe, as of this Throne Speech last week, that it suddenly is a priority now.

Let's be clear—let's be clear about something. The spendDP did not save the \$1 billion. They did not reduce spending. They—certainly, they did not come close to eliminating their deficit or balancing the budget or paying down debt. They actually didn't reduce taxes either, quite the opposite. They took all that money and they spent it on other priorities.

And, amazingly, now the government is saying the reason they under-spent in the Infrastructure

Department was because of the flood. Now, this is bizarre, really.

I want the Premier to tell Manitobans that that government spent 28 per cent less than they promised on infrastructure in the last two years because of the flood.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, in the last three years this government has spent \$1.6 billion on core-on infrastructure in Manitoba, core infrastructure. That's more than the Leader of the Opposition when he was in government in the '90s spent over 10 years.

We've made a record investment in infrastructure and, in addition, we provided one and a quarter billion dollars of various forms of investment in flooding in Manitoba along the Assiniboine valley. Brandon now has one-in-300-year protection. The dikes have been improved and further improvements will be made.

An emergency channel was built in Lake St. Martin to allow the lake to come down more rapidly so that there would be relief to the people in those communities, and now we've committed a quarter of a billion dollars for new investments to make the channel permanent, to have an additional channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, and that investment in the Interlake will lead to an economic renaissance there because people will have predictability about the levels of the lake. They will see that there's an opportunity to invest in their homes, to invest in their communities, and that will fuel—

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

**Mr. Pallister:** Mr. Speaker, in the '90s you could get Cracker Jack for a quarter. This Premier is not heading a Cracker Jack government, that is for sure, and he has the nerve to compare his spending of current days to 20-year-ago spending in front of financial planners without factoring in inflation into the calculation, amazing.

In the two years since the flood the NDP spent \$949 million less than they promised to spend on infrastructure, and he stands up and blames the flood. The NDP claim that the reason that they promised \$4 and spent less than \$3 was the flood. But in the two years prior to the flood, in 2009, 2010, they actually spent \$940 million less than they promised.

So the flood of the century or the excuse of the century, which is it? In total, \$1.9 billion since that member for St. Boniface became Premier taken from infrastructure, put in other areas of higher priority.

If the flood was the excuse, what was the excuse before the flood?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the member can't inflate his way out of the lack of spending on infrastructure when he was in office. He can't even begin to do that. The gas tax was raised, the highway budget was cut under the members opposite.

In our last five years we've had spending double the amount of money raised on gas tax, two and a half billion dollars. This is \$1.2 billion, more than double, very significant improvements in highways in Manitoba.

This Throne Speech committed to further investments. Highway No. 1, they said they would twin it to Saskatchewan; they didn't do it. We did. Now we're going to pave Highway No. 1 to the Ontario border. Highway No. 10, very significant investments have been made in that, more to come. Highway No. 75, \$125 million in the last several years, now an additional \$215 million, Mr. Speaker.

Those investments will generate economic growth in the province. They will aid the private sector in producing goods that they will export to our major market in the United States and they will create good jobs for Manitobans. That's the way of the future.

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

### **Infrastructure Spending Government Record**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** This is faintly humorous, Mr. Speaker, but tough on Manitobans. That government raised the gas tax last year and raised \$70 million in new revenue with it and spent more than that less on infrastructure. They put not a penny of those dollars into infrastructure.

Now, broken promise, in the last two years—speaking of broken promises, a speciality of this government, in the last two years the NDP has imposed higher taxes on Manitobans after promising they wouldn't do that. Higher taxes on insurance products, higher taxes on car registration, life insurance benefits, gasoline, that's broken promise No. 1.

\* (14:00)

How about No. 2? They claimed they would use the money for roads and infrastructure and then reduced their infrastructure spending by a billion dollars below their budgeted amount, broken promise No. 2.

And last week the spendP released Groundhog Day, the Throne Speech, and they claim that the PST hike that they want to impose in the next few days is going to go to, you guessed it, infrastructure, that old priority they never had that they suddenly have now.

So I've got to ask the Premier, who is demonstrating that he is a serial promise breaker: Isn't this just No. 3? Isn't this just a rerun?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Time has expired.

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is a specialist on telling tall tales.

Yesterday—two days ago he tabled in the Legislature a bridge project that was 20 years old and said that we were counting it in our plan. He was a hundred per cent wrong in that. It was the wrong project in the wrong decade in the wrong century, and he doesn't have the decency to correct the record.

This is what the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said in the '90s about The Gas Tax Accountability Act and the lack of it in Manitoba and the lack of gas tax honesty in Manitoba. They said, in their campaign, just 47 per cent of the money raised in the gas tax was invested in roads. In other words, for every dollar they raised in gas tax, they spent less than a dollar on roads in Manitoba. That's another tall tale from the Leader of the Opposition.

He was wrong then and he's wrong now, Mr. Speaker.

### **Flooding Infrastructure Government Investment**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, they cost it, they contract it, and they announced it five years ago. That's what this government's all about. They got no credibility.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has made so many promises and broken them on a daily basis. They cannot be trusted on anything that they say.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. By the NDP's own numbers show spending less today on flood infrastructure than they did in 2009. For an example,

the NDP forecast to spend \$195 million, and in 2009 they actually spent \$97 million.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister, this NDP government why they claim to spend more when it is not. I ask this government: Why are they misleading hard-working Manitobans?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think the Legislative Library is setting up a new section. It's in the fiction section of the library, and it's for Tory press releases because they have absolutely no credibility when it comes to infrastructure.

And just like our leader, I want to give my critic the opportunity to stand up and apologize for last week saying that one in four highway projects were cancelled. They actually identified two, Mr. Speaker, they thought were cancelled. They're both active. So will he get up and apologize for misleading Manitobans?

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, this minister should be apologizing. It's called the division of broken promises.

**An Honourable Member:** That's what's in the library.

**Mr. Eichler:** That's in the library.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government cannot be trusted with taxpayers' money. Their own numbers demonstrate the NDP has not kept promises to invest in flood infrastructure. Since 2009 the NDP has invested 30 per cent less than promised on flood and water control infrastructure. Another example, from 2009 to 2013 they promised to spend \$448 million; instead, they spent \$315 million, 30 per cent less.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this NDP government why they continue to mislead hard-working Manitobans.

**Mr. Ashton:** I also understand there's a rumour that Tory researchers have been seen going through the archives at the Manitoba Museum to dig up more 20- and 30- and 40-year-old pictures that they can use in question period.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition stood up and, with that, you know, that self-righteous indignation that only he can muster, tabled a 20-year-old picture, and our leader gave him the opportunity—the Premier gave him the opportunity to apologize earlier. Will

he now stand up and apologize for misleading Manitobans, putting false information on the record?

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the reality is, we're investing in Manitoba infrastructure; they're tabling 20-year-old pictures.

**Mr. Eichler:** Mr. Speaker, I gave the minister two opportunities. I'll give him one more. Let's try and focus on the question.

Mr. Speaker, despite record provincial revenues, it is clear the NDP has a spending problem that is with flood mitigation, and infrastructure is just not there. They're collecting more money from hard-working Manitobans. Transfer payments from the federal government are at an all-time high.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government why Manitobans believe the PST or any announcements can be taken seriously by this government. What is wrong with this government when they can't make a promise and keep that promise which is true to hard-working Manitobans?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I must say there may actually be some hope for members opposite in getting accurate information.

Now, I know they haven't apologized for their inaccurate press release last week. They haven't apologized for tabling a 20-year-old picture earlier today.

But earlier this afternoon I was checking my Twitter account, and I want to announce publicly that the Leader of the Opposition is now following me on Twitter, so maybe now he's going to get some accurate information in terms of infrastructure from this government.

But, Mr. Speaker, I sure won't be following him on Twitter, because that's fiction.

#### **Shellmouth Dam Upgrade Leaf Gate Construction Timeline**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** This comes from a minister who actually, on his application website for Shellmouth Dam funding, dated the application deadline as February 2013, and it just came out in November, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans are tired of recycled announcements that have many residents along the Shellmouth Dam, landowners and visitors alike, were skeptical of this minister's and this government's sincerity to the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Infrastructure to please elaborate on his comments in the Crossroads paper that specifically said in its headline, Province will address Shellmouth leaf gates.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** You know, again, I know the members opposite have a lot of interest in the 1990s. But what might be interesting, by the way, is to—for this member to go and look at when the actual legislation was brought in that actually provides, for the first time, statutory coverage for artificial flooding in the Shellmouth Dam, and it sure wasn't when the members opposite were in power, Mr. Speaker. It was when this government brought in that legislation. In fact, not only did we bring in that legislation, we put in the funding to have that in place for the 2011 flood.

And I want to say, members opposite have a lot of chutzpah when they talk about the Shellmouth Dam, because they did absolutely nothing for people in those areas.

**Mrs. Rowat:** And the families out there are still waiting for representation from the 2011-2012 flood. No money has flowed, so this government is full of announcements.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, in 2007 the minister responsible for Hydro, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), refused to meet with the SAVED committee who were responsible or—seven municipalities who are very interested in the goings-on of the Shellmouth Dam. This minister, now Premier, refused to meet with them, and the leaf gate issue went dormant once again.

So last week, when the minister actually spoke to the Crossroads paper, he had indicated that he was not willing at that time to give the specifics of the project or the timeline.

As this is the minister responsible for the department where for every \$4 announced, \$3 are spent, can this minister indicate to those ratepayers in that area: Does he only intend to announce that project and has no intentions of building it?

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, this is—that's got to be probably one of the most convoluted questions I've seen in question period for quite some time. And with the Leader of the Opposition, convoluted is kind of standard practice.

First of all, let's understand that she's now switched to the Shellmouth leaf, you know, the gates, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate that that project is cost-sharable with the federal government. We have about \$8 million in place.

Originally, by the way, Mr. Speaker—and I know members opposite don't like reference to this—the federal government was actually in charge of that project. They unilaterally withdrew from that. We took over the management of that project. It is indeed part of our flood protection.

And one of the reasons it's very much an active project is because, in addition to the design, we will indeed be consulting with people in that area, because, Mr. Speaker, just like on compensation, when it comes to Shellmouth Dam, it's this government, not the PCs, that are listening to people in that area, because we are going to build that additional leaf gate and do it in a way that doesn't damage people in the surrounding area.

\* (14:10)

**Mrs. Rowat:** Well, yes, there was an agreement in 2003 between Canada and Manitoba, but this government failed to address the needs of the municipalities, wouldn't consult, so the thing went sideways.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like some clarification from this minister, because in February at the same meeting the government's representative indicated that the leaf gate structure on the Shellmouth Dam would not be happening. It was a dead issue. Well, fast-forward, November Throne Speech, and the minister says to the media that the government will be addressing the need to raise the leaf gates as part of this government's infrastructure plan. Well, they can't have it both ways.

When can the Shellmouth region receive honest consultation on the project of Shellmouth Dam, the specifics and a transparent timeline? They've been lied to enough by this NDP government. Landowners are waiting for compensation from 2011 and 2012. Nothing has flowed.

Why should they believe this government and this minister who's full of hot air?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the only person that's trying to have it both ways is the member of a party that from 1971 when they were in government never once brought in legislation that established

statutory compensation, a member that stands up and purports to speak for people in that area.

And I want to repeat one thing again. It wasn't the PCs that brought in statutory compensation, it was the NDP. They are absolutely without any credibility when it comes to Shellmouth Dam. That's having it both ways. The member opposite, who can get up and talk about the Shellmouth Dam but did absolutely nothing—her government did absolutely nothing and she's done absolutely nothing in *[inaudible]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I want to caution honourable members. They seem to be very engaged in question period, which is good, but at the same time it makes it very difficult for myself to hear the—both the questions and the answers, and I'm sure our visiting guests that are in the gallery here this afternoon. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members, please keep the level, the volume down a little bit so all of us can hear the proceedings of this afternoon.

#### **Illegal Activity in Schools Incident Reporting**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that minister could limit himself to 140 characters on everything. I might want to follow him on Twitter.

I asked last week whether or not the Minister of Education was having information on the deadly drug fentanyl brought into schools, and he said he had no idea. I asked him about how often drugs were found in schools, and he said he had no idea. I asked him yesterday how often weapons are found in schools. He said, well, he had no idea.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Safe Schools Charter also indicates that gang involvement, there's zero tolerance for young people being involved in gang involvement within our schools. That sounds like a good idea. I wonder if that's being tracked.

Can the Minister of Education tell us how often young people have been found in gang involvement in our schools in the last academic year?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I appreciate the question from the member. I may be new on this side of the House, but he seems to be playing from the same old tired playbook day after day after day.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we are talking directly to parents and we're talking

directly to students about safety in schools and then making sure that they are safe in inclusive classrooms for every student across our province. We're not interested in the fear mongering and scare mongering that comes from the other side of the House. We're interested in listening to parents, listening to students, taking preventative action to make sure that our students have safe and healthy schools to go to every single day.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if safe schools is a tired playbook, I'm willing to play from that playbook every day.

I don't understand how the Education Minister has no idea how often drugs are found in our schools; he doesn't seem to care. He has no idea how often weapons are found in the schools; he doesn't seem to care. He has no idea how often gang involvement is happening within the schools; he doesn't seem to care. He talks about a Safe Schools Charter, but there's absolutely no tracking happening within that Safe Schools Charter.

Does the minister simply not care to find out how bad the problem is, or is he simply not willing to address the problem and that's why he's not giving us this information?

**Mr. Allum:** I thank the member for the question.

The truth of the matter is that we're concentrating on preventing actions that are unsafe for children in our schools. We're talking directly to parents and talking directly to schools, talking to principals, talking to school administrators to working collaboratively in order to prevent any unsafe actions happening in our schools.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Steinbach wants to say that he speaks for parents. Well, did he speak for parents when he opposed Bill 18? No. Did he speak for parents when he refused a—to support a human diversity policy in schools? No. Did he support safe schools and did he speak up for parents? Did he speak up for parents?

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable minister's time has expired.

The honourable member for Steinbach, with a final supplementary.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Times flies, I know, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how can he say that he's preventing anything when he doesn't have any idea what is actually happening in the schools? You

know, we're all in favour of preventing drugs in schools, but he doesn't know how often it's happening. We're all in favour of preventing weapons from coming into our schools, but he has no idea how often it's happening. We're all in favour of preventing gang involvement in our schools, but he has no idea what's actually happening.

Why won't he admit to acknowledging that the first thing you have to do to determine what the problem is and how to solve the problem is find out the information about how often it's happening? Why won't he find the information and bring it public, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Allum:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. I regret to inform the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) that the member from Steinbach is now the Justice critic as well as this Education critic.

Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is the explanation—the person who needs to explain something to parents and to teachers and to principals and to school administrators is why the member from Steinbach, when he had the chance to stand up for Bill 18, he didn't. He opposed it and, worse still, he voted against it. That's shameful.

More than that, Mr. Speaker, we put school resource officers in schools to protect our kids, and, once again, he voted against it.

The people of Manitoba know where we stand—

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

### **Early Childhood Education Child-Care Spaces**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, as Mary Agnes Welch pointed out in Saturday's Free Press, when budgeting, the NDP government has a choice: to invest adequately in child care and early childhood education as foundational human infrastructure for the future of our province or to pay heavily down the road.

As brought up at a September 18th meeting of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba, child-care access in Manitoba right now is in crisis. There is a very large shortfall in child care and early childhood education spaces.

Today, on Universal Children's Day, I ask the Premier: Why has he failed to ensure an adequate

number of child-care and early childhood education spaces in Manitoba?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I thank the member for the question because it allows us to put on the record the very significant investments we've made in child care.

We have tripled the budget since our time in office. We have doubled the number of spaces at the same time as the Conservatives withdrew all their funding for it at the federal level and cut the programs. The provinces were left on their own to provide child care, early learning opportunities, to working families in Manitoba.

We have the best—one of the best systems in Canada. Wages have gone up over 56 per cent, and for the first time in the history of Manitoba, the people that work in child care have a pension plan.

That's what we're doing for child care, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, there are more than 11,000 children waiting today for space in child care or early childhood education. The government hasn't done its job. Indeed, this NDP government continues to develop new ways to squeeze Manitoba's middle class and other families. Parents who can't work because of a lack of access to child care and early childhood education means a loss of economic productivity, a loss of jobs in our province.

The NDP provided only minimal additional funding in the 2012 and 2013 budgets, barely a drop in the ocean of what's actually needed.

Instead of the same pittance and piecemeal approach from this government, I ask the Premier: What is their real plan to ensure the basic human infrastructure for children and families is there in our province?

\*(14:20)

**Mr. Selinger:** Unlike any other province in Canada, we actually have a prenatal benefit program for young expectant mothers in this province, and immediately upon them entering into parenthood they get support. They get home visits. They get support from nurses. They get support from people that help them get involved in programs, preschool programs, family resource centres, which we fund.

Then when you get to the child-care area and they want to enter the workforce, we've tripled the budget for that, we've more than doubled the number

of spaces for that. We've increased wages and training. We've changed the curriculum in child-care centres to a learning curriculum to prepare young people to be ready for school so that they can have success in school. And when we get to school, we've reduced class sizes in the K-to-3 areas.

Just this morning, Mr. Speaker, I announced a new school in the Riverbend area of Manitoba, Riverbend, north end of Winnipeg. It will have 64 daycare spots, 500 more places for students. It will be built in Winnipeg in an area where there's a growing population.

The leader of the Liberal Party—or the ex-leader of the Liberal Party has voted against every major investment we've made in child care and he has joined hands with the Conservatives that withdrew the program—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, you know the NDP government is talking about \$5.5 billion in physical core infrastructure. That's over 1,000 times greater than what they added this year to the basic human infrastructure for child care and early childhood education. What we need is not some tinkering. What we need is a major new investment, sufficient funding.

Will the government continue to fail Manitobans, or we fine—will we finally see this coming year a major additional—that one-year investment of 40 to 50 million dollars in child care and early childhood education, as Liberals have been calling for?

**Mr. Selinger:** We've added 12,000 additional spaces into our child-care system. There are now more than 28,000 child-care spaces in Manitoba. And you know what, the population in Manitoba is growing. The population is getting younger. We have a dynamic and robust economy and more people want to work and live in Manitoba, which is why we are going to enter into a new program of child-care expansion in Manitoba—fifty 'por' per cent increase in wages, first ever pension program, 12,000 more spaces, every new school has a child-care centre built in it, and we are investing like you've never seen before in child care in Manitoba.

I invite the ex-leader of the Liberal Party to stand up and actually vote for a budget that increases child care in Manitoba and doesn't do what the Tories do, which is vote against it every single time.

**French Immersion School (Riverbend)  
New Construction Announcement**

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, as we all know, our government believes in investing in students and our economy. That means focusing on smaller class sizes and the quality of education to help our children develop the skills they need to succeed.

We're already building a new school in north Winnipeg where the growth has just been tremendous, Mr. Speaker. And today the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made an exciting announcement, you heard a little tiny bit about it already, but I would like to ask our advanced minister—or Minister of Education to give us a little bit more information on that announcement.

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** Now that's how you ask a good question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on jobs and the economy, a skills agenda, and at the heart of that agenda, at the core of it is education. That's why I was pleased to join with the Premier, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), to announce a new school in north Winnipeg today. I also want to recognize the person who did most of the work on that school is right behind me, the former minister of Education and the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

Mr. Speaker, this school will provide spaces for 400 kids to learn and develop skills. It will also include a child-care centre for 54 preschoolers and 12 infants. Our government builds schools; they close them. We hire—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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

**Elmwood Giants**

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I'm honoured to share with the Assembly today the accomplishments of some outstanding young athletes from my constituency.

I am proud to report that this year the Elmwood Giants won the title of Winnipeg High School

Football League Andy Currie division champions, defeating the West Kildonan Wolverines by a score of 14 to 7 in a closely fought defensive battle at Investors Group Field. The team's coaches and some of the players are joining us here in the gallery today. These incredible young people serve as an example to our community as a whole that when you work together as a team, you put in a heck of a lot of work and you keep your goals in mind, you can accomplish anything.

I would like to congratulate all the players of the Elmwood Giants for their hard work, their determination and their grit demonstrated all season. I'd also like to recognize the coaching staff and the many volunteers and supporters who came together to make this victory possible.

Sport is an important part of the history of our community and Elmwood High School, and I'm sure the success of the Elmwood Giants will serve as an inspiration to our younger generation. I also played high school football in my youth, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, it taught me the value of hard work, sacrifice and teamwork. All of these are invaluable lessons that helped me get to where I am today, and I know they will serve the—all players in their lives as well.

Our government recognizes the importance of sports and a healthy lifestyle. In 2009, several colleagues of mine and myself had the pleasure of attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a refurbished Elmwood High School outdoor track, field facility and improved football field. I'm sure that this outstanding community asset has helped to enable our young athletes to fully realize their potential.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to join me in congratulating this terrific team from Elmwood High. This is an amazing achievement, not only for the school but also for our community. Way to go, Giants.

**National 4-H Month 100th Anniversary**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I'd like to draw attention to the House to an important milestone in an organization that is not only highly esteemed by our party and Manitobans alike but the one which has roots in Manitoba. As many of you are aware, November is National 4-H Month. Even more significantly, 2013 marks the hundredth anniversary of 4-H since its introduction to Canada in Roland, Manitoba.

4-H is one of the largest, longest running youth organizations in Canada, promoting strong values and leadership for over 3,500 youth in Manitoba alone, with over 200 active clubs. More than half the members live on farms, about 30 per cent live in non-rural farm areas and 14 per cent are urban.

4-H engages a wide range of activities. In fact, almost any activity can qualify provided the activity is seen to foster innovative community leadership in youth between the ages of 8 and 21. These activities have ranged from beef raising, equine adventures, gardening, woodworking and many others.

This program strengthens the moral fibre of our province from the bottom up, starting with our most critical and vulnerable demographic, the youth. 4-H achieves this by providing an opportunity for youth in our province to learn important values including teamwork, community, leadership, diligence. The list goes on.

On behalf of our party and all members of the House, I'd like to take a moment today to congratulate the 4-H council and the larger network of 4-H organizations throughout Canada for achieving an impressive milestone and immense success in their endeavours. Also like to wish 4-H continued success with the future as they continue to encourage value—strong values in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **JDRF Ride for Diabetes Research**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Every November the juvenile diabetes research fund raises funds to fight type 1 diabetes in honour of Diabetes Awareness Month. This year's Ride for Diabetes Research took place on November the 8th at Winnipeg's downtown YMCA-YWCA, and it was a huge success.

This fundraiser is a fast-paced and energetic stationary bike ride held in cities across Canada. It brings people together in friendly competition to see who can bike the farthest, cheer the loudest and, most importantly, raise the greatest amount of money for a fantastic cause. Teams consist of five riders who take turns riding for seven minutes each. This year, JDRF hopes to raise an incredible \$7.7 million nationally through the event.

This was my second year joining, and, as always, I was overwhelmed by the spirit and dynamism of the participants. Teams dressed in

elaborate costumes and everyone was supportive of each other's efforts.

Meeting several young people living with type 1 diabetes was a personal highlight for me. They have to take multiple needles every day for a disease they inherited genetically, but they rode their bikes faster than many of us adults in the room.

\* (14:30)

For more than 40 years, JDRF has been a leader in the search for an end to type 1 diabetes. Their mission is to improve the lives of those affected by type 1 by accelerating progress on the most promising opportunities for finding a cure, creating better treatment plans and, with possible, preventing the disease.

Mr. Speaker, this event shows what we can accomplish when we come together, united by a cause that affects so many on a deeply personal level. I want to congratulate JDRF on their successful Ride for Diabetes Research and thank all those who volunteered or participated. The money this event has raised is going to help us work towards a cure for type 1 diabetes, and help people the world over.

Thank you very much.

#### **Katherena Vermette**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba are home to talented artists, writers and poets, and this year one of them was honoured with the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry.

Katherena Vermette grew up in Winnipeg's North End and has now returned to live there as an adult. Katherena works as a literacy educator and is currently a Master of Fine Arts student through the University of British Columbia, where she plans to finish her degree in April of 2014.

Her nominated works, *North End Love Songs*, is a collection that focused on Katherena's experience in growing up in the North End as a teenage girl and dealing with some complicated feelings coming back to the neighbourhood with her two daughters.

Writing became a release for her, and this work has led her to join some pretty exclusive company. It is rare for a Manitoban to win an award as prestigious as this, and Katherena has proven that her work is the—is some of the best this country has to offer. Her stories of this city and this province are

important to share and are important for educating everyone about the great love that people have for where they grow up and the power of returning home to where your life began.

Katherena plans to finish her degree in the next year and publish works geared just for children and youth. Her works are truly accessible for all ages, and all Manitobans will be able to hear more from such a talented poet.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of this House, I would like to congratulate Katherena on winning the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry and wish her nothing but the best in the future. It is artists such as her that are important to the fabric of this province, and I hope to hear more from her in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Early Childhood Education and Child Care**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, today is Universal Children's Day, as recognized internationally by the United Nations. It's a day when we should be considering the status of children in our province. Today, I want to specifically deal with the issue of school readiness of our children and the fact that our child care and early childhood learning system is in crisis at the moment.

At a panel organized by the child care coalition on early childhood education and child care, held on September 18th, the point was made that we have a crisis today in Manitoba. As of the end of September, there are—were 11,415 names on the province's centralized waiting list. Parents are coming up against completely unacceptable long wait times for accessing child care. The result is that parents who are running businesses are having to stay home and lay people off from their business and the economy is suffering.

In 2001, the coverage rate for zero to 5-year-olds was 17.9 per cent. After more than a decade of NDP government, the coverage rate has only crept upwards to 20.5 per cent. Compare this to Québec with about 50 per cent coverage and we are far, far behind.

The NDP mismanagement in this area, causing our current crisis, cannot be ignored. While Liberals continue to call for an annual increment of 40 to 50 million dollars, the NDP have invested only one tenth of that amount and less than a thousandth of the

\$5.5 billion they've recently announced for physical core infrastructure over the next five years.

There needs to be a transformation to a much more accessible and fully integrated child care and early childhood education system in our province. There was no mention of this need for Manitoba's foundational human infrastructure in the Throne Speech, though it's evident, with about 30 per cent of children starting grade 1 not ready for school, that action is needed.

As Mary Agnes Welch pointed out recently in the Free Press, just as Liberals have said for many years, the investments in early childhood education can help move Manitoba from the bottom of the barrel in social well-being, as we are under the NDP, into a more respectable social and economic situation for our province.

Thank you.

#### **House Business**

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there's leave to proceed as follows: On Wednesday, November 27, during orders of the day, no member may request a quorum count and any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December 2, as the first item under orders of the day.

During private members' business on the morning of Thursday, November 28, no member may request a quorum count and, despite rule 23(4.1), any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December 2, as the first item under orders of the day.

On the afternoon of Thursday, November 28, notwithstanding rule 23(1), oral questions shall be the last item of business considered under routine proceedings. During orders of the day, no member may request a quorum count and any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December 2, as the first item under orders of the day.

Lastly, with regards to private members' resolutions, for those resolutions to be considered during the first two days of private members' business in the spring, the resolutions may be submitted to the Journals Branch a week prior to their consideration and to the resumption of the House in the spring.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business, is there leave as follows: on Wednesday, November 27th, during

orders of the day, no member may request a quorum count and any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December the 2nd, as the first item under orders of the day?

Is there leave for that matter? *[Agreed]*

During private members' business on the morning of Thursday, November 28th, no member may request a quorum count and, despite rule 24–23(4.1), any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December 2, as the first item under orders of the day.

Is there agreement on that? *[Agreed]*

On the afternoon of Thursday, November 28th, notwithstanding rule 23(1), oral questions shall be the last item of business considered under routine proceedings. During orders of the day, no member may request a quorum count and any recorded votes would be deferred to Monday, December the 2nd, as the first item under orders of the day.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Lastly, with regards to private members' resolutions, for those resolutions to be considered during the first two days of private members' business in the spring, the resolutions may be submitted to the Journals Branch a week prior to their consideration and to the resumption of the House in the spring.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Any further House business?

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**  
**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**  
**THRONE SPEECH**  
**(Sixth Day of Debate)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Seeing none, now proceed to orders of the day, government business, and to resume 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 Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief) who has six minutes remaining.

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the minister's name?

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

The honourable member for River Heights.

**An Honourable Member:** No. Hey, just a minute, River East.

**Mr. Speaker:** River East, pardon me.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not—well, I'm not quite prepared to leave the northeast quadrant of the city of Winnipeg yet.

I have had the proud opportunity to represent the good people of River East for the last 27 years in this Legislature, and I want to, first of all, thank them for the opportunity to let me serve, and this really is a service profession. It is very important that as we do our job here in the Legislature we don't ever forget the people that elected us and put us in this place and entrusted us to make the right decisions for the right reasons for them. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to again thank the people of River East, and I want to say how pleased I am—I'm not sure this would be my 27th response to a Throne Speech, I may have missed a year or two in there, but I have had the opportunity on several occasions to speak and either support or not support a Throne Speech. And I know that we on this side of the House, this time around, will very much be voting against the Throne Speech and the vision, the agenda that this government has put forward.

\* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, I want to, at the outset, welcome you and every other member of the Legislature back. We were—had a very short intermission, I would call it, after sitting all summer dealing with some very significant issues that face all Manitobans—some issues that Manitobans feel they were betrayed on in the last election of 2011 when we had a government that promised that they wouldn't raise taxes and then went completely—did a complete about-face after the election and raised more taxes in the last two budget years than Manitobans have ever seen in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, they were betrayed by the government, and we felt it important to sit here all summer and make sure that Manitobans knew that we were there supporting them and in trying to ensure that the government would see the light that after presentation after presentation of ordinary Manitobans that told this government it was wrong-headed, No. 1, to increase the PST after they had said they weren't going to in the last election and, secondly, to take away their democratic right to

vote on whether that tax should be increased as is there still today in balanced budget legislation.

And I fear, Mr. Speaker, that that option and opportunity for Manitobans is going to be gone within a few short weeks when this government rams through their agenda. And it seems like we have a tax-and-spend vision for this government as they move forward as they have since the 2000 election and as they will continue to do.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I know we're back after a very short period of time but, again, I do want to welcome everyone back. I do want to welcome you, Sir, and the table officers back to the House and all of those that support us here in the Legislature on a day-to-day basis and the pages that are going to experience some interesting times over the next session and to all of the interns, too, that have been chosen for both caucuses. I'm hoping that their time will be rewarding and that they will learn a lot, and it will bode well for them into the future in whatever endeavours they undertake.

And to the staff, Mr. Speaker, that support us as members of the Legislature, the staff in our caucus office, specifically, and our researchers and all of those support staff and those that support us in our constituencies and ensure that we're getting to the right place at the right time and responding to constituents as their issues arise, so there's a lot of people that we need to thank for our opportunity to be here, and I always say to everyone that you are only as good as the people that surround you. And I know that I am truly blessed by people that surround me that are committed and that are dedicated and that work hard every day to try to ensure that I can do my job to the best of my ability. So I want to say thank you to them.

And I listened with some interest today to a very hypocritical government that introduced a piece of legislation, and I think it's Bill 18 that was introduced, and it's a bill to protect consumers. Well, does this bill protect consumers from a government that lies to them, that deceives them, that tells them one thing before an election and does something completely opposite after? You know, I've had a chance to glance through the bill, and it talks about protecting consumers but it talks nothing about protecting consumers from a government that they can't trust.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's been shown time and time again that Manitobans cannot trust this NDP

government who says one thing to get elected and then does completely the opposite after they're elected. And we've seen that in spades this year, and, you know, I was kind of hopeful that with the short recess that we had before we came back into this session, that we would see a government that maybe was a little less arrogant, that maybe would take into consideration some of the concerns that they have heard from hard-working taxpaying Manitobans on that, and they would maybe, just maybe, in their Throne Speech, withdraw Bill 20 and say, no. We'll respect Manitobans. We'll respect their ability or at least delay Bill 20, Mr. Speaker, and go to a referendum to give Manitobans the opportunity to vote yes or no to the tax increase.

But I fear that that is not going to happen, so I feel very badly that Manitobans will be forced, as a result of a heavy-handed government, to once again dig a little deeper into their pockets to support the spending addiction that we see on the government benches. Mr. Speaker, I fear for Manitobans and future generations that are going to have to bear the burden of the increased taxation and the lack of opportunity here in this province as a result of a government that can't get its spending under control.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, and what we've all tried to teach our kids, I'm sure, is that you do have to spend within your means; you can't just spend willy-nilly on absolutely everything that you feel you might want—not what you need, but what you want—and not be able—not have to suffer any consequences. The consequences are that you run yourself so deep into debt that you can no longer get credit. Then you go into bankruptcy.

Well, I fear that this government is on a path to bankruptcy for this province. And they certainly, if they aren't bankrupting the province, they're bankrupting Manitoba taxpayers, who have to pay more and pay more and pay more, as a result of the spending addiction that we see year after year after year.

And you know it's fine, Mr. Speaker, to take someone else's money and say, well, we can do this and we can do that. It's different when you have to make your own choices about your own money and when you can make choices about other people's money. I mean, you can say, well, we'll just raise taxes, we'll just take some more money out of their pocket because we know best how to spend their money, their dollars. Well, Manitobans are getting

tired and I'm hearing it on a regular basis out there as I go door-to-door and speak to my constituents in my community.

They've become very cynical, very cynical of a government that says one thing and does another. And, you know, I heard the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today stand in his chair and call the Leader of the Opposition the specialist of tall tales. Can you believe that? Can you believe that the one person who stood up before the last election and said, read my lips, no increase in the PST—now, Mr. Speaker, was that a tall tale? I would think it might have been because we know he was not speaking the truth. He deceived Manitobans before the last election and he continues to do that—

**Mr. Speaker:** [*inaudible*] the opportunity—I've had the opportunity in the past here to caution honourable members with their choice of words with respect to using unparliamentary language, especially when it's in reference to another member of the Assembly. So I'm going to caution the honourable member for River East on the—her choice of words here during her comments this afternoon and ask her to please follow the parliamentary practices that have been in place for such a long time.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I acknowledge your caution and I will be much more careful in my comments.

But we do know that there have been some tall tales told in this Legislature by the government's side of the House. And I know one other area where I know many, many seniors within my constituency are feeling the pinch. And not only are they seeing an increase in their PST of 8 per cent, but, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many that are living in apartment blocks in River East constituency—and, I would venture to guess, right throughout the city and throughout the province—who are on fixed incomes. Many that don't have the ability to see their pensions raised or have any ability to generate any more income in their families. And there are many that are seeing their rents in their apartments go up some 12 per cent this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that during the last election campaign, again, the NDP went door to door in those apartment blocks and they said to those seniors, oh, don't you elect the Conservatives because if you do, your rents are going to go sky-high. They're going to raise your rents, but we're

going to keep them affordable for you. We are going to keep them affordable.

\* (14:50)

Well, what is happening this year? What is happening this year, Mr. Speaker? Their rents are going up 12 per cent under an NDP government that promised them—promised them—that they would keep their rents affordable; 12 per cent increase in their rents, a 1 per cent increase in the PST, an 8 per cent increase in their insurance on the contents of their apartments and a death tax on top of it all. Well, you can imagine the kind of outrage that I am hearing and the kind of deception that these seniors feel as a result of a government and members of a party that go out and tell them one thing before an election and do exactly the opposite after.

Mr. Speaker, there's cynicism out there, and quite rightly so. People should be cynical and they should be questioning the integrity of this government. And we're not going to let them forget. We are going to continue to make our voices heard. We're going to continue to listen to those Manitobans who say to us, enough is enough. We didn't elect this government to raise taxes when they said they weren't going to. We didn't elect a government to raise our rents by 12 per cent when they said they were going to keep our rents affordable. We didn't elect a government to lie to us before an election and do something completely different afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, we will not let our constituents forget. And I know that the government has been in power for 14 years, and I know that sometimes a government can lose touch with the community and the constituents that live in their community. And they believe that they are invincible, that they can do absolutely everything that they want to do and Manitobans are just going to be led like sheep and not stand up and question anything that the government does. And, you know, that is not the case. I have a little more confidence in Manitobans than this government might have. I have a little more confidence in them to say, you know, maybe it's time. And that's what we're hearing; we're hearing rumblings that maybe it's time for a change out there. And I know that the government is hearing the same kinds of things.

Well, and the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) sort of sits there and shakes his head and thinks that, you know, Manitobans don't know what's happening and what's going on. They'll just be led by a government that says one thing and does another.

They won't be cynical at all. Well, Mr. Speaker, I tend to disagree with the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson). Manitobans are smarter than what he gives them credit for. Manitobans can see through the arrogance, the lack of consultation, the lack of commitment by this government to put Manitobans first and foremost rather than the issues that they believe are important. And, you know, Manitobans don't want to be talked down to. They don't want to be talked down to by a government that says, we know better than you. We are better than you, the masses. We will make decisions for you. We will decide how to spend your hard-earned tax dollars. We will tax you as much as we think we can take. We know that Manitobans will tire of this kind of government. They are already. And it's our job to continue to make them know and understand what this government is all about.

And, Mr. Speaker, I feel sad—I feel sad for the next generation of Manitobans, those that are going to have to pay dearly for the addiction—the spending addiction that this government has. We do need, I believe, some sort of legislative protection for Manitobans from this government—Manitobans who need their pocketbooks protected. They need their pocketbooks protected from a government that has such a spending addiction that they just keep going back time and time and time again saying, just give us more—give us more. We know how to spend your money better than you do. Manitobans are tired of this. Manitobans do see through this government and Manitobans will, I know, speak very strongly come the next election and it'll be our job to make sure that that does happen.

So, with those few words, I want the government to know that they can't be trusted and we can't believe a word that they say in their Throne Speech, and we cannot be supporting a government that deceives and lies to Manitobans day after day. That will not be tolerated, Manitobans will not tolerate it and we will make sure that they know come the next election what, you know, what kind of government—

**An Honourable Member:** Doom and gloom.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** The—well, and the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says doom and gloom—

**An Honourable Member:** Well, it is.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Yes, and, quite frankly, many of my constituents are feeling that doom and gloom right now—right now. And it's—any way, it's too bad that the member for Elmwood has his head buried in

the sand and thinks all is well and good and wonderful.

Manitobans will be able to speak loudly and clearly come the next election and I will be here to make sure that that does happen. Thank you.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** Obviously, the member opposite that just spoke is really painting a horror picture, a scenario, and then maybe she'd consider an acting career once she gives up political sense because, truly, it is amazing of the acting that's taken place across the way.

And from—on behalf of Manitoba, I'd like to make some commentary on the Throne Speech.

You know, agriculture is definitely the—a great industry in the province of Manitoba. I'm very proud to have been involved in agriculture in my own personal life for 30-some odd years, and I continue to be involved and I really see the benefits of agriculture in the province of Manitoba, and let's—let it be for the record, an industry that brings in \$10.1 billion into our industry in the province of Manitoba, directly and indirectly. But yet we hear members opposite complaining that the province of Manitoba is falling apart and then there's no hope at the end of the tunnel.

And you know what, one of the great things we need to celebrate—and just recently—is Manitoba Hydro making a hundred-million-dollar sale to Saskatchewan, and I think at one time there was a commentary from across the way, as I made a comment the lights are brighter in Saskatchewan. Well, truly, they are simply because we're moving more hydro into the province of Saskatchewan and the lights will get brighter because of that, and that's only a start of many additional sales that we're looking forward with the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make some commentary of agriculture in our situation as I think some of the members are quite familiar with certain things that we are faced with. Obviously, the federal department chooses to make some decisions and, unfortunately, we as a province are faced to maybe shore up some of the support that has existed for a number of years, and let me show you some examples. The community pasture as we all know has been around for the '60s, mid-'50s, and rightfully so because appropriate land that was designated for protection of erosion, soil erosion and wind erosion. Now, unfortunately, the federal government

has chosen to relinquish their handcuffs with the community pastures.

We in the province of Manitoba believe community pastures, first of all, are vital to the beef industry. We know what the beef industry has gone through in the last number of years. The BSE was really the injury of the demise of the cattle industry. But also the community pastures, the reality it's a economical way for cattle producers to maintain pasture scenarios. As we all know, the value of cropland is accelerated almost to the point where the value of cropland has probably increased \$100,000 per quarter in certain geographical areas. So for the cattle industry that would be a real challenge. So I want to make it known on commentary towards the fact that we, the Manitoba government, believes in helping out the beef industry and we are working with the community pasture organization that has been struck up with the Manitoba Beef Producers to make it viable for the agriculture or the beef industry to say it.

\* (15:00)

And we talk about the challenges we face financially, and the challenges are because simply we've been given some tasks that I felt the federal government really chose not to support over the years.

But I also want to indicate to the members opposite the beauty of the agriculture industry and how many jobs it provides, Mr. Speaker. It's really difficult for people to understand the beauty of agriculture. And we talk about 62,000 jobs are created through agriculture in the province of Manitoba, which really 'sumizes' to about a 10 per cent employment through our agriculture and agri-food industry. And, as I indicated, that is a 10-point-some-odd-billion-dollar industry for the province of Manitoba, and it's growing and it will continue to grow. As we all know, the world population is growing and we want to be part of that, to provide food for the Third World countries and provide economic spinoff.

I think I want to stay focused on the beef industry, and I'm very proud to say that our government has been very influential in helping out, continuing talks with the US government. Obviously, another challenging scenario is country of origin labelling, COOL. And I want to make you aware, Mr. Speaker, that our department, our government, has been in consultation with the federal minister and

we're moving forward to provide our opinions how we can address the issue, because it is very critical.

And, in fact, it was a couple weeks ago, I was in the US, Chicago, where we had attended a seminar and discussion where the North American Meat Association realized the importance of the cattle industry in their industry or in their country, to the importance that they are going to start to lobby with us in support of trying to get changes made appropriately for the betterment of the industry. What they're presently going to be seeing is closures of slaughter facilities in their states. And, in fact, a number of the meat processing industries will be shutting down simply because of the change in the regulations that are coming very shortly. So I just want to make that known on the record, Mr. Speaker, that we, Manitoba Ag, see the importance of the—of our involvement to get changes made in the COOL regulation.

Now, as far as the other additional things we've done and we focused on—and it was related to in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker—is our positive thinking, as far as government, towards working with producers across the province of Manitoba. And I think one of the greatest things that we've done, or a number of the greatest things we've done, we've now put forward the forage insurance program that's been asked for a number of years. And I'm very proud to say our government has moved forward with it, in consultation with organizations, and it's finally has come to fruition.

And I want to also indicate the fact that the livestock price insurance—and I'm hearing the members opposite saying there was nothing in the budget. Well, let me assure you that from the agriculture perspective this is one of the most exciting budgets we've put forward, or Throne Speech we've put forward, for the betterment of the industry—agriculture industry in the province of Manitoba. And no better time, especially when we've seen the beef industry go through some very challenging times, like BSE.

And we're seeing the challenge of young generation ranchers coming back into it. This is an opportunity that we want to bring forward to the agriculture industry and provide incentive for the young generation, for various programs that we're bringing forward to the young producers, because we definitely need the beef numbers and we want to work with producers and organizations in appropriate locations in the province of Manitoba.

I also want to indicate a number of other things that's very key to us, and that's all part and parcel about the fact that we have the Port of Churchill, as—Mr. Speaker, as you're quite familiar with. We've got a port. Given the fact of the amount of grain that was harvested this year and the importance of the Port of Churchill being of a viable option and alternative place to move our grain, and possibly the future holds in store that we will provide an opportunity to bring in products from European countries through the Port of Churchill. And I want to assure member opposite from Midland that we're thinking positively and, yes, the minister will be working very forwardly on that. And I have to say congratulations to the Port of Churchill exceeding their limits from last year and probably almost setting a record for the amount of tonnage that's been brought forward. And that was—that's the great thing about it.

And we have another great thing, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Manitoba, is CentrePort. We are working with CentrePort. We are perfectly located in North America to handle the upcoming opportunities of providing services throughout the province of Manitoba for the betterment of agriculture at the end of the day.

Now, I understand that we talk about certain things that are challenging, and some of them are challenging. An example is communication, and, you know, I've talked to my constituency on a regular basis. I talk to a number of people where I attend various functions. From the rural perspective, and I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest complaints I'm hearing about is the cellphone service that is lacking in the rural departments. And I keep saying to them it's unfortunate that the visions of the members opposite at that time chose to sell MTS, and it's become a private enterprise that someone's not making a financial incentive for private industry to invest in the importance of cellphone service. So what we need to do is to find some alternative mechanism, and I'm sorry to say that members opposite choose not to acknowledge the fact that how important cellphone communication is, high-speed internet service is, to the future of agriculture in the rural landscape.

I'm very honoured, Mr. Speaker, to have the title change to Rural Development, because I really believe in the fact that cellphone and high-speed communication is a key asset in rural development for the province of Manitoba, and our Throne Speech somewhat addresses the importance of being somewhat diversified in the importance of agriculture in the

province of Manitoba, and I want to assure that we will, through the province of Manitoba, be involved more so in agriculture than we've ever had.

Some of the great stories that I want to share also with members opposite is the fact that the Growing Forward 2 has brought forward some great incentives and we will work with. And some of the key pillars, Mr. Speaker, is innovation, competitiveness, market development, and industrial adaptation. These are key towards—as our Throne Speech has indicated, we are moving forward towards jobs and economic development, and agriculture will play—will play—a key component of that.

I've had the opportunity to meet with a number of ambassadors from various parts of the world, and, Mr. Speaker, they look at Manitoba, look at Canada being one of the safest places that we can do business with. They are truly very comfortable with the fact that its food safety is the No. 1 issue of theirs and they feel very comfortable about the international relationship we have with Manitoba and with Canada.

This all links into the fact, Mr. Speaker, of CentrePort, Port of Churchill, and the opportunity as we move forward. We have a great institute in Portage la Prairie called the Food Development Centre. And one of the number of great tributaries towards agriculture is that we have young entrepreneurs—are entrepreneurs of the world, having the opportunity to develop a product and use the Food Development Centre to finalize the ingredients to make it a finished product. We can refer to the hemp seed. We can talk about the buckwheat. We could talk about the sea buckthorn. There is a number of food ingredients that we've put through the Food Development Centre, and we will continue to do that.

And I think, at the end of the day, when we have a partnership with the producers, whether it's crop production, beef production, pork production, this is an opportunity where we can add value to the province of Manitoba through agriculture, and that is part of our job. That's part of our teamwork between our different portfolios in our government, to work forward to increase the economy of the province of Manitoba, and I see we will.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very short speech that I'm going to present, and I just want to allow more time for members opposite or my fellow ministers to have an opportunity to speak on it. But I do want to

assure you that agriculture is really front and centre of the Throne Speech, and I just want to assure the members opposite, be prepared for the ride because we're going to have nothing but great news for agriculture for the next number of years, and we will work with agriculture producers as I promised we will.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the Throne Speech and to the amendment made by the Leader of the Opposition.

First, I'd like to recognize the recent devastation left by the Haiyan typhoon in the Philippines. It's hard for us to comprehend the extent of the destruction and the number of people who have been left homeless and without sufficient access to food and to shelter. It's important that we are reaching out to our friends in the Philippine community to offer what emotional and financial support we can under these very stressful circumstances.

\* (15:10)

I also want to share my sympathies with our friends south of the border for the devastation left by the recent tornadoes and the severe thunderstorms in the Midwest United States with, of course, the most severe being in Illinois. Our hearts go out to them as they engage in the recovery from these severe weather events.

And I want, as well, to recognize that this week is Holodomor Awareness Week. It's important that we're all aware of the devastating genocide and famine in the—in Ukraine in 1932 to 1933. It's also important that we learn from this and other genocides the reasons for what happened and why it happened and that we act effectively to prevent such genocides from ever occurring again in the future.

I want to say a thank-you to the residents of River Heights who elected me and who I represent. River Heights is a wonderful, friendly community with many outstanding people, like Jim Carson, Bev Larmour and Ara Dungca, who were recognized earlier this year with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal. Our resilient and lively community spirit is reflected in our Kelvin Clippers and Grant Park Pirates football teams and the many Corydon Comets teams who continue to play hard.

The River Heights community is also home to the Chai Folk Ensemble, the only Israeli folk

ensemble in North America to perform exclusively in—to live music, a vehicle for continuing Jewish culture through music and dance in Canada. They are now preparing for their 50th anniversary next year and I anticipate a fantastic celebration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect for a moment on why we're here. We are here to represent and to care for the people of our province. We are the servants of the people. It is in this context that it's of great concern that under this NDP government, Manitoba middle-income families have continually been left behind over the last 14 years, with two-income and single-parent families watching their incomes disappear in a myriad of taxes and increasing costs, the majority of Manitoba's workers, the backbone of our province, are being squeezed.

Sadly, while the throne speeches of the last 14 years have made many flimsy promises, this government has delivered little for hard-working Manitobans.

The status of Manitoba families has hardly changed. Manitoba's middle-income earners have consistently experienced a flat line in their disposable incomes after inflation, year after year. Indeed, for far too many, incomes are not even keeping up with inflation. Manitoba families are feeling frustrated, financially squeezed and worried about slipping backward as they try to keep a roof over their heads and feed their families.

After 14 years of neglecting families in Manitoba, the NDP have conditioned Manitobans to only hope but not expect any improvement from this government. We had little expectation for anything other than the status quo in this Throne Speech and on this, the NDP have delivered, again. Manitobans would have liked to have seen a Throne Speech that offered real hope for rising incomes and greater opportunities for Manitoba families. Alas, we didn't.

The major focus of this Throne Speech was on infrastructure, on spending on what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has coined core infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, more than seven months ago when the government presented its budget, the primary focus of the budget was on raising the provincial sales tax by 1 per cent, from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Since April, the Premier and his Cabinet have attempted many explanations for how the money raised by the extra 1 per cent on the PST, which they've been collecting since July, how that money will be spent. I've estimated that there've been about 50 different proposals and last week, on Tuesday, in the Throne

Speech, the government provided their 51st, again, a vague and unfocused option for spending the money.

In presenting their various options, this NDP government began by saying it would be spent on infrastructure and then began by talking about infrastructure as roads and bridges and flood prevention, but they also extended this to include schools and hospitals and then, over the course of the last seven and a half months, the government issued a series of announcements using each to reflect on how this road or back lane or recreational centre or school or playground or house was an example of how they were spending the new money from the increased provincial sales tax.

Indeed, as the days and weeks passed, soon the government was talking about items which weren't infrastructure at all, as if the PST increase, which remains without the legally required referendum approval from Manitobans, as if this increase was there for anything and everything that the government was asking. Manitobans very quickly became skeptical about the rise in the PST and the large number of claims that were being made for why the PST was increased. Since then, last Tuesday, after about 50 proposals in one form or another as to what the rise in the PST was for, the government decided that core infrastructure was the buzzword of the moment, meaning that the vast majority of things that they'd claimed to be spending it on over the last seven and a half months was actually just misleading Manitobans.

For reasons known only to themselves, the NDP government have led the people of Manitoba on a tortuous journey to the point where, quite frankly, no one in Manitoba really knew where they were going to spend the PST money on. Indeed, we were to find out in the two weeks before the Throne Speech that the government had covered such a tortuous past that they themselves had forgotten what they were going to spend the PST money on, and as a result members of the government decided that since they didn't know for sure, they had to ask some people, and so they invited a wide variety of people in meetings in the run-up to the Throne Speech. So that after seven and a half months of telling people what they were spending the money on, they were going to do a complete about-face and ask people what they thought. And so, as a result of this process, the NDP government has come forward in its Throne Speech to say that they will spend the money on infrastructure—core infrastructure, they say. But, because of the circuitous path the government has

taken and their recent conversion to the idea that they should only spend it on core infrastructure, we are left with a question. We ask, why should the latest option for spending the PST money be any more credible than any of the 50 which preceded it?

To top off their statement in the Throne Speech about spending the PST money on core infrastructure, the government has thrown out a number, \$5.5 billion, that the provincial government now says it will spend in the next five years on core infrastructure. This is an interesting figure, particularly given that the government will likely only raise about \$1.4 billion in the last five years from the increase—in the first five years from the increase in the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. The \$1.4 billion represents about \$200 million in 2013-2014 and then an average of about \$300 million in each of the next four years. Now, \$5.5 billion is about four times \$1.4 billion, and in the information provided by the government it's become apparent that they are including dollars provided by the federal government and dollars provided by municipalities. But, no, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), in the media scrum, said that every penny spent was to be spent by the provincial government, though, in some cases, they would, of course, rather be pleased if the federal government would consider reimbursing them for their expenditures. So much for the federal government being a partner; the federal government is just there for reimbursement.

As I mentioned Monday in question period, the Premier has often taken the position that taxpayers' money is his money to do with as he wishes, and now, in taking the position that federal and municipal government dollars are also his money to do with as he wishes, the Premier has moved to a new level—his claims over the money he's spending, which is not just from Manitoba provincial taxpayers, but from municipal taxpayers and federal taxpayers as well.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is important and so, of course, is spending every cent of taxpayers' money wisely and with honesty. The people of Manitoba have been and will continue to watch. The Premier and his government have a record of overspending. Whether the Premier will spend wisely or not, will we—we will be watching closely.

It is, of course, of interest that this NDP government says in the Throne Speech that it's committed to working with the municipalities on asset management plans to maximize the life of local infrastructure. This optimization of spending and

efforts to ensure infrastructure lasts and lasts are vital and are elements that we've been calling for for some time.

\* (15:20)

But I would begin by asking this question: Is the Province actually optimally managing its own infrastructure, let alone trying to manage the municipalities' infrastructure? Let me give you one small example. As Manitobans know, for many years I've been calling on the Province to change from a drain, drain, drain approach to water management to an approach which balances water retention with drainage so that water is not continually coming off the land faster and faster.

There is at South Tobacco Creek an example of the water retention behind 27 small dams which reduces the peak flow off the land by 25 per cent. This is good infrastructure management because reducing the peak flow has increased the lifespan of road and culvert infrastructure and decreased the damage to this infrastructure. Instead of changing their approach to water management, the Province has continued its drain, drain, drain approach which results in greater damage to infrastructure and a shortened infrastructure lifespan. The Province needs to get its act together first before it preaches to municipalities.

In another example, the Province has included in its list of priority infrastructure a redevelopment of the Daly Overpass on 18th Street in Brandon. Now, this is actually very important to the people of Brandon, but the project appears to be getting announced without the normal engineering and traffic planning studies which would be expected to precede such an effort. There have been proposals put forward which might be more effective in dress—in addressing the congestion issues at much less cost which do not appear to have been fully evaluated. We would expect much better planning than this. It appears that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is so keen for a photo op he's jumping in with an announcement without having done the sort of due diligence and homework he's calling out the municipalities for not doing.

In summary, while infrastructure is to be supported, like all other government expenditures—well, not all under the NDP, I must say—infrastructure spending must be subject to due diligence and care and wisdom, all items which the current NDP government seems to have a rather short supply of.

The third area I'd like to discuss is the fact that the current NDP government has sadly and has epically failed in many major areas over the course of the last 14 years. With this record of failure, one has to be at least skeptical of the grandiose plans put forward by the Premier, plans which already appear to be short on proper planning and due diligence.

One thing that can be said about the NDP failures is that they followed a balanced approach: failing on fiscal management, failing on social spending and failing on environmental stewardship, failing on everything. First, on fiscal management. When the NDP government came to power in 1999, they promised to balance the budget. In 2008, because this NDP government had failed to put Manitoba's fiscal house in order, they passed legislation so they'd only have to balance the budget every four years. In 2010 they failed to keep even this watered down promise, and again legislation was changed to allow the government to excuse their own failures. After 14 years of failures, Mr. Speaker, one has to ask why on earth would the people of Manitoba now trust the NDP government to honour their current fiscal promises. It's too bad that Manitoba families, those being squeezed out of their hard-earned dollars, can't just rewrite the rules every time they feel that squeeze, thanks to the NDP government.

Second, on social policy. When the Broadbent Institute recently rated provincial governments for delivering on social well-being to their populations, Manitoba was found to be at the bottom of the barrel. Manitoba under this NDP government has done very poorly on such basic measures as infant mortality and educational scores compared to other provinces. The NDP government can hardly blame the organization which gave them this rating since the Broadbent Institute has solid NDP credentials and, if anything, would be more likely to give this NDP government a break. To their credit, the Broadbent Institute was honest and forthright. It would be a nice surprise if this NDP government emulated the Broadbent Institute in this respect.

Middle-class families in Manitoba are concerned about social policy and they're concerned the dollars to help those in need of social services are well spent. The failure of the NDP government to provide an increase in shelter rates to 75 per cent of market rates or any policy reflective of true cost of living in this province stands out as one of the ignominious actions or lack of actions of any government anywhere. The failure of this government to

recognize real-world costs actually exist is reflective of the fact that this NDP government doesn't really concern itself with real-world markets and costs.

Not long ago, at a committee meeting in the Legislature, we heard from people in Brandon that there has not been any rental accommodation available in Brandon at the level of support provided under income assistance, \$285 a month. There has been no rental accommodation available since the year 2000 in Brandon at that price.

The government is forcing people to take money for their children's food in order to pay the rent. The children are suffering and we are suffering as a society because these children are growing up poor, malnourished and with a lack of opportunities that other children have. The NDP policies are short-sighted, outdated, ineffective and uncaring approaches to social policy, and the results are reflected in the recent rating by the Broadbent Institute. Furthermore, on one area of social policy, health and the management of emergency rooms, the Throne Speech was silent in spite of the poor management during the last 14 years and the need for improvement.

Third, Mr. Speaker, on environmental issues this government is also failing. Today, Lake Winnipeg is still the most threatened lake on our planet, yet in 2003 this NDP government said they'd clean up Lake Winnipeg in two or three years. The year before that, in 2002, this NDP government said they'd meet, indeed they promised to exceed their Kyoto targets by 2010. This was later put in legislation, although, of course, they delayed the target 'til 2012. Now just last year the Premier had to acknowledge his failure in keeping even this belated commitment as well.

The Throne Speech gives Lake Winnipeg only a small mention. There's no real plan to improve Lake Winnipeg presented. The government has talked for some time of a new water management plan, but this was notably lacking in the Throne Speech. The government continues with its troubled drain, drain, drain approach to water management and fails to recognize the need to change to an approach which balances drainage with water retention in a way that doesn't continually increase the amount of water coming off the land. The government's present drain, drain, drain approach has increased flooding and has increased the amount of phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg. Further, with climate change and increased amounts of wet weather, the old ways are not what's needed today. The government has

reneged on meeting its Kyoto targets, even though these were put in legislation, and in this Throne Speech there's no plan for where the government will be heading in the future.

Having covered three principal themes, the lack of this government's support for families, their confusing policies on infrastructure and their failures on fiscal management on social management—on social policy and on environmental stewardship, I now want to move on to talk about various additional issues and claims which the government itself has made in its Throne Speech.

First, on child care and early childhood education, this NDP government Throne Speech claimed for our government Manitoba families are always priority, yet this is clearly one of the most vacuous claims in the Throne Speech. It is important that this is exposed for the reality that the NDP government has in fact done a very poor job of supporting families. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the poor support this government has provided for child care and early childhood education in Manitoba for all families.

As was revealed in a panel discussion organized by the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba on September 18th, there's a crisis in the child-care system in Manitoba, with very long waiting times for access in our province and more than 11,000 children waiting. At the present time there are only enough spaces for about 20 per cent of Manitoba children in the preschool years. In Québec, the number's about 50 per cent, and in Scandinavia I understand it is higher, around 80 per cent. We are only 40 per cent as far as Québec. The prolonged waits for access are preventing many middle-class mothers from working. This is putting brakes on our economy as well as hampering the needs and aspirations of ordinary families all over Manitoba. And yet in the Throne Speech the NDP do not even recognize the current desperate situation. We have a long way to catch up to where we need to be and this government has presented no plan. Ordinary Manitoba families are just not a priority for this NDP government.

\* (15:30)

On children: Further addressing important issues for children, such as early childhood tooth decay, improved learning, improved childhood behaviour and decreasing violence, needs to be substantially improved in the approach that's been taken provincially. Similarly, there's a need to improve the child and family services system so that families and

children are better supported and so that fewer children are apprehended and taken into care. Mr. Speaker, 10,000 children in care is far too many, yet, inexplicably, on this the Throne Speech has no plan.

**Diabetes:** In its Throne Speech, the government claims success in relation to diabetes, saying that the number of people being diagnosed with diabetes has declined. Well, the government is referring to a recent report from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. The statement made in the Throne Speech is not accurate. The number of people being diagnosed with diabetes has actually increased, and this comes from Manitoba Health's own numbers. It is only when the data is adjusted to give an age-adjusted figure that there's a very slight decline in age-adjusted numbers. Even then, the incidence figure now, age adjusted, is much higher than it was 10 years ago. Indeed, the overall incidence of diabetes in Manitoba is unacceptably high, reflecting the disastrous and abysmal policies of the NDP government with respect to the diabetes epidemic.

As we pointed out, an effective approach to the epidemic under this government would have produced a very different result, preventing up to 30,000 new cases of diabetes and saving the provincial government up to \$600 million over the last 14 years. By now, this could have eased the tax burden as well as improving the health of middle-class families and all families. Indeed, sadly, when it comes to diabetes, the current Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his NDP government must rank as having done a very poor job, another NDP failure.

Well, progress on rapid transit, as announced in the Throne Speech and this week, is welcome to Manitoba families. It's come all too slowly under this government. It's taken 14 years to have 3.6 kilometres of rapid transit, getting our university students, staff and faculty halfway to where they're trying to go. Once again, the Throne Speech falls short of where it should be, and it could have done better and we should've been there sooner—all the way, by now.

**Innovation:** The Throne Speech talks of the importance of innovation and commercialization of new ideas. It's not enough, Mr. Speaker, just to talk about innovation. Over the course of the last year and a half, drastic changes have occurred in Manitoba with respect to our innovation capacity, with the loss of the institute of biodiagnostics, the loss of the cereals research laboratory and the loss of significant agricultural research capacity, to name a

few. The Premier and his NDP government have been pretty quiet on these losses and have been ineffective in ensuring a strong future for grains research and have failed to achieve their promised coming together of the Canadian national grains institute, the cereal research lab and the research activity at the Canadian grain institute.

We are looking at long-term repercussions, negative repercussions for the future of the grain industry and the future of our province. Innovation and commercialization of innovations is important for middle-class jobs. But the government has managed to leave us short of a meaningful action plan in the Throne Speech.

**Privatization of the Property Registry:** In the same Throne Speech that the Premier and his government talk of the failed policies of privatization, and—elsewhere in the Throne Speech the government talks of how it has privatized Manitoba's Property Registry. They say, we partnered with the private sector to develop a new model for delivering Property Registry services. What is very clear from the way the government has privatized the Property Registry is that the NDP are not business people. The failure to tender the sale of the Property Registry is incomprehensible unless one recognized that the Premier and his NDP government seem to know very little about normal business practices like tendering for a major sale like this one.

The extra cost that will have to be paid by all Manitoba families to access necessary information is obviously not a concern for this NDP government. From the example of how the same company has operated in Ontario, we can expect very high prices here in Manitoba and poor service all at the same time, all the result of the NDP giving a monopoly to an Ontario company without ever tendering the sale in the first place. It is likely that one day there will be an auditor's report on this sale, and it's likely to not be very complimentary to the NDP, just as the auditor's report in Ontario was not very complimentary to this company.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, Liberals will not support this Throne Speech. It is far short of what Manitoba families need. It is far short of what our province needs.

Thank you.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to begin by recognizing an important Elmwood event. On November 7th, the

Elmwood Giants brought Elmwood High School its very first football title. The Giants had a five-wins-two-loss regular season record and beat the West Kildonan Wolverines 14 to 7, to win the Winnipeg High School Football League's Andy Currie A Division title. This come-from-behind victory demonstrates the determination of this team. Special congratulations to standout players Andrew Ricard, Brady Welburn and Shaun Neil, and I also want to congratulate the head coach, Nathan Falk, Principal Mike Babb, and extend best wishes for continued success next year.

In addition, I'd like to mention that many of my colleagues—and I'm sure members on the Conservative side of the House—have been attending fundraisers over the last week or so for the Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. And the Province of Manitoba is contributing \$300,000 in provincial support, and believe there's support coming from Manitoba lotteries and liquor, as well, and the federal government, of course, also stepped up to the plate. And it's a very serious issue in the Philippines and certainly the Filipino-Canadian organizations are very active in raising money for the effort.

Now, Mr. Speaker, regarding the Throne Speech this year, we see a—it's very clear—we see a very big contrast here between what the opposition members are saying and what the government members are saying. You know, if the economy was in the bad shape that the Conservatives say it is in, then it might resonate with the public. But the fact of the matter is that—and the reason they come across as such dour, doom-and-gloom people is because they are trying to turn what is essentially a good economic story into a negative economic story. And certainly I know that's not good for their mental health, to be making continuous speeches, just running down the province and saying negative things about the province.

The truth of the matter is that we are, at some point in the future, maybe 10 years from now, we are going to look back and see this as a golden era where Manitoba's population was increasing. You know, this wasn't the case before; the members know that. Even in NDP—previous NDP governments, we had had decreases in population, we went through recessions before. That isn't what's happening now. We have population increases year after year, since the NDP became the government in 1999. We have an unemployment rate the third lowest in the country, primarily because we do have a balanced economy, we have—we're not reliant on any one particular sector, unlike Alberta or BC or other

provinces. And it's reflected when we go out and knock on doors and talk to members and voters and constituents.

And we do, you know, hear the odd complaint, but let me tell you that when I asked them whether, you know, they're working, I go through the whole house, and they're all working, every one of them is working. So then what is the problem? The reality is there is no problem. The opposition are trying to create a problem, stir up a problem and get people to believe things that don't exist.

The misinformation that we hear from this opposition every day is mind-boggling, and it would take me a whole hour just to go through the individual points but we all know what they are. And why they would continue to, you know, repeat such nose stretchers is just beyond me, but I guess they figure that's the way to go.

\* (15:40)

Now we are in historic low-interest-rate economy at the moment. Now, you know, if you look at the pattern over the last 30, 40 years, we did have interest rates in the 1950s—early 1950s in the same range we are now. So this has happened before. But, when you have low interest rates like we do right now, this is the time to be building infrastructure. I mean, we'd be having to build the infrastructure anyway, because when the bridge in Minneapolis collapsed five or six years ago, when the bridge in Québec collapsed, these facilities would've had to have been replaced. But had they been replaced—have to have been replaced in the 1980s, the interest rates as you know were in the 18 to 20 per cent range, and that would have had—the cost would've had to be borne by the people, by the economy in the province. But we have—are fortunate to be living at a time when we have low interest rates and it just so happens the infrastructure has to be upgraded.

And, Mr. Speaker, you will know that you personally have fought the battle before—against some big odds, I might add—to, in fact, impress upon the government that very point: that infrastructure, the roads, the bridges need to be kept up, because at the end of the day, if you don't fix it today, you're going to pay even more tomorrow to do it.

So they—I don't expect the opposition to be cheerleaders. I don't expect that, but I expect a certain amount of honesty in their criticism and maybe, you know, picking more selective points, because, you know, governments do make mistakes,

and I—they should—they have every right to pounce on mistakes that the government makes. But just to be totally negative, I mean, let's just look at what's happening in the world right now. We have the situation with the European Union countries who unilaterally adopted the Sterling Lyon approach—you know, acute protracted restraint—and just shut down their construction projects and shut down their economies, and what do we see? Twenty-six per cent unemployment rates in Greece and in Spain.

Well, guess what? President Obama and our Prime Minister here in Canada, they had a choice. They could've followed the Sterling Lyon European Union approach and hacked and slashed their way to prosperity, which doesn't work, or they could've done, Mr. Speaker, what they did. What they did was build infrastructure. The Obama administration has spent huge amounts of money in the last five years doing infrastructure—not make-work projects, but infrastructure that needs to be done. The federal government, to their credit, have done the same thing. They didn't hack and slash like Sterling Lyon did, like these Conservatives here that are sitting next to me would do. They follow the Sterling Lyon model, acute protracted restraint.

In 1977, what do they do? They just mothballed Limestone. They mothballed senior citizens projects, and at that time I happened to be a fundraiser for the provincial party and the treasurer of the party and I did visit businesses before the 1981 election. And I can tell you that over and over again engineering companies, construction companies, architectural firms would confide to me that, I vote Conservative. I usually support the Conservatives, but I can't afford to support the Conservatives or vote for them because they shut the bloody province down. They—you—if you're running an architect firm, an engineering firm, a construction company, if you happen to own Taillieu Construction, what do you want? You want to support. These Conservatives want to shut everything down. Well, what is the company going to do? Lay off their employees and the unemployment rate's going to go up. The construction companies can't make money. Engineering firms, architect firms cannot make money, cannot employ people if you shut the province down. If you don't build hydro projects, if you don't build roads, if you don't build bridges, if you don't bring—build schools and hospitals that is going to be your result, and you only have to look at Greece and you only to look at Spain to see where you would be versus Canada and the United States.

So, you know, the public can see that they're very, very lucky to have a government that understands this, that they do not want some out of control crazy people running the government, which is what they will get if they vote for the Conservatives. And in a—not to mention the fact that Hydro will be in jeopardy and they would be trying to sell the Hydro company, because their track record has been that way.

Whenever they're in government—I have the benefit of having been around here for a while and know what happens when they come in. And their private manipulators, you know, their puppeteers come in and start, you know, working on projects with their government to start privatizing these things. They wanted to privatize Autopac at one time. They wanted to privatize the telephone system; they did privatize the telephone system. They've sold off all sorts of businesses and so on because of ideological needs.

So, you know, the members should embrace the fact that we have low interest rates, the fact that we should be trying to create jobs. The Hydro situation is a really good example, where they run around like chickens with their heads cut off, complaining about all sorts of little, you know, one-offs about spot market hydro pricing and they don't like that the bipole's going toward the Saskatchewan border, it should be going down the east side, and all these complaints. And yet they appeared before the Hydro committee and they listened to a 45-minute presentation and they totally looked in awe of the presentation. They didn't have any real questions because Hydro is explained to them, that we're going to pre-sell the power before we build the dams. There's no big risk here.

We've got people outside the country supporting—they're our best supporters. We had the vice-president of Minnesota Power here who just wowed the audience on CJOB a couple of months ago, who is a big salesperson for Manitoba Hydro power, because they know in the United States that in 10 years time, they have mandated requirements by law that they have to have 30 per cent of their power produced by clean sources. And the only clean sources would be nuclear and hydro. And you can't build a nuclear plant in 10 years. You can't build one in 20 years. So that's not an option. Hydro is the only source. And they are prepared to sign very healthy contracts that benefit Manitoba. And these guys want to—they wanted to destroy that. They want to argue against it.

We have a federal former minister in the Conservative government, Steven Fletcher, who actually sees light at the end of the tunnel and wants to build an east-west power grid, much the same way that John A. Macdonald built the railway. And yet he doesn't even get support from his own dozen members of the Conservative caucus in the federal Parliament, not to mention these guys who just poke holes in every argument. We have signed a power agreement with Saskatchewan for a hundred million dollars. Now, we should be having a tickertape parade led by these members. They love Brad Wall. They love Saskatchewan. You know, sometimes I think they want to move to Saskatchewan. And all of a sudden we hear nothing, not a word—not a word—from the Conservatives about a hundred-million-dollar power sale, not to mention a memorandum of understanding where Saskatchewan is going to buy 500 megawatts, 2020. You know, where is the recognition that this is the way to go, this is the right thing for Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro to be doing, by this—by these members opposite?

So, you know, they are doing damage to the Manitoba economy, to Manitoba Hydro, by trying to pick apart and stop the Hydro projects. *[interjection]* Yes. And we're—and with their kind of leadership we are going to end up in a big, big mess, with huge deficits. You want to talk about big deficits, all you have to do is look at when Clayton Manness was the Finance minister, we had a record 800-and-some million dollars in deficit in a year.

\* (15:50)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I saw some slides the other day that were sort of instructive. I don't have them here today, but I will in a few days, and basically look to debt-to-GDP as a good indicator of how well an economy is doing. And did you know that in a chart of about a dozen industrialized countries, that the United States—hard to believe, listening to those Republicans, you know, the people that these people follow in the United States—you know, saying how the United States is going off the cliff because the debt is too high. The debt—the GDP in the states is like, I think it's 13 per cent. It's really excellent, No. 1. Canada's No. 2, and then it moves up from there in industrialized countries, and some of them are quite high—

**An Honourable Member:** So your point is?

**Mr. Maloway:** So my point is, to the member for Springfield, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba's

debt-to-GDP dropped since we, the NDP, took over the government. When the leader of the party, the opposition, was here in the 1990s and the Conservatives were defeated and the NDP took over, we have actually improved the debt-to-GDP ratios and there's no recognition on their part that that is, in fact, the case.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have in my constituency another bridge that needs replacement, and that is the Louise Bridge. People who know the Louise Bridge is over a hundred years old, and if you listen to the Conservatives they would leave that bridge for another hundred. They would not build it. But the fact of the matter is that it's on the schedule to be rebuilt and actually would be straightened beginning in 2014. The Louise Bridge would speed traffic and help alleviate congestion, and members will know in this House that there's a lot of traffic congestion due in part to the enormous construction boom of the last 10 years, particularly in the Transcona area.

This high density of new houses has required the construction of the provincially led Plessis Road underpass, plus even more construction that will come as demands for more efficient transportation occur, because there's just construction everywhere. I mean, that just must depress these Conservatives, you know. I'm sure they don't go far from their own houses, because if they drive around they'd see construction everywhere, houses being built everywhere, and with those new houses that are being built we have to improve the infrastructure around those areas so that people can get around easily.

When the—the Province has announced just today that we are to expand the rapid transit line to University of Manitoba, and this is something that has been in the works since 1976. It's taken us that many years to get to this point, and I guess we are happy about all this, Mr. Speaker, because the next rapid transit corridor will run out to our constituencies of Elmwood and Transcona, and so before we could get our northeast corner built, we have to get this one on its way. So I think that that alone makes us quite happy that it's being done, and not to mention that it's just a very, very, very, very good idea.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Conservatives are not likely to change their approach in the House here. They have got their marching orders and their notes that they have to follow, and I would like to also talk about the—this whole idea about the hydro

projects and why it's very important for the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) and other forces in the province to work together for the hydro grid, okay. The member for St. Paul voted against our private members' resolution here for the western power grid. And, you know—and then on the other hand, we have a power sale to Saskatchewan, and then I start reading his comments and I see that he's kind of caught in a corner, right? It's not such a bad idea after all, he says.

So I'd like to see these opposition come up with some sort of consistent approach here. Get on board, support the infrastructure program to build some transmission lines to promote power sales to Alberta and Saskatchewan, and stop standing in the way of progress. We need the construction jobs—we need the construction jobs in Manitoba, and that's the way we should be going.

Anyway, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I defer to the next speaker.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** It's a pleasure to put some words on the record with regard to our leader's amendments to the Throne Speech. I believe that each of them were well thought out and I believe that they respect the communication and the consultation that we've been doing with Manitobans over the past number of years, and I think that what we have put forward are some very solid ideas with regard to how Manitoba can do a lot better for its citizens.

It was rather interesting listening to the member for Transcona put words on the record with regard to Hydro and the spin that he was putting on the record. My husband works for Manitoba Hydro and I think he's going to find what you put on the record rather interesting, Mr. Speaker, because I know that a lot of the things that the member put on record are not exactly the truth. Not exactly—not exactly—how things are happening in Manitoba Hydro. And I believe that there's a number of things that need to be corrected.

We are not looking at a government that is taking care of Manitoba Hydro. They are not taking care of their front-line workers. We're seeing that with a shutdown of the offices in rural Manitoba and we are seeing that with families who are having a very serious challenge in having to relocate from one community to the next, Mr. Speaker.

You know, with the sale to Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan has been selling hydro to Manitoba, is

my understanding, in around the western part of the province for a period of time. You know, so, you know, I think that what this government does is expands on the truths, and, you know, as an opposition it's our role to hold government to account, to ensure that what they are saying is accurate, and we know for a fact that they are very good at their spin. But what we also know are more and more Manitobans are catching on to that spin and realizing that that is not what is really happening within this province. We are seeing more families in Manitoba using food banks, and I believe that when the members opposite were talking about how well this province is doing, I think they fail to reflect on the challenges so many Manitobans are facing with regard to putting food on their table or taking care of their children and their families, Mr. Speaker.

We saw in the Throne Speech, from this government, a lot recycled commitments. We saw, you know, a comment made with regard to the Shellmouth Dam upgrades, and we were able to ask a question in question period today with regard to the Shellmouth Dam, and the government is very good at putting out a press release and then indicating, you know, click here to go to the application for compensation for the landowners who have been looking for compensation from this government for two to three years. So they click on that button, and what do they see? They see that the press release of November 8th, 2013, actually has a click button for application. You go onto that and the application deadline is actually February 2013. Like, that's like eight, nine months ago, Mr. Speaker.

\* (16:00)

So, you know, if this government really cared and actually paid attention to how serious the issues are out there and how important it is that when you make a promise you follow through, and I think that this is a good example of this government not paying attention to detail, not being transparent about their responsibilities to Manitobans. They have a very serious lack of credibility when it comes to people that have serious—have faced serious flood issues in the southwestern part of the province and the parkland area, and I believe that when you do something like that and put an application deadline in the past tense just shows the true colours of this government.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial sales tax increase, the 8 per cent, from 7 to 8 per cent has been a very serious economic challenge for so many

communities that I represent and even the ones that are just outside of my riding like Roblin and Gilbert Plains and Grandview and others along there, Swan River. But I'll speak to the families and the people that own businesses in the Russell area and the Binscarth area, and I know for a fact that a lot of people are just buying their basic needs in some of these stores and going to Saskatchewan to get their bigger items, and that is such a sad, sad state because the government really didn't have to do this. They didn't have to pit Russell against Yorkton by having the 3 per cent difference in PST, and I think that that just shows a government that really doesn't think about how that affects small business and how it affects small communities. We see so many businesses struggling to just make ends meet and you see so many community people support those businesses because they know how important it is to have that business in the community. But when you have a government that continually creates roadblocks and challenges to make a buck, then you begin to lose faith.

I know my niece and my soon-to-be-nephew bought a house in Langenburg. They wanted to be closer to home, but they just didn't want to be saddled with that extra debt that this Province has put on its residents. So they've settled, you know, 20, 30 minutes just outside of Russell and have a beautiful home. But, again, have chosen that because they feel that they have a better opportunity in Saskatchewan, and that is, you know, how it affects me personally, but so many other families in Manitoba.

You know, despite more than a decade of unprecedented revenue, and I think that's what really gets Manitobans, is that we have seen unprecedented revenue from the federal government and from their taxes that they have to pay, that we are seeing key public services deteriorating under this NDP government. We see less front-line staff in the hospitals. We see them working very, very hard, and we know that many of them are putting in extra shifts. And I know because my daughter has been in the hospital and we've had other members in the hospital who—and the nurses just have no trouble sharing that they just feel that when this government talks about how well they're doing within the health-care system, it makes them very, very concerned that they just don't understand what's actually happening out there, that they don't understand that the nurses are being run off their feet, that they don't understand that they're having to

turn patients away because there are no beds. They have no idea that the number of people that are waiting for placement for personal-care homes are taking up acute-care beds. This government just, you know, just doesn't seem to understand that you cannot continually throw money at situations without having some type of respect for how those dollars are being spent, some accountability to that dollar.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing less access to daycares in my constituency instead of, as this government projects, more. You know, I just find this rather interesting that there seems to be different rules for different folks, and I just believe that, you know, this government can't say that they have a great record on daycare. I know for a fact that when I was raising my children and had to find a daycare I had the opportunity to check and choose which centre my children would go to, and I'd—I'm—it's sad to say, but I don't believe that young families have that opportunity today. They are on wait-lists. They are having to find alternative care. And I believe that that's not a bad thing, but it leads you to wonder if every family out there that is looking for alternative care is actually having their child placed in the best possible and the best, safe possible—space possible for them to be taken care of.

We don't want to put children at risk, and I believe that this government, by indicating that they have done, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, unprecedented support for the daycare in Manitoba—that's not true. We've heard of a case—or more than a few cases in Manitoba where, you know, children have not been taken care of, that they—families could not find adequate daycare and have had to put their children at risk. One situation where there was no caregiver, a parent came to pick up their children and there was absolutely nobody there—no adult there taking care of those children.

So, Mr. Speaker, when situations happen like that, it begs the question, do you believe that child care is actually meeting the needs—or that the daycare situations are actually improving? And I beg to differ.

The member for—what's Bonnie's riding? Is it—

**An Honourable Member:** Bonnie's riding is River East.

**Mrs. Rowat:** River East, thanks. I just wanted to, you know, say that I really appreciated the comments that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) put on the record with regard to, you know, the issues

that are facing seniors in her constituency. And those issues are the same across the province, Mr. Speaker.

The increase in rent, Mr. Speaker, is a very good one. Individuals on fixed income, whether they're seniors, persons with disabilities, people on social assistance, they're all feeling the crunch. And their dollars—when you increase the PST, that tax that goes to this government and taken away from families, which are dollars that would be spent in their neighbourhood. It's a fact that when people in low-income situations, whatever money they get goes right back into their circle community, their little area. You know, and so it's not only hurting them, it is also hurting the community that they live in and that they support. And I don't believe that it's fair that families have to determine whether they should be putting more money into rent and less money into the health and wellness of their family. And that is a very tough decision, a very sad decision.

And we've heard this government talk about a tough decision it was, how tough it was to raise the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. Well, think about it on the other side of the coin, Mr. Speaker, how tough it is for those families who are now faced with having to pay that extra tax and having less to provide for their family. Less opportunity for those children not only to have sporting opportunities, but also just to have that little extra something that they can enjoy, whether it be a LypSyl or whether it be a nail polish or whether it be, you know, a pair of mitts that are just a little bit warmer than the basic model of mitt. It's all those things are things that parents—moms and dads—have to think about, is how can they provide for their children. And when this government talks about how important it is and how tough it was for them to increase the PST from 7 to 8 per cent, I think they should actually reflect on how that is affecting families and the tough decisions that they have to make.

The NDP's spending spree is costing Manitobans today through lost jobs and higher taxes. And I talked about the lost jobs of Manitoba Hydro employees. There was a woman that—a single parent in Souris who now has to travel to Brandon to work. The government—and there were several that lobbied when they met with Manitoba Hydro to have her stay in the community because she has a small—or young daughter. And it's going be—what's going to happen in this situation, Mr. Speaker, is this woman is going to have to work in Brandon. So she's no longer going to be able to just take that extra 15 minutes to go and watch her daughter participate in the school play or

listen to her speech in class or be able to go and catch her play volleyball during recess.

\* (16:10)

So all these things, as much as the government feels are not that important and that they think that all of this is, you know, going to support their decision to go on the east side at the detriment of families like Christine [*phonetic*], it just makes me very sad, Mr. Speaker, that this government has forgotten the real reason that they're here is to respect and support Manitoba families. So I believe that the burden that they're passing on to people like Christine [*phonetic*], to her children, to my children and on to grandchildren of these individuals is just very disrespectful.

We need to ensure that there's effective delivery of supports and services for individuals, Mr. Speaker, and by not balancing the budget, at some point somebody's going to have to take care of that. And I think that what this government has failed to do is affecting so many Manitobans and so many families who are now going to have to pay more than \$1,600 per year due to these tax increases. And, you know what, we just purchased a new home, and I just could not believe the insurance increase on the house insurance. Oh, my goodness. And I just thought, this is absolutely ridiculous. So I sent a copy of this down to my cousin in Alberta, and I just said, look at this. You know, this is absolutely ridiculous, and you know, it just makes you wonder how many families may decide, you know, I think I'll just stay where I am, or I'll think, you know—or I'll move down to another area of the country and, you know, get that much further ahead.

The NDP have continued to spend and it's missed its mark for I guess so many years and so many initiatives, so many projects and all of that adds up, Mr. Speaker. All of that overspending and excess spending adds up. Look at the Hydro building. How many millions of dollars did that building cost? Man, that would have helped Christine [*phonetic*] stay in the Souris office, I think, for another 10, 15 years. What do you think, Mr. Cullen from Turtle Mountain? Don't you think so, Spruce Woods? You know, like I think that Christine [*phonetic*] in Souris would have been able to manage her job in Souris and would have been able to continue to appreciate and enjoy her daughter's activities in the community and, you know, that just makes you very sad when you see how government has overspent in so many ways, in so many projects,

and 'expecially' the Winnipeg Hydro office. That is a major bone of contention with so many people, so many people employed by Manitoba Hydro in the rural areas. That's just absolutely disrespectful.

So what we see now are families having to move, families to have to make tough decisions about how they're going to actually, you know, manage with their family when they have to work in a different community half an hour away. *[interjection]*

And that's a very good point with regard to service, Mr. Speaker. Having the opportunity to actually go in and talk to an agent, talk to a service person in the office and—to determine how best to move forward, either on a line relocate or whether to, you know, change a service. It's, you know, now have to travel to Brandon or you know, work through a toll-free number, and I think that's just very disappointing. I know that, you know, in a small community, people get to know each other in a way that where somebody will phone Brad at home and just say, you know what, our gas stove isn't working. You know, is there a way that you can, you know, get here and give it a look? And often, you know, Brad will say, okay, I'm on call or if another guy's on call, then you know, they'll get to it right away. And I just think you lose that personal touch. You lose that opportunity to work together.

Now, with regard to service, you know, it—repairs, like, oh, or actually asking for a new line, Mr. Speaker. If you ask for a new line out in rural Manitoba for hydro, it could be two to three weeks, maybe longer, before, you know, somebody can get out to do that service. And, again, that's a reduction in the quality of service that people are receiving in different areas of the province.

And it was interesting because I believe it was in around the Minnedosa area or Shoal Lake area, one of the workers had indicated to a client that, you know, it'd be a couple of weeks before they can get service and so what happened is this client—this service person actually got reprimanded by his, you know, by his superiors because he was not supposed to be indicating to the clients when they can get—when likely they'll get their service work done. Now I don't know if that's because, you know, the government is trying to, you know, dictate when service calls will be given or to hide the fact that there is that much of a wait time for service, but I'm just very disappointed that this government continues to, you know, disrespect Manitobans.

So, in closing, I guess, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I will not be supporting the government's Throne Speech. I will be supporting the amendments put forward by our leader. And I believe that what is quite clear to Manitobans is that Manitoba continues to fall further behind other provinces and Manitoba continues to pay, including families who have to now pay, as I said earlier, \$1,600 more a year alone due to these tax increases.

So, when you see the government bring forward a Bill 18, The Business Practices Amendment Act, improving consumer protection and enforcement, I think it actually—this government might want to take this bill back and look at ways that taxpayers and ratepayers in Manitoba can actually be protected from this government, Mr. Speaker. I think that would make more sense.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud of this Throne Speech and I am honoured to rise on the behalf of our government to respond.

My constituents in The Maples will be happy to know that our government is addressing our province's challenges head-on. This is a balanced and intelligent plan to lead Manitoba into the future, and it will not only protect us from economic uncertainty around the world but also will allow us to continue to grow. We are focused on things that matter most to families and on building a stronger province for the future, and that means a steady, growing economy with more training opportunities and good jobs for families.

Before we begin, I want to take this time to thank my constituency assistants who are doing a fantastic job at assisting my constituents in The Maples—also many volunteers. This is one of the busiest offices in the province. I also thank my constituents for their continued support and their eagerness to engage in our democratic process. They are very involved in their community, and I'm always grateful for this. Finally, I would like to thank my family and wife.

I grew up in agrarian India and first came to Canada many years ago. This country was strange and unfamiliar, and I struggled to build a life in Vancouver where I was often subjected to racial slurs and discrimination. I thought of returning to India and my father even raised the money to bring me back home. However, by a twist of fate, I heard from friends who were on their way to Toronto.

They had stopped in Winnipeg and had found that there was no reason to move anywhere else. They had all been able to find jobs and their lives seemed very affordable. They encouraged me to join them and I did not need much coaxing. This is how I found myself in our wonderful prairie province in the centre of Canada. I'm proud to say that the things my friends found are still true. Newcomers are encouraged to work and live in Manitoba and this government continues to ensure life remains affordable here.

This allows businesses to invest in our province since there is no shortage of great people willing to come here and staff their companies. A decision to increase any tax, no matter how little, is never easy. But we have made responsible decisions to raise revenue in the fairest way possible. Our 10-year Building and Renewal Plan and the time-limited PST increase will provide us with the revenue necessary to continue investing in the critical infrastructure like flood protection while protecting schools and hospitals. We are making a different choice rather than members opposite would make, and we are proud of that choice. We refuse to cut deeply like the opposition had proposed. Making these cuts would hurt families and undermine Manitoba's steady growth.

\* (16:20)

Service to community cannot be measured in speeches and instead it can be appreciated through genuine services delivered to our community. I am working for that how for the people in The Maples—now for the people in The Maples. We have the obligation to make the decisions that will benefit the people in our community and benefit our children so they grow up in this strong Manitoba and can build their future.

The marginal increase for the PST was a difficult decision to make, but it means we can take advantage of matching dollars from Ottawa to build our core strategic economic infrastructure without cutting from our schools and hospitals. The revenue generated from the new point of PST will be fully dedicated to new investments in core strategic economic infrastructure such as highways and bridges, flood protection and infrastructure in our cities, including roads, water and sewer systems.

A key focus of mine has been helping families with various matters, ranging from education, immigration, health and employment. Much like our government, I take this balanced approach because I

recognize the big picture of how these sectors relate with one another. Our plan, outlined in the Throne Speech, has allowed my colleagues and I to focus on the things that matter most to families. A bright future for families will only come from practical solutions, a balanced approach and a renewed focus on the most important basics, such as skilled training, good jobs and economic opportunities for the future, all of which are addressed in the Throne Speech.

A key operating challenge facing Manitoba businesses is a shortage of skilled labour. The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, or the MPNP, has helped revive immigration to Manitoba, which almost stopped in the early 1990s under the PCs. We now attract thousands of new Canadians and their families to our community every year.

One specific hurdle for these new residents is getting their previous academic credentials recognized in Manitoba. I have worked with the government to remove these barriers so that people from these skilled professions can now apply for the Provincial Nominee Program. Under the PNP, an independent study shows that 85 per cent of newcomers who settle in Manitoba get jobs within three months, and most end up working in their chosen fields within three to five years.

Encouraging young people to pursue post-secondary education is also crucial to ensuring they have the skills they need when entering the workforce for the first time. This is something our government is clearly focused on. We are proud of the fact that Manitoba has among the lowest college and university tuition fees in the country. Our government has worked hard to make post-secondary education accessible for everyone. We also introduced the Manitoba Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate, which gives students a 60 per cent income tax rebate on their eligible tuition, no matter where they went to school, as long as they are living and working here in Manitoba. This helps graduates in those crucial first years after graduation and it has already put nearly \$100 million back into students' and recent graduates' pockets.

New education and training initiatives and better resources for young entrepreneurs will ensure every Manitoban can take advantage of these opportunities. Our Throne Speech introducing many improvements that will help families in my area and in Manitoba, such as better and streamlined tax credits for employers to take on more apprentices and new tools

to help match apprentices with job openings; a new grant program for young entrepreneurs in technology-based start-ups and access to better resources for young people in skilled trades, wanting to start their own businesses; expanded co-op and workplace credit options for high school students and upgrades to more shop classes so students can gain practical experience; new schools for growing neighbourhoods, including a new school in north Winnipeg and a major new investment in Frontier Collegiate Institute in Cranberry Portage; a new language arts curriculum to improve reading and communication skills for all students, new French as a first language and French immersion curricula and a renewed focus on improving high school graduation rates for Aboriginal communities; a new Churchill transportation authority to diversify and market the port to attract investment and develop opportunities in North, so—in the North.

Private, public and civic spheres act individually and collectively, whereas the public sector depends on businesses for private sector investment for the well-being of our citizenry, tax revenue to pay for public services and much more.

An effective policy understands and takes into consideration that business needs government to compensate for negative externalities such as the recent global economic recession to also effectively function and prosper. The Throne Speech clearly understand the logic.

Manitoba has a highly diversified economy and a diverse export base with the highest share of exports to the rest of Canada. We also have a below-average reliance on the USA and other international exports, which helps us weather the ups and downs of the global economy. In addition, we are opening up new opportunities for Manitoba businesses.

We have focused our international trade strategy to reflect our growing success in trade with the BRIC nations. We have seen great outcomes regarding Manitoban international trade. Over the past 10 years, our export trade with Brazil, Russia, India and China has increased by 463 per cent. Manitoba has also partnered with the private sector to create Manitoba's World Trade Centre. As part of a global network of over 320 locations in 96 countries, the WTC is set to become an exceptional partner in training and preparing our companies to export globally.

Record investments in building Manitoba infrastructure will create thousands of good jobs and keep the economy growing. Infrastructure spending is an important government expenditure that benefits both the public and private sectors. Businesses use government-built infrastructure in a manner that helps generate profit and jobs for the private sector. Business expansion results in a stronger provincial economy. In the long run, we are creating more jobs for families by building infrastructure that allows for a diverse economy, whether that means improving our highways to ship goods out of the province or investing in digital innovations for e-commerce. Without adequate infrastructure, business will have difficulty distributing their goods and services and our economy will now—will not grow. This means less economic security for Manitobans who will have to leave our province and look for work elsewhere. We want to keep building a strong province so our children can stay in Manitoba.

The new five-year, \$5.5-billion plan focused on core, strategic economic infrastructure will build Manitoba's roads and bridges, flood protection and municipal infrastructure like water and sewer systems. This means clean water for families, safer roads and more protection for their homes and cottages every year.

Manitoba's geographic location and transport systems are a key advantage in making us a supply-chain hub. We are the heart of the continent and the centre of Canada, with trade links to the east, west, south and north. Our multi-year reconstruction of Highway 75 will better protect this vital route from flood-related closures, and major upgrades to the Trans-Canada Highway to Ontario will strengthen another critical trade route. Highway 75 also serves as the northern part of the transportation link between Winnipeg and the US, and is used heavily by trucker drivers and weekend shoppers travelling from Winnipeg to Grand Forks and/or Fargo.

\*(16:30)

We are proud to have established CentrePort Canada, building on our province's well-established transportation network of air, rail, trucking and sea routes connecting businesses with 'incent'—with the entire continent. Major investments in the Perimeter Highway system and in the new Trans-Canada Highway bypass around Headingley will improve traffic flows and help realize the full potential of CentrePort Canada Way.

For families and students, there is a rapidly growing transit option available that offers communities a viable, cost-effective way to attract non-traditional riders and get them to their destinations more quickly: bus rapid transit. Bus rapid transit is a lower-cost, more easily implemented alternative to a rail-based commuter transit system, yet still includes many popular features of rail-based public transportation, such as routes that are clearly laid out and run on a frequent and reliable schedule. Bus rapid transit systems also often include low-emissions vehicles, electronic and/or automatic payment methods and real-time arrival and departure updates.

The PCs and Liberals voted against our legislation to invest the equivalent of one point of the provincial sales tax into the infrastructure and transit priorities that benefit municipalities. However, in our Throne Speech, we have made a commitment to expand Winnipeg's rapid transit project, including completing the southwest corridor to the University of Manitoba, adding an additional lane to the Pembina Highway underpass and improving active transportation.

We are also choosing to invest in critical infrastructure to grow the economy and to protect against future flooding, but not at the expense of our schools and health centres. Our Throne Speech sets out advancing work on a permanent flood outlet for lakes Manitoba and St. Martin, which is another important element to once again protect Manitoba families.

We have also focused on primary education to ensure our children have a bright future ahead of them. For example, with the support of the government, I helped my community get approval for a new K-to-8 school in Amber Trails which will open in 2015 and includes a daycare centre. This, along with the 60 per cent tuition rebate, will give our youth opportunity to learn and become future leaders so that they can give back to their community.

Families in The Maples will also soon have a new place to relax with their children. Manitoba is providing over \$60,000 for a new community park. The park will have play structures, family areas and space to play soccer, cricket and football. The construction of this park would not have been possible if it were not for The Maples' strong community spirit. With the help of volunteers,

including myself, we helped convert the area from an environmental disaster to green community space.

Another way to build a prosperous community is by embracing a healthy lifestyle. In 2009, I suggested that the Manitoba government include a tax credit for fitness centre fees. Now this suggestion has been implemented. There is a strong connection between the health and well-being of people and their work environments. When people feel valued, respected and satisfied in their jobs and work in safe, healthy environments, they are more likely to be productive and committed to their work. Again, this balanced approach helps both families and business in the long run.

We should be proud that Manitoba is one of the most affordable provinces in which to live, with a high quality of life. We will continue to take new steps in the years ahead to improve the services families count on most and protect consumers. Since 1999, our government has delivered personal income tax savings for Manitoba families that will total \$520 million this year.

We have a plan, highlighted in the Throne Speech, to make life better for all Manitobans. New child-care centres will give parents more convenient and affordable options for care. We are also making sure every Manitoban who wants one will have a family doctor by 2015, starting with our commitment to hire 200 more doctors. We are also expanding core options for cancer patients and building more clinics for families to conveniently access the care they need. To protect families, our government has introduced new rules to ensure fairness for families when negotiating the sale of or renovations to their homes.

I am proud of new legislation highlighted in the Throne Speech to address high-cost credit products that risk ballooning debt for vulnerable people. To financially assist vulnerable populations, we have introduced an expansion of Manitoba Hydro energy-efficiency incentives to lower income renters.

Our many rivers, lakes and parks also make this province a great place to live. Manitoba families expect strong leadership that will protect our natural habitats for all Manitobans to enjoy them for generations to come. I am proud that the Throne Speech targets investments that strengthen provincial parks and further efforts to protect and restore the health of Lake Winnipeg.

We are keeping life affordable for families by having the basic education property tax \$700, saving Manitoba homeowners and tenants \$16 million annually. A decade ago, we had among the highest property taxes in Canada, but this is no longer the case. Manitoba's property taxes are now among the lowest. We are going to continue to keep Manitoba affordable and help older Manitobans by eliminating education property taxes for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I have quoted the Sikh holy book, The Guru Granth Sahib, before, but I believe it contains a great message that is worth repeating once again. It says that we should have such a society that all the people feel included and no one should be left out, and the 10th Guru said there is only one race, that is the human race.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to rise today and talk about the Throne Speech. Actually, an hour and a half out of my life I'm never going to get back. I was kind of worried there for a little while that it might go on for two or three days. I can tell you that it was interesting, to say the least, that this government talked about everything but yet nothing. And I can tell you that whenever we talked to the general public that was here, it was quite interesting to hear some of the feedback from the members from the public, and, of course, from our MLAs.

But, first of all, I want to welcome you back, and, of course, the table officers. And last night, after a function down in the Golden Boy, I had the opportunity to walk back by Hansard, and some of the staff was leaving and we had an interesting conversation there too. So I appreciate Hansard and I know they have a hard time understanding me, and so does my wife, by the way, so I think we're kind of all in the same boat there. So, anyway, I do appreciate what Hansard does for us and every member of the House, for that matter. So I'm not alone or immune in that situation.

But I can tell you that one of the things that concern me the most is in my critic roles, and I want to focus on them just a bit before I get into some of the comments put on by members opposite.

Agriculture has probably had the best year that they've ever had financially with the great crop they had, and well-deserved. We know very much so that, you know, the communities of Arborg and Ashern and even just north of me in Fraserwood, the amount

of rain they had there in 2005, right through to almost 2009. Thank goodness the financial institutes worked with them and helped them keep those farms alive, so we know that agriculture's going to survive, especially now in that area, but we had some other areas hit pretty hard down in the Darlingford area and others this year. But it will save the economy for the province of Manitoba. We know very much so that the numbers and the amount of crop that's still in the bin is significant and, hopefully, that'll pull us through.

We never know what next year's going to bring, but we have some issues that are—that are on the forefront, and the government did mention it, but they didn't mention what their plan was when it comes to MCOOL and, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and most members of the House, myself and the Minister of Agriculture, we had a conference in Vancouver whereby we brought forward a resolution that was actually sponsored by our colleagues to the south, the member from North Dakota, and also a member from South Dakota that unanimously passed the MCOOL Resolution drawing attention to the mismanagement of the US government.

\* (16:40)

But what this government missed in the Throne Speech in regards to the MCOOL was what they were going to do about it. And I can—I would like to put it on the record and make it official that whenever we have a situation whereby the United States or any other country wants to bring forward a position to block trade, which is an important part of our organizations working back and forth together, we need to look for other markets. We need to look at markets, whether it be in China, whether it be in Japan, whether it be in Germany. We need to be very focused on making sure that we have a market for our products.

Now, as of November 1st, we've seen the beef market actually closed to most of our Canadian beef only because of the fact it's too expensive to process that beef, to put it through that other line and label it with the US manufacturer saying it's grown in Canada, marketed in the United States, processed in the United States. And we get it; we understand that we need to know where our products come from and they are safe. In fact, we have the safest, most-efficient-cost food in the world. And we should be very proud of that.

So we should look beyond our borders, look on—beyond the fact that some of our trade needs to go to

other parts of the world, and if the United States want to—wants to lose that market and be at jeopardy, then that's their decision; they'll have to be the one to suffer for it down the road. In fact, I can tell you, the pork industry has done a great job on their own. I know our colleagues in Neepawa, with HyLife, they have exported about \$90 million worth of pork products to that country. We're very proud of them looking outside the market. We need to encourage the beef producers to do that, and part of that would be that government taking that lead role in ensuring that markets would be there.

Now, there's some other things that come into play and especially in the beef market, and that's the other thing they missed in the Throne Speech was what this government's going to do with community pastures. Now, the Manitoba Beef Producers have reached out, reached out to the government, saying what is this government's plan. What are they going to do to help us to ensure we have a place for our market steers to go, our cow-calf operations going to go? So we need to ensure that we have that issue resolved, quite soon, actually. And I'm encouraging the Minister of Agriculture to do that as well because it's something that we need to sit down with the producers and come to some type of a resolution so that they can make their plans for next year, because you can't wait 'til spring and then all of a sudden say, this is what we're going to do, so.

And the other thing that they announced in the Throne Speech that we've been calling for, and that is on the beef insurance program. The beef insurance program was actually established in Alberta two years ago. So we're to the point now where we're at an unfair disadvantage in regards to growing our beef, keeping feedlots within the province of Manitoba and also in Saskatchewan.

Now, Saskatchewan was ready to make that announcement, according to, you know, my colleague out there, Lyle Stewart, the Minister of Agriculture, at agribition. So we know that it's getting closer. We know the Province of Manitoba is working towards that achievement as well, but I can tell you, it's something we need to move forward again quite soon rather than leave it too long in order to—for us to be able to maintain our feedlots within the province of Manitoba because we not only lost our processing capacity, we also—we don't want to lose our capacity to actually grow beef within the province of Manitoba and have it finished here as well because of the jobs that it does create.

And also I want to talk about the processing plant in Carman that we've been advocating that the Province funnel the money out to. We've been asking for that in order to ensure that it's able to grow and prosper. We're—we were looking for the Throne Speech to say that the government would be able to make that commitment. We have not seen that. We have not heard that this government's going to move forward on that commitment, and we certainly encourage them to do so in order to keep that beef processed right here in the province of Manitoba.

And I know that we don't have a lot of time here and we have other people that want to speak, but I want to come back to what—one of my other critic roles, and that's the Minister of Infrastructure. And it was interesting, when he got up to debate, he talked about some of the things that he wanted to talk about. In fact, he said the critics, actually, the member from Lakeside, you know, he's had a portfolio for a while, and I have to say the ultimate is in—is that he fails to get up and ask any questions about infrastructure.

Well, that wasn't just a challenge. So we did that. We did that, and what have we heard today and yesterday in regard to those questions? He referred back to many other statements but never answered any of the questions.

Whenever you look at the gas tax—it was brought in in 2012; after this government said they were not going to raise any taxes at the door in 2011, they brought in the gas tax. And I can tell you that, in order to match the gas tax alone, it would have been \$590 million. That is clear as whatever is out there. It's a documentation brought forward by this government, and, obviously, they don't want to live up to it.

The next thing we talked about was the flood dollars that was supposed to be committed and forecast to be spent. And what did we see there? Since 2009 'til now, we've seen a 28 per cent—almost 30 per cent—downturn in those investment dollars. Now, in 2009, they budgeted \$197 million; they spent \$98 million. The year before the big flood, the flood of the century in 2011, which we know had a devastating effect which cost Manitobans a huge amount of money.

And this government's quick to blame the federal government for not being there, and I want to come to what the member from Interlake talked about, is that the federal government has stuck to their guns in regards to DFA, a be-all, end-all—the money is there—

and they don't want to go outside the box in that regard, he says.

Now, we know very clearly how DFA works. DFA is managed by all provinces. And, if you want to make changes to that—and Calgary, Alberta, just went through this with their flood through Calgary this spring, and some of those other communities—whenever changes to DFA want to come about, or need to come about, because of an omission or whatever needs to change, it is up to the First Ministers in order to sit down with the other ministers and the federal government and negotiate those changes.

We had—during the flood of 2011—we had the opportunity. In fact, the flood was in June—May—June of 2011. In July of 2011, the—our Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province had the opportunity to reach out to those other First Ministers across this country, and say, look, what we had in Manitoba wasn't working. But he didn't; he didn't take that opportunity. So why would he criticize—the member from Interlake, or anybody on that side of the House, criticize—the federal government if it's not a priority, where you don't want to bring it up and talk about that at the Cabinet table, with your federal colleagues, across this great country of ours? So I'm just a miffed.

And, since then, you know, Alberta's had the same situation, as I've said earlier, this past spring with their flood. And we know very clearly that they didn't bring it up either. So, obviously—obviously, there must be more to it than that, or it's working well, or maybe not well enough. But we have heard that discussion.

So I know that my past ex-brother-in-law—he runs the Calgary Stampede. And here's what happened, because they wanted to make sure the Calgary Stampede did go on. And here's what happened: three years ago, they decided to make sure that they're going to be able to move forward if a flood ever did occur. And they know they're in that flood plain, just as we know Manitoba has a large base of a flood plain as well. So you put safeguards in place, you put programs in place, in order to try and protect yourself from that. So here's what the Calgary Stampede board did: they went out and bought an insurance package three years ago. And, when the flood came, they were insured, they were protected. They called in gravel trucks, Hough's loaders, whatever they could get their hands on, and they actually moved forward—they moved forward. They

had generators running. In fact, the Calgary Stampede went off without any major hitch. But, behind the scenes—behind the scenes—the government wasn't there. The Stampede actually did it all on their own. The City of Calgary pulled forward with them. And I can tell you that every one of those board members was out shovelling or helping and working each and every day.

And I know that, whenever we look to the federal government, that if there's a change that we need to make, we should be bringing it up.

And so I take pride in those people that protect themselves the best they can. And a lot of times it's through no fault of their own, where they have to make those decisions.

Now, in Manitoba, it's a little bit different in regards to insuring for flood. And we know that those are some of the issues as well. But that's what we have. That's where we have the opportunity to sit down, and with our counterparts in the federal government and other provinces, and say: What are your issues? Where are our issues? And how do we get there in order to make that resolve? So I think it's really important that we do that.

\* (16:50)

And, whenever we reach out to the federal government, we don't negotiate through the media. I mean, that would be the worst thing we can do.

In fact, you know, the Minister of MIT announced the other day, along with the First Minister, they're going to build Highway 75; build it up and flood proof it. Well, that's great. And they said they're going to do it on their own, but if they truly wanted to have the federal government there, they would have waited. They know there's a black-out period in that particular area in regards to negotiating with the federal government. So now the federal government has an opportunity to say, no, there's no relationship there. You don't negotiate by making an announcement, and I know the government said it doesn't matter, we're going to do it alone. But is that wise? Is that wise for protecting the investment of all Manitobans? I wonder if we look at the fact that whether or not if they put on 60 per cent or 40 per cent or 50 per cent of that investment, that would be significant. In fact, I believe that project is \$250 million, roughly, thereabout, so, if the federal government come in for half of—that would be \$125 million that we could spend somewhere else.

We know there are infrastructure shortage and whether that's a \$125 million out of the availability, whether to fix a pot hole downtown or pave a road up towards those hard-working folks in Arborg. Those are issues where we need to be able to reach out to our cousins and neighbours and other people and say, hey, we're doing the best job we can with the money we have, not saying, we're going to do it with or without them. I mean, that is not the way you want to try and start negotiation with anyone, whether that's your business partners—you don't negotiate that way, at least in my opinion.

And I also—I want to talk about the outlet on Lake Manitoba. When this government had the flood of 2011, we know very well that we had to make that decision and we know that those folks around Lake Manitoba had to have that water in order to protect the city of Winnipeg. Do they need that much? Did we listen to us? I know, and I put this on the record before the former member of Riding Mountain asked in the House, and the Water minister at the time, the member from Riel, said that he must be getting senile because it was in the fall of 2010, and he said then that the water table was high. We know very well it was high in all parts of Manitoba; we couldn't handle any excess moisture. So there was a shot fired across the bow saying that, look, be ready, we could possibly have a flood. So what did we do to prepare for that? And that's what we're talking about.

In fact, today, when I asked my questions, the leader asked his questions in regards to infrastructure, flood dollars being allocated and we see a 28 per cent decline in those dollars. One makes you wonder whether or not this government is truly serious about flood mitigation, and I know that the outlet on Lake Manitoba is one we've been calling for. We would love dearly to see it proceed as quickly as possible. We know that there's checks and balances that need to be done. We know that there's 'envitalmenters'—environmental studies that need to be done. We know that KSG is also doing that study as we speak. How soon that will happen, again, we have no idea.

The other thing that concerns me in regards then to Lake Manitoba, the government in their wisdom decided to do away with the Lake Manitoba Water Stewardship Board, and that concerns me as well. We had people that was appointed to that; in fact, it was appointed by this government back in 2003, right before I was elected. The report was worked on and tabled and brought forward to this House. Since then, I guess they've decided that this government no

longer needs to have that Water Stewardship Board, but what about the grassroots input—the grassroots input from those people that live on the lake, that live around the lake, and it is so important that they ever will have a voice, and, quite frankly, I think the government's missed the boat on that.

And I know that we also looked in the Throne Speech for this government to come clean. In fact, the lake residents and farmers were promised by this government that they would have multi-year income coming back to them in order to re-establish some of those farmlands that were flooded, taken out, through no fault of their own. And we're very disappointed that this government didn't own up to that commitment. In fact, the First Minister said the average payout was over \$300,000, and we can certainly tell you that it's not there, it's not true and it's very disappointing that this government did not own up to it and correct it. Those hard-working folks come here—actually had a meeting with the government, tried to make them understand that what they put on the record was actually wrong, and I guess time will tell, and we leave very little hope out for those folks that there will be any further compensation coming as we move forward.

And I know that the other thing I was disappointed in in regards to the Throne Speech was health care. And that's so important to all members of this House. We know it is, but when we see 19 ERs close down, 19 ERs closed down by this government in the last two years leaves one to wonder where the priorities are. And, you know, we have some members of the House that still have a doctor. This government promised everybody would have a doctor. And I can tell you that that's so important; no matter where you are in this great province, we need to have medical attention, we need to have physicians, we need to have nurses, we need to have those fine folks that are going to be able to have those same opportunities as the people in Winnipeg.

And so we know that clearly we cannot have highway medicine. We need those services available to us so that, whenever there is that emergency, it's not going to be one of a traumatic experience and lose a loved one because we don't have those resources available.

And I know in a number of parts of my riding alone we have seen time and time again whereby people have been rushed off, rushed through to the city. Thank goodness my riding's fairly close to the

city. But still it's the time limit that we have in order to get them there and get them there in a safe way.

So I know there's others that need to speak, and we'll leave it at that. And I can tell you that I encourage—I encourage—the members opposite to look at our amendment. I think the amendment is not only in order; it's one that all members of the House should suggest that they support it as a friendly amendment. It's the opportunity for the government to say, yes, we are right, we are right, we're going to side with the Tories; it's time that we finally had that opportunity to right the wrong and leave it at that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak again on the Throne Speech 2013.

First of all, it is a privilege to represent, you know, the good citizens of The Pas constituency. I'm a proud citizen of that region. Right, I'm a proud citizen of that region. You know that region is comprised of people, very resourceful, highly motivated to keep their communities growing, so for me to be here representing their interests is an extension of that kind of commitment to keep that region growing. I'm part of it, and so I'm very proud of that.

I had the privilege, of course, to be a major player in that region as a leader in my community. And I understand, you know, how things work, how

things move forward; you got to make, you got to have a vision, you got to make some bold decisions about where you want to take the communities 10, 20, 30, 50 years ahead of us.

And for me being part of this government, you know, fits well with me because we think far ahead. You know, decisions we make today are based on what's required for the next generation, the children that are not yet born, making sure that they have social and economic opportunities that'll benefit them and their families down the road.

I want to also say that building a stronger economy is a goal for everyone that should be concerned now, next year, 10 years, 15, 20 years, 30 years down the road. And, to focus on more jobs and better jobs in all the industries that are involved in northern Manitoba, well, we're part of that now. We are partners. Not before, we weren't partners before, but now we are.

You know, when we have investments in education, training, opportunities, parents feel great about the future for their children, and, as you can tell, our regions, our communities—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for The Pas will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

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