

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

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(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 21, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 21—The Churchill Arctic Port Canada Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 21, The Churchill Arctic Port Canada Act; Loi sur la Société canadienne du Port arctique de Churchill, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: We're all proud in this province of the fact that we, with the Port of Churchill, have the only deep-sea Arctic port in Canada and it's a port that has tremendous potential. What this legislation does is put in place a brand new structure. It has many elements that people will recognize very similar to another tremendous organization that we have in this province, CentrePort.

And, again, Mr. Speaker, it puts in place an entity that will help connect Manitoba, Canada, through Churchill, to the world.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And this is the reason for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition's signed by H. MacKay, W. Joyce, W. Matheson and many, many more Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's submitted on behalf of C. Vandenbossche, B. Johannesson, T. Butow and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And this is the background to this petition:

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

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

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

(4) The differential in tax rates create a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this petition is signed by R. Bertrand, G. Bertrand and R. Lambert and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): 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.

* (13:40)

(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.

Signed by J. Letkeman, W. Neufeld, N. Kehler and many other Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

(2) The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

(3) If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Municipal Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by W. Jefferies, D. Denning, K. McCloy and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents.

(2) The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

(3) If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited and will—while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

(4) Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently affecting municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely fund—flood compensation.

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Municipal Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

This petition's signed by H. Penner, D. Derksen, T. Penner and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today members of the Westwood Collegiate's Westwood Warriors varsity volleyball teams, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors.

And also in the public gallery today, we have with us today 55 grade 7 to 9 students who are participants of the Lord Selkirk Junior Parliament under the direction of Ms. Nadia Gorbay. These students and their schools are located in the constituencies of the honourable Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson) and the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Balanced Budget Law/PST Increase Government Accountability

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has put a price on his integrity of 1 per cent. He promised that he wouldn't raise the PST and, of course, he's proceeding to do just that. But it's not just the fact that he is doing so, it's how he went about it.

Now, earlier this year, he called his senior finance officials together and he told them—and, I'm sure, much to their surprise—that he was going to jack up the PST, and his top guy said, you know,

there's a law, sir, there's a law. You have to have a referendum first.

The Premier said, no, no, I'm going to ignore that law. I'm going to ignore that law, and I'm going to break two promises at the same time. First of all, our party has always run on honouring the balanced budget law; I'm going to break that promise. And secondly, I ran, personally, and all my candidates did, on not hiking the PST. I'm going to break that promise too.

Now, why did the Premier break both those promises and put himself above the law?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, before the Leader of the Opposition asks questions of others, maybe he could explain to us why he broke his promise not to privatize the telephone system. And it's been well over 15 years now. He's had every opportunity to apologize to the people of Manitoba, and he hasn't done it.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition himself said that the balanced budget legislation was not binding on future governments. Future governments have a responsibility to act in the public interest, and our jobs and economy plan is about growing the Manitoba economy, steady growth in the Manitoba economy, at a time of global economic uncertainty and continuing sluggishness in the recovery of the North American economy. It means more jobs for young Manitobans. It means more economic opportunity for people in Manitoba. It means a brighter future because we have a clear plan to move Manitoba forward.

Mr. Pallister: A brighter future with higher taxes and fewer jobs, Mr. Speaker: That's not a brighter future for anyone.

The balanced budget law is very, very clear—very clear. It says before you can raise the PST, you shall have a referendum. Shall: the strongest word, I understand, in legislation. Shall have a referendum. You shall ask the people.

But the Premier said, no, I don't like that law. Even though I promised to uphold it, even though I promised that I wouldn't raise taxes, why should I obey a law? Why should the NDP government obey a law? That's what the Premier said. He said, let's not have a referendum. Let's add a clause in this tax hike bill that says we're exempt from obeying the law.

Now, in golf a do-over is called a mulligan. Now, what the Premier is saying to Manitobans is, I

want a double mulligan at your expense. First, I want the right to break my promise on the PST. Secondly, I want the right to break the balanced budget law too.

What right does the Premier of Manitoba have to expect young people in this province to obey the laws that he himself will not respect?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the members on the opposite side of the House seem to enjoy spending a lot of time on the golf course. We on this side of the House prefer to focus on jobs and the economy [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker, when the '08-09 recession came, every government in this country, regardless of their political stripe, the federal Conservative government that swore they would never run a deficit, realized that we need to do something to keep the Canadian economy going when we had the financial meltdown emerging out of Wall Street.

Conservative governments in this country ran deficits. Liberal governments ran deficits. New Democratic governments joined with those governments in an economic action plan to create thousands of jobs in this country. We all did it together because it was the right thing to do for the country. It was the right thing to do for the global economy.

Only the Leader of the Opposition wants to spend his time playing golf and looking back at the '90s and the law that he authorized that hamstring the future of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, you'd think the Premier would be good at golf because he's good at getting things in the hole, like this Province's Treasury. But probably he's not good at golf because everything goes too hard to the left. And, of course, you have to play on your honour and obey the rules of the game when you play.

Now—but the Premier did a two for one on this thing. He wanted to lump together his PST hike and give himself a mulligan on the referendum at the same time. He never went to a single PST hearing, not one. He didn't want to hear from Manitobans. But he doesn't want Manitobans to know that. So what better way than a two for one? He puts the two really bad ideas he's had this year—among many others, these two take the cake—and he puts them into one bill and then he only has half the pain of listening to Manitobans.

* (13:50)

Why would he ignore his senior officials? Why would he ignore Manitobans and disrespect them and why would he ignore the laws of our province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, another double bogey from the Leader of the Opposition.

We come to this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, with the responsibility to govern in the best interests of the people of Manitoba and we do that with full regard to the conditions that are in front of us.

And I can tell you, in '08-09 every government in this country, regardless of their political stripe, they saw the credit markets dry up. They saw interest rates soar to 9, 10, 11 per cent. They saw private investment evaporating. They saw the auto sector in Ontario and the United States falling apart, and what did governments do? Conservative governments took ownership in private corporations to keep jobs going in southern Manitoba. Other governments had stimulus programs to create economic opportunities. We all pulled together to make sure the global economy resuscitated as quickly as possible.

We're about halfway through that process. Manitoba has done extremely well. We've had thousands of new jobs in this province. We have people coming to live in Manitoba.

I was just at a conference at lunch hour today—

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

Interfacility Patient Transfer Policy Case Concern (Carole Moroz)

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, just over two weeks ago a woman from Komarno began to experience tightness in the chest and other heart attack symptoms, and rather than wait for an ambulance, her husband rushed to hospital in Gimli. They arrived at 2 p.m. There was no doctor on duty, but the nurse practitioner there conducted some—no tests, but she took vital signs, and because there was no doctor, the situation was discussed, a call was placed, a decision was made to transfer this woman to Arborg hospital even though EMS personnel questioned that decision and even though Arborg is further down the road. It's further north and farther away from major hospitals where doctors and nurses would have the knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the clinical interventions to treat that urgent cardiac arrest.

My question for the Minister of Health is: Why transfer a heart attack victim from one local hospital to a second, more remote local hospital? Is that common? What's the policy?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, I do thank the member for bringing this to my attention. I wonder if, perhaps, he could share some more details with me after question period so that we could look into this matter.

Mr. Speaker, medical decisions are left to medical professionals. This is not something that comes from the Health Minister's office. I know that, on the ground, those people on the front line, they are trained to make those evaluations and make those assessments. If something does go wrong, there are critical incidents reporting in place to look at it.

Mr. Speaker, if the member could provide us with a little bit more detail, my office would want to look into that.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The minister is responsible for policy.

Now, Carole and Steven Moroz arrived by ambulance at that second hospital, at Arborg hospital, where the doctor did EKG and blood work and confirmed a heart attack. But there were no beds at Arborg hospital even though the decision was made to transfer her to that second hospital.

Can the Minister of Health please tell the House: Why would someone experiencing a heart attack be transferred from a first local hospital to a second local, more remote hospital that has no available beds?

Ms. Selby: Again, I would urge the member to bring some information to me after question period so that, if we aren't already looking into this matter, that my office could do so.

Mr. Speaker, our priority is, of course, to find the best patient care in the most efficient and the safest manner. Now, decisions are made at the front line by medical professionals, and those decisions are made according to what's happening right in front of those medical professionals, and a number of other criteria come into play. But I can assure you the priority for Manitoba Health across the province is to provide safe, efficient and high quality health care.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to be clear. This is a huge policy concern and she is in charge, or should be.

But the situation gets worse from there. There's no beds available at Arborg hospital, so Carole couldn't be admitted to hospital. So the situation was discussed, a call was placed and a decision made to transfer her to a third hospital, Selkirk hospital.

Now, the minister knows that with a heart attack early treatment can prevent or limit damage to the tissue. Acting fast can save your life.

So I ask the minister: Why would a patient be transferred from a first hospital to a second, more remote local hospital, only to be transferred to a third hospital? Who makes these decisions and what is the policy behind these decisions?

Ms. Selby: Again, I will request that the member please speak to me after question period so that, if he hasn't provided this information to my office, that we will look into it.

Mr. Speaker, it's why we have critical incident reporting, so that people don't bury things under the rug, so that people will talk about what happened. If something went wrong in a particular situation, we want to get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you the decisions are made in the front line by medical professionals. These are not decisions that are made by the Health Minister, by the Health Department. The people in the front line evaluate, triage and make those decisions.

But, Mr. Speaker, if something went wrong, we want to talk about it, we want to learn from it. We don't want to bury it under rug like they used to do.

Interfacility Patient Transfer Policy Case Concern (Carole Moroz)

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): My colleague from Morden-Winkler outlined very well what had occurred on November 3rd to my constituent Carole Moroz. She literally got a tour of the Interlake in the back of an ambulance, from home in Komarno to Gimli to Arborg to Selkirk to St. Boniface, 225 kilometres, Mr. Speaker, unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health if policy was followed, yes or no?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Of course, our hearts go out to patients if they've experienced a difficult transition through our health-care system. We want everybody to receive the best care in the most timely manner. It's why we work with health authorities, with patients and, of course, with

everyone within the department, that if something doesn't go according to how we would like it to go—and that, of course, would be best patient care—that we look into it and find out what happened. And, Mr. Speaker, we will do the same in this case.

Mr. Eichler: I'd like to table for the House a detailed map showing the ride that Carole Moroz went on, a ride that—and fortunately, did save her life in the end. No one—no one—should have to go under what Carole had to go through.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this Minister of Health what assurances that this will not happen again to anyone else in the province of Manitoba.

Ms. Selby: Might I say, I am glad that this turned out better in the end for the patient, but, of course, a very scary journey that we would not want to see—to happen to anyone.

It's why we've put measures in place like the STARS helicopter, so that if somebody is in a remote area, a difficult area to reach, that we can reach them. It's why we're bringing health care closer to families, why we're opening, whether it be QuickCare clinics or access centres, around the province, making sure people have access to a family doctor.

But, Mr. Speaker, when something goes wrong in a case, we can't bury it under the rug. We can't hide it. We need to talk about it. And that's why we do have legislation that insists on critical incident reporting, so that we can figure out, if something did go wrong in this particular case, figure out why and make sure it doesn't happen again.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Carole almost lost her life. Let's be very clear here. The Moroz family believes that staff did everything that they could and followed policy outlined by this government. The Moroz family went through more than anybody could expect.

The map that I tabled shows this government needs to be clear in what policy needs to be followed. Mr. Speaker, with the on-off-on-off closures of the Teulon hospital, the Morozs were not sure whether or not they should take them to Teulon. Things may have been different if we knew that the ER was open.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister to ensure that not only Teulon but the other 18 ERs are open and remain open. Can they do that for all Manitobans today?

Ms. Selby: I can assure you that on this side of the House we are doing what we can to make sure that there is medical health all across this province. We want people to have good quality care no matter where they live, and it's why we have been working with communities, with health-care authorities to make sure they are.

And we have had success in that area, Mr. Speaker. The closure of the Virden ER was a troubling area, but we worked together with the local RHA and the community, and that ER is back open.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we won't give up on any patient, on any community. We're going to keep working with them to make sure that everyone has a health-care system we feel they deserve.

*(14:00)

Interfacility Patient Transfer Policy Case Concern (Carole Moroz)

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, this minister just said that they are experiencing success. I think that's a callous thing to say when Carole's husband, Steven, is sitting in the gallery this afternoon and joins us here today.

But, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse, because after all that stress and all that elapsed time and interfacility transfers from one to a second to a third hospital, Carole went into major cardiac arrest after arriving at Selkirk. CPR was administered, she was stabilized, and because of her heart attack there, the situation was discussed, a call was placed and that decision was made to transfer her to a fourth hospital, St. Boniface.

Carole almost died. She's recovering at home. Steve is here and Steve said because of all—did the stress of all those multiple and illogical interfacility transfers contribute to Carole's cardiac arrest at Selkirk hospital?

I ask the minister: Did it?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Of course, it must have been a very difficult time for this family. My heart goes out to someone who has faced a difficult time with a loved one, and I am glad to hear that Carole is recovering, but it sounds like it was very stressful time.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the family members here that a critical incident will be looked into. Any incident in this province where people don't feel that

correct care was given, should the case be that something went wrong, should the case be that there was a mistake made, that's what the critical incident reporting will do. We won't hide from it. We won't bury it. We won't keep it a secret. We'll keep it open so that people can learn if something went wrong, and if it did, how we can make sure it doesn't happen again.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the real question is, why doesn't the minister yet know about a situation and how much goes on right under her nose that she's not aware of?

But, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse again, because back at that second hospital in Arborg, because there were no beds, calls were placed and a decision was almost made to transfer Carole even farther north to Fisher Branch or Ashern. A doctor later disclosed that that decision would have killed her. She would have been so remote that advanced cardiovascular life support care that she needed simply would have been out of reach. So this patient was transferred from a first to a second to a third and almost to a more remote third hospital. It's illogical. It's inefficient. It nearly cost Carole her life.

And so I ask the minister again: What is the policy when it comes to interfacility transfers for patients with life-threatening medical emergencies? Is this the new mobile clinic approach they're talking about in the Throne Speech?

Ms. Selby: Again, Mr. Speaker, these kind of decisions are made by medical professionals. They're made by people on the ground in the facility. They're not made by politicians and nor should they be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, should a decision have been made that is perhaps incorrect, if something has gone wrong in a particular case, we're going to look into it.

But I can tell you right now decisions like this should not be made by politicians. They should be made by medical professionals.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Morden-Winkler, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it sure sounds a lot like the minister's blaming the front-line workers in the system. Policy is her job.

You know, and I have to be clear. As Steven and Carole explained their story, at no point did they blame front-line care workers. But what's clear—but what is clear is that this is a system under stress, a system where resources are strained to the breaking

point, a system where there aren't enough doctors or hospital beds and a system that lacks clear policies of where to send a patient who's suffering a major life-threatening emergency.

Mr. Speaker, the Moroz family is seeking answers. With Steve present and Carole listening from home, will this minister give an answer to this Manitoba family who had to experience this terrible ordeal, this absurd odyssey that nearly cost Carole her life? Will she investigate? Will she report and will she do something about this?

Ms. Selby: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we will look into this. We will review all the facts, and if something is not being done as it should, we will review it and that will be changed, because our policy is to make sure that people get the best, the safest, the most efficient medical care, that they get triaged according to their medical need and not according to their pocketbook.

Ambulance Response Times Rural Manitoba

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): We're not sure what constitutes a critical incident. After four hospitals, you would think that's critical. She should have known about it.

Ted Sabourin lives east of the Red River near St. Jean where he has lived all his life. Until now he has felt safe at home, but not anymore. Ted suffered a fall at home and had suffered severe bleeding. He had the opportunity to call his son-in-law—or son that lives down the road. His daughter-in-law, being a nurse, could not stop the bleeding. They made a call to 911. Ninety minutes later—90 minutes later—the ambulance got 7 miles from the hospital to Ted Sabourin's home.

I want to ask the minister: Is 90 minutes an acceptable wait time?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Again, I would urge the member to speak with me after question period. If there's details that my office is not aware of, we would like to hear.

Mr. Speaker, when a family member is ill, when there's somebody suffering nearby, when you're hurt, nobody wants to have to wait. People need to have care as needed, and we are doing what we can to make sure that there is emergency response times. We know that in rural Manitoba emergency calls are up and our response time is down, but if there are pockets around the province where perhaps we could

do better, we want to know about it. It's why we have done an extensive review of paramedic services across the province and why we're working with paramedics to make sure that we are doing better everywhere in Manitoba.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, they've closed 19 ERs to date. That's the type of service that we're getting in rural Manitoba. That's front-line services that are being cut to Manitobans.

I raised the issue of emergency service when the St. Jean bridge was dynamited in February. The community raised it again as well.

It took 90 minutes for medical care to arrive at emergency, which is completely unacceptable. To make things worse, the ambulance drivers were unfamiliar with the area. The ambulance, like all ambulances in this province, are not equipped with GPS. The municipalities, however, have GPS on every residence in Manitoba. The ambulance couldn't find their way. Thirty minutes, they weren't there, a phone call; 30 minutes later, another phone call; 90 minutes.

Does this minister think that 90 minutes is acceptable wait time for an ambulance 7 miles from a hospital?

Ms. Selby: Let me just say one more time that we have seen a significant increase in the number of calls that our rural paramedics are taking and yet, although we've seen an increase overall, their times have gone down in their response time. Mr. Speaker, if there are pockets where we could do better, we want to know about that. It's why we conducted the EMS review. It's why we're working with EMS providers across the province, because if there's areas where we can do better, of course, we want to.

We're working with every community to make sure that they have accessible and timely health care.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the issue of emergency services were raised with the—by the residents of St. Jean when the MIT dynamited their bridge connecting St. Jean west with St. Jean east. But confusion will only continue when they close the bridge on 23 Highway which will make it now a 14-mile trip down the east side.

So, Mr. Speaker, front-line services are being cut throughout rural Manitoba. Does this minister and her government believe that they can treat rural Manitobans as second-class citizens, or does she

believe that 90 minutes is acceptable wait time for anyone in Manitoba?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, I think when we're talking about emergency care it is very important we put facts on the record and not scare people needlessly.

Mr. Speaker, we have—for that very reason, we have land service, we have air service, we have a helicopter. That is why we offer all those services to get to remote areas in Manitoba, whether it's the STARS helicopter, whether it's one of our air transport planes or whether it's rural ambulances.

We are working with communities. And to be very clear, we're not the ones who fired a thousand nurses. We're not the ones who drove doctors out of this province. We're working with communities to make sure they do have health care.

Personal-Care Home Wait Times Prairie Mountain Health Region

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I think that was a pathetic comment by a minister who's responsible for all Manitobans in this province and the health care.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, the wait for personal-care placement in Manitoba is disturbing. In the Prairie Mountain Health region alone 140 people are currently waiting in hospital beds for personal-care home placement.

Because of such high numbers in such a large region, PCH patients are being moved to alternative facilities that may be hundreds of kilometres outside their home community. More than one family in Russell had to face this decision. They were told that their loved one would be transferred to Baldur personal-care home while waiting for a closer placement. This is over 300 kilometres or a three-and-a-half-hour drive one way for family to visit.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health believe that placing family members three and a half hours from their home community is the right care in the right place?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Of course, we value our seniors, and we want to make sure that they live their lives out in a safe, comfortable place, a place that they can call home.

It's why, in 2011, we have built more—announced a strategy to build more personal-care home beds, to

build more personal-care homes. Mr. Speaker, we've got \$200 million going towards building new personal-care homes to support seniors, because, of course, we know seniors do want to live closer to home.

But I have to ask, will this member vote to support that?

Mr. Speaker: I just want to caution all honourable members. I know we have a new microphone system in the Assembly here, and it perhaps takes some getting used to; I know it does for me. But I want to ask for your co-operation to make sure that our books that we use here and the papers that we have before us are not placed on top of the microphone, because it becomes very difficult for our Hansard recorders here to capture the questions and answers and speeches that are in the Assembly. So I'm asking for your co-operation to make sure that the microphones are kept clear so that we can have a clear recording.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, 140 people in the Prairie Mountain regional health authority are waiting in acute-care beds for placement in a PCH. Another 229 are waiting in the community.

Mr. Speaker, on the Manitoba government website, under the personal-care home placement, it says, and I quote: You and your family may wish to visit several homes before deciding which one or ones you would choose.

Well, I ask the minister: How many overcrowded personal-care homes does she think these families likely will pass on their three-and-a-half-hour drive to Baldur?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, since we came into office, we've been expanding home care, we've been adding more supportive housing and we've created about a thousand new personal-care home beds. In fact, there are currently 300 new beds under development and also in Morden, Lac du Bonnet, Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell seniors around this province that what we won't be doing is privatizing health care, cutting home-care services or introducing home-care user fees, something the Leader of the Opposition did when he was in government.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, today we're asking this minister to be accountable to her policies and her decisions, and she's failing to do that.

Mr. Speaker, there are 140 individuals in the Prairie Mountain region occupying hospital beds while waiting for PCH placement. CIHI indicates that the average cost of a Manitoba hospital stay is \$5,400 per day. With the Prairie Mountain health region indicating 94 days as an average wait for PCH placement, this practice could be costing over \$500,000 a day, and that's one region. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority has 82 currently waiting in hospital, 108 in the Interlake-Eastern. These numbers are staggering.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister believe this is the best her government can do? Why has her government not acted sooner on what has now become a serious crisis—

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

Ms. Selby: On this side of the House we respect seniors. We respect that they want to make a choice of where they want to live and whether that may be home-care supports, Mr. Speaker, and in some cases it means a personal-care home. But we do want those seniors to make a choice, and it's why we're building more personal-care homes. It's why we're not freezing health-care capital like they did when they were in office.

Daycare Spaces Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, instead of committing the desperately needed additional 40 to 50 million dollars for the children of Manitoba, for the basic human infrastructure for the future of our province, for child care and early childhood education, the Premier boasted that he's created 12,000 new child-care spaces.

We know that as of the end of September there were nearly 12,000 names on the Province's central waiting list for child care.

I ask the government: Is the Premier saying that he's now solved the problem, that as of today these 12,000 people on the waiting list have places? There's absolutely no families on the waiting list? Is that what he's saying?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that's not what we're saying. We're saying that since we've come to office, against—votes against every budget we've ever had, including the member from River Heights, we have tripled the amount of funding

going into daycare and we've doubled—more than doubled the number of daycare spaces in the province. There were—there are now 28,000 daycare spaces in Manitoba, 12,000 more than when the Leader of the Opposition was in government and daycare spaces and daycare budgets were being cut. We've increased wages for daycare workers by 54 per cent, and we've introduced the first ever pension plan for daycare workers in the province. And now, after having completed our plan, we are out consulting Manitobans again about how to further improve daycare in Manitoba.

We have a growing economy. We have a younger population. We have people that want to come from around the world to live in Manitoba. They want to work in Manitoba. They want to raise a family in Manitoba. And we want a first-class daycare system to support them. That's something we've had in spite of all the votes against it by the members opposite.

Early Childhood Educators Wage Increases

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, so there's still 12,000 children waiting because of poor budgeting and poor planning by this government.

Mr. Speaker, recruitment and retention for early childhood education—educators is certainly necessary to offer the child-care spaces. But because of the short-sighted mismanagement by this NDP government, more than a third of Manitoba's child-care centres have to operate with licence exemptions because they can't get enough trained staff.

Now, the Premier yesterday made claims of an expansion of the child-care program in Manitoba, and I ask the Premier today: By what date is the proclaimed 56 per cent increase in wages that he mentioned supposed to begin in his new plan, and is this increase in wages specifically for early childhood educators?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the 54 per cent increase in wages is already fully implemented. Salaries were less than \$20,000 a year for a daycare worker. They're now well over \$32,000 a year.

And the member needs to know that we are doing a record amount of training. When I travel to Dauphin, I see the new Assiniboine Community College facility there, I see a new daycare centre

there and I see young people from the region training to be daycare workers. When I go out into the schools, for the first time in the history of the province, new daycares are being built in every new school we build. And we are increasing daycare training at St. Boniface university, at Assiniboine Community College, at Red River Community College. And people that are working in daycare actually can work in daycare and get training at the same time, so they can have a salary while they're learning and advancing their skills to be good quality child-care workers. This is a plan that has made a very big difference in daycare.

As a matter of fact, we call it early childhood learning centres now because there's a curriculum there that prepares young people for schools.

Affordable Daycare Government Intention

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, there's still 12,000 children waiting because of poor budgeting and poor planning.

Now, the Premier seems very eager to make claims of child-care and early childhood education expansion, but what's happening is that there are more and more corporate chains moving in to fill in where a lack of spaces exists. With the government's current rigid subsidy policy, as opposed to Quebec's one system for all, two-income families in our province are seeing their incomes cut in half by having a parent stay at home or paying the equivalent to an extra mortgage or more than an annual university tuition on their daycare fees.

I ask the Premier: What is this government's plan to provide truly accessible child care without draining the pockets of Manitoba's middle-class families?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, we have a plan to make sure Manitobans have employment and good jobs. That's our plan, and we're following through on that.

And secondly, we've kept our daycare fees among the lowest in the country, and tuition fees at colleges and universities are the second or third lowest in the country, depending on what institution you have. And any student that graduates from a university program, including an early childhood learning program, and works in Manitoba will get 60 per cent of their tuition back when they do that and make their home in Manitoba.

* (14:20)

The Leader of the Opposition was part of a federal government that cut the national daycare program. We took that over; we funded it a hundred per cent. The leader—the ex-leader of the Liberal Party voted against every budget when we expanded daycare in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, it's not bragging. It's not bragging to say we have doubled the amount of daycare spaces in the province, we've paid for it, and everybody opposite has voted against it.

Power Smart Program Public Consultations

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): That was a great answer, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to another one.

It's kind of fun to watch the opposition parties flail around from one issue to another. I'm more fascinated by what we don't hear about from the opposition benches here. We don't hear many questions about Manitoba's booming economy. We're only triple the national average in our labour productivity. We don't hear about that.

As your economy grows, wouldn't you know it, you need more electricity. Oh, Manitoba Hydro, haven't heard about that since a little announcement with Saskatchewan, have me?

Well, I'm wondering if the honourable Minister for Manitoba Hydro might be able to tell us a thing or two about some neat new initiatives on energy efficiency for Manitobans.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, I'd love to, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, it's expected that within the decade Manitoba could run out of electricity. We could run out of power. If we do nothing, like members opposite have told us to, that certainly will come to pass. We're taking a responsible, balanced approach to meeting the energy demands of the future because we do have an economy that's growing and a population that's growing.

And by using less energy at home, we can sell more on the export market, which members opposite are opposed to, Mr. Speaker. This in turn subsidizes our rates here to keep our rates amongst the lowest on the continent. Through loans and rebates and incentives, Power Smart has saved Manitoba families and businesses millions of dollars, \$845 million at last count, and we can do—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable minister's time has expired.

Interfacility Patient Transfer Case Concern

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): On July 18th the former minister of Health said the ER in Beausejour—the ERs in Beausejour and Pinawa would be open all summer, and then on August 12th she changed her story, saying that it wouldn't be. It seems like the new minister doesn't really know what's happening, so I'm going to give her another chance today.

A patient from Beausejour had to go through five emergency rooms before getting to one that could help him, 200 kilometres away from home.

Mr. Speaker, do I really need to table a map for this minister? Two hundred kilometres from Beausejour to Eriksdale. Really?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I can tell the member across the way that the reason why we're working with communities and RHAs is to make sure that there is access to health care, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that when people walk into an emergency room, they can see a doctor, they can see a nurse. And those communities that have been working to find one, we're working with them to make sure we are recruiting.

But I need to be really clear, Mr. Speaker, that when a patient walks into an ER and there is a nurse there, that nurse is trained to be able to triage a patient, to determine what is the best care for that patient and to determine if that patient should be seen elsewhere. That's a medical professional that makes that decision.

Vita and District Health Centre ER Reopening Timeline

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, on October 17th, 2012, the Vita emergency room was closed on a temporary basis. The community was ensured that it would reopen in a couple of weeks. This emergency room has been closed for 13 months.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) is on record saying there's nothing more important than ensuring your family gets the care they need regardless of where they live.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: When will the Vita ER reopen, or is this just another broken NDP promise?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we're the party that has been bringing more doctors to rural Manitoba. There are now more than 120 doctors working in rural Manitoba.

But we know we want more doctors, and that's why we have a commitment to hire 200 more doctors, 50 physician's assistants. So far we've hired 61 of those this year and, Mr. Speaker, we will keep working until we get the job done.

Emergency On-Call Services Rural Manitoba

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, 19 emergency rooms closed under the NDP's watch and counting.

Not only this, Mr. Speaker, but we have many ERs that now share on-call services. Glenboro, Carberry have been doing this for two years; there's no change in sight in that regard. Additionally, we've got three communities in southwestern Manitoba sharing ER. We've got Killarney, Boissevain, Deloraine working in rotation on ER on call.

This results in many Manitobans being a hundred miles away from an open emergency room. This is a matter of life and death. I've raised the issue with the previous minister, no results to date.

I'm going to ask this new minister: What is she going to do for residents of rural Manitoba?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, there's only one party in this House that's cut \$37 million from rural health and it's that party.

On this side of the House, we're not going to fire a thousand nurses. We're not going to run doctors out of the province. We're going to work with communities to keep health care in communities, close to families.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's now time for members' statements. Order, please. Order, please.

Westwood Warriors Volleyball

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors within the Department of Health): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize some

amazing displays of athleticism taking place in my constituency. Joining us today in the gallery are members of Westwood Collegiate's Westwood Warriors varsity volleyball teams.

These athletes have ruled the court this year, earning their spot among the province's highest ranking varsity volleyball teams. Currently, the varsity girls team is ranked third in Manitoba, while the varsity boys are ranked fourth.

Of course, behind any great sports team is the hard work and commitment of their coach. Brian Schmeichel, coach of the varsity boys team, was recently named Subway Urban Coach of the Month. Brian is a dedicated coach, investing hours of his personal time and coaching with a demeanour that inspires confidence and hard work. Having coached at Westwood for nine years, he has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for the team's current success.

Erica Reimer is new to coaching the varsity girls team, but in previous years worked with the junior varsity team. Having coached much of her current roster since grade 9, she has helped them hone their skills to become the brilliant athletes they are today.

The impact that coaches make in our lives stays with us forever. Thank you, coaches; you are incredible role models for these students.

This weekend, both teams compete in regionals, with provincial championships set to run November 27th to December 2nd. I wish both teams the best of luck as you fight to reach No. 1. You are making those close to you so proud and have built an incredible reputation for your school.

Mr. Speaker, to close, I would ask leave to table the names of the volleyball players, so that they may appear in Hansard. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the names of the members of the volleyball team to appear in today's Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Members of the Westwood Warriors varsity girls volleyball: Coach Erica Reimer, Lindsay Anderson, Hannah Brooks, Celina Dyck, Lexie Erickson, Katie Hamm, Emily Hollins, Brittany Kaminsky, Nikki Majewski, Avery Munday, Tyneille Neufeld, Hailey Witt, Mikayla Woodward, Brooklyn Yakiwchuk.

Members of the Westwood Warriors varsity boys volleyball: Coach Brian Schmeichel, Ryan Bisgnano, Kurtis Brakel, Connor Brooks, Jordy Jamieson, Jordan Lira, Josh Lobo, Matt

McCourquodale-Bauer, Kyle McCoy, Brady Nault, Drey Rannard, Connor Schmidt, Mack Vargas.

Hilary Hanson and Don Seymour: Friends of the Harte Trail

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to thank two of Charleswood's dedicated volunteers, Hilary Hanson and Don Seymour. Hilary and Don have played an integral role with the Friends of the Harte Trail for the last 14 years.

In July 2000, a group of concerned citizens known as the Friends of the Harte Trail officially opened the multi-use pathway. Don and Hilary served as presidents of the organization over the next several years.

Mr. Speaker, the volunteers have been pioneers in environmental protection, conservation and education. They set out 13 years ago to preserve a valuable strip of land, originally known as the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The strip of land was slated for a roadway development, but the volunteers worked hard to protect the land in its natural state, developing Winnipeg's first rail-to-trail conversions. They planted countless native Manitoba trees and shrubs, developed a native prairie garden and worked closely with the City of Winnipeg naturalists' office to ensure expansion of the trail in the most environmentally friendly way possible. The Harte Trail, now also part of the national Trans Canada Trail, is the spine in the—in a network of trails in southwest Winnipeg.

Volunteers maintain the trail and remain vigilant about its upkeep. One of the last things that Don and Hilary wanted to happen is now complete. To commemorate Charleswood's centennial year, the Friends of the Harte Trail chose to install a historic sign east of Elmhurst, close to the location where Pacific Junction station and the Searle grain elevator once stood. Old pictures show the two structures as well as that of the last steam engine on the tracks before diesel engines took over. Two other photos are of the Prairie Dog Central, the historic train that was the last to use the tracks before they were pulled up.

* (14:30)

So, with this last project completed, Hilary and Don have announced that they will be retiring from the boards of the Friends of the Harte Trail. They hope to devote more of their time to their home and their yard, as well as travel and bike on trails in other countries.

On behalf of the residents of Charleswood, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Hilary and Don for their vision and dedication over the last 13 years. They have improved the lives of our residents by ensuring that this trail has become a fabric of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Norwood Lawn Bowling Club

Ms. Christine Melnick (Riel): Today I'd like to celebrate the contributions of the Norwood lawn bowling community to 'comu'—the Norwood Lawn Bowling Club to community life in the constituency of Riel.

Founded in 1927, the Norwood Lawn Bowling Club's first greens were built at Coronation Park on Taché Avenue. By 1931, the Norwood Lawn Bowling Club was one of 19 bowling clubs in Winnipeg, attracting people from all walks of life who valued healthy recreation and fellowship.

Like all organizations animated by the spirit of volunteerism, fundraising events were soon planned to help build a new club. The women of the Norwood Lawn Bowling Club spearheaded several programs, including silver teas and evenings of whist and bridge to enable the club to expand and be of greater service to the community. Their efforts made with—met with success and the club built a log cabin clubhouse in 1935.

The Norwood Lawn Bowling Club was initially established as a men's-only club, but in 1941 the women associated with the club formed their own division—right on, sisters—known as the Norwood Coronation Ladies Lawn Bowling Association. During the Second World War, the club held tournaments to raise funds to support the war effort, including a gift to the Canadian Navy ship, the HMCS St. Boniface, and a tournament in aid of the Athletic Patriotic Association.

In 1965, the Norwood club partnered with the Masonic Lodge 110 to build a new facility that would house them both. The new facilities featured a solarium, a meeting room, office and dressing space, as well as a 100-seat lodge room, an assembly room, bowling equipment storage and kitchen facilities. This relationship continued until 1991, when the club moved to its present location at 1212 Dakota Street.

The Norwood club has always been very active, and several of these outstanding members have joined us in the gallery today. Prominent Norwood

bowlers include Bev Shafirka, Elaine Jones, Bob and Betty Van Wallegem, Pete Williams, Glen Monk, Rob Law, Emilie and Reno Ammazzini. These are also about—there are also about 80 other members and everyone contributes to the club in one way or another.

In 2014, the Norwood Lawn Bowling Club will host the major Canadian championships for the seventh time in its history, and I ask all members to join me in wishing them every success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Neelin High School Choirs

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am pleased to rise in the Manitoba Legislature today to recognize the École Secondaire Neelin High School choirs. The choirs are under the direction of Carolyn Gwyer who continues the tradition of strong vocal performances from Neelin. The choir program at Neelin was established in 1967. The choirs are in Winnipeg for three days to perform at ChoralFest Manitoba. This is an annual festival organized by the Manitoba Choral Association. It allows choirs and conductors a chance to participate in workshops with notable adjudicators and clinicians from all over Canada.

The Neelin choirs performed yesterday, Wednesday, November 20th, 2013, in the Legislature on the main stairway. Ms. Gwyer told me this is a great place for the choirs to perform as the acoustics are very good. The choirs performed for over an hour and demonstrated their command of a very wide repertoire. From pieces recognizing Remembrance Day to Christmas pieces, the various choirs entertained the noon-hour audience.

Mr. Speaker, I am always thrilled when I am able to welcome people from Brandon, and yesterday was another fine example of the talent resident in Brandon schools. I wish them well in ChoralFest and am certain that they are great representatives of Brandon and Manitoba.

Thank you to Ms. Carolyn Gwyer and the 67 students in the École Secondaire Neelin High School choirs.

Little Red Spirit

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, a caring and supportive learning environment is an integral part of early childhood development. A child's first five years are the essential building blocks to their success later in life. Children are more likely to succeed from a young age if they can begin

school healthy, safe and ready to learn, which is exactly what the Little Red Spirit Aboriginal Head Start Program in my constituency provides.

Programs like Manitoba Aboriginal Head Start empower young children with culturally appropriate, early childhood education programs. Teaching in Ojibwa and Cree, Little Red Spirit uses a holistic approach to early childhood development. By promoting positive parenting, nutrition, physical health, literacy and community development, they are helping kids develop the skills they need to become strong, happy and healthy people. They give each child and family the tools they need to grow in every part of their lives.

Little Red Spirit's programing involves children experiencing their culture and language first-hand. From drum making to medicine picking, community walks and field trips, the children are immersed in learning opportunities that promote positive cultural identity. These are truly some of the best ways to encourage confidence and curiosity in our young.

By focusing on the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of the child and the parents, Little Red Spirit provides families the opportunities to help themselves grow together. Offering services to families like this, as a whole, means that children and parents alike are supported in ways that strengthen everyone.

I'd like to welcome some of the staff, parents and some of our wonderful young learners from the Little Red Spirit to the Legislative Assembly today. Programs like yours promote stronger communities and stronger families. Little Red Spirit is a fantastic example of how best to grow—help our children grow into eager and involved individuals.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Speaker: Now, on the—to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), and it's standing in the name of the honourable member for The Pas, who has 27 minutes remaining.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I was saying yesterday how fortunate I was to be part of progressive communities in my constituency,

always looking forward, moving forward, growing their local economies, creating jobs, creating opportunities for the people—young people, building better educational facilities, better opportunities in training, apprenticeship programs.

Mr. Speaker, I think, with—all these opportunities, that are available to my friends and relatives in my area, is because we have an excellent relationship through this government and the policies that this government has to allow the communities to grow in my region—very grateful for that. As my—during my term as a leader in my home community, for example, I've had the distinct pleasure of planning what would—what our future would look like 15, 20, 30 years ahead of us, and for me it was important that a government of the day, this government here, was able to look that far and wide, far enough that those children that are in the grade schools right now can actually see what's ahead of them and can look forward to those graduating days, knowing that they will have opportunity, jobs, training and higher education in northern Manitoba. It makes me feel secure, and it makes the parents feel secure, as well, that there is a bright future ahead of them.

* (14:40)

We talk about building a stronger economy in Manitoba, and it's important that we focus on jobs—more jobs in all sectors: private, public jobs that families and communities can build their futures around; jobs in the energy industry, infrastructure, transportation industries, tourism industry; public sectors at all levels. Mr. Speaker, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel with these kind of policies that we have with this government that our communities can tap into the resources that are made available for them.

Building, repairing and expanding our infrastructure creates jobs, and I know that the people in northern Manitoba will take full advantage of those opportunities. It will give them an opportunity to learn more about the level—the industry that they're involved in and perhaps be more involved in the area of ownership of businesses down the road, and it makes Manitoba a better place to live. Not just northern Manitoba, but all of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we are planning—when we plan for the future, we know that through our commitments there is excitement. There is other sectors in our communities that are willing to invest

in the future. One example is the entrepreneurial spirit that is alive and well amongst Manitoba's Metis community. Just last week in fact, the Manitoba Metis Federation hosted a successful trade show, bringing together leaders in the Metis business community. That to me signals that we are moving forward in a positive manner.

And northern Manitoba holds enormous economic potential because of the policies that we have. It is estimated that hydro and mining development, for example, will drive the demand for thousands of skilled workers in northern Manitoba in the decade ahead, providing northern Manitobans with skills training, ensuring they are positioned to get these jobs, which, in turn, will drive the local economy.

As part of our work on Opportunities North, we will bring together UCN—University College of the North—the Northern Sector Council and community leaders to focus on matching skills training with specific employment opportunities in the North. That's commitment from this government to all of Manitoba but specifically in northern Manitoba. I'm very grateful that this government has a vision that is all-inclusive, because it's all about growth—growth and jobs, the economy, with the involvement of people at the local levels, regional levels.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other reasons why we should be excited in northern Manitoba and I'll give you a good example. The work that we are doing on Provincial Road 373 to Norway House and Provincial Road 374 to Cross Lake is part of a multi-year plan to completely surface these roads. That's huge, given the fact that at one time these roads were very dangerous, very rough and in fact sometimes impassable because of in-severe inclement weather. You have had to driven these roads to understand how important this is to those people in those communities.

And I remember when the Progressive Conservatives were in power in the '90s. The highways in northern Manitoba were completely devastated, ignored, and, as a result of that oversight, there was many, many accidents on those roads, many difficulties encountered during wintertime and severe inclement weather in the summer. It was shameful, the way those roads were maintained at that time.

But now it's different. When you travel on 373 and 374, you will notice that the level of stress in the—with the citizens from those communities is

much lower, much lower than it was before because there's children in those vehicles, there's elders in those vehicles. And for me that's important to know that the roads are safe and secure for those sectors, you know, that sector in our community: the children transported by buses, school buses, elders, you know, moving from community to community or to other centres in northern Manitoba. Good roads, well-maintained roads, are very important for us.

Mr. Speaker, this year Manitoba Hydro began a unique partnership with First Nations, and for me that's very important because now the First Nations communities, the Aboriginal community in general, are much more involved. They're included in the planning and implementation of policy that will see their communities grow. And this year Manitoba Hydro began a unique partnership with a program called BUILD and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to train and employ First Nations people to install home geothermal heating and cooling systems. More than 20 workers were trained, installing 100 residential geothermal systems in Peguis—first river—First Nations, reducing energy costs in these homes by 70 per cent. In the coming year, this initiative will be expanded to four additional First Nations, employing some 50 more people in this growing green energy industry. This kind of a partnership and arrangement with the Aboriginal communities, First Nation, Metis communities, is a huge step towards assisting the communities to become more energy efficient, to have more green energy, local policy participation in that area. It creates jobs, growing the local economy, local economies, in the regions.

Mr. Speaker, northern Manitoba holds enormous economic potential. It is estimated that Hydro and mining development will drive the demand for thousands of skilled workers in northern Manitoba in the decade ahead, providing northern Manitobans with skills training. It will ensure they are positioned to get these jobs which, in turn, will drive the local economy. That's part of our work on Opportunities North. We will bring together University College of the North, the Northern Sector Council and community leaders to focus on matching skills training with specific employment opportunities in the North.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of vision speaks volumes of what this government is all about, making sure that all parties involved, whether they're in the private or public sectors, all levels of local governments, all levels of education training institutions and the business community in general,

to be able to move forward in a manner that involves everybody in the communities, will mean that we will move forward together, creating an economy and bigger and better jobs.

* (14:50)

I think with all the investments that we are making in the North is a signal not only to northern Manitobans, but to all of Manitoba that this government is very concerned about the future of Manitoba, and that's why we involve everyone in the planning of a—brighter futures in Manitoba.

For example, you know, we are making a \$23-million investment to improve and expand Frontier Collegiate Institute in Cranberry Portage because it's not—you see, Mr. Speaker, it's not just about that school in that community. It's all about the North. It's all about the communities in the North, of people in the North going through that educational institution in Cranberry Portage, but at same time preparing themselves for careers, jobs in northern Manitoba. We have to make investments of this nature and of this magnitude to ensure that the people in northern Manitoba have adequate preparedness, training, opportunities for apprenticeship programs, opportunities to make a living in northern Manitoba and be able to contribute back to their communities in some form through their disposable incomes growing the economies in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy that I can report one of the biggest movements we've made in a mining sector. You know, there was issues in this area for some time. Low commodity prices have made equity markets challenging for mineral explorations, for example. That's a challenge. But the industry itself and this government never gave up on stuff like that. You know, they move forward trying to find a way to create opportunities from the challenges that are encountered. Renewed supports for mineral prospecting and exploration will support junior mineral companies to continue their important activity in Manitoba, laying a foundation for an even stronger mining industry in the province. And last week a new minister's Mining Advisory Council was announced, bringing together First Nations and industry to shape plans for skills training, new jobs, revenue sharing and perhaps even partnerships that we haven't seen before. This is huge for First Nations and Aboriginal communities in northern Manitoba, and throughout Manitoba in fact.

I had the pleasure of discussing these issues with the chiefs around a table this week, and I can say that the excitement, the air of excitement was at that table because they can see, you know, positive returns from their involvement. Not just jobs, not just, you know, apprenticeship program opportunities, but generating real wealth for their communities, you know, from revenue sharing, from partnerships, contracts, et cetera. I think I can understand why the chiefs would be very excited about this prospect that they will definitely benefit from this advisory council.

Mr. Speaker, in the years ahead—in the year ahead, I mean—new measures will also be introduced to strengthen laws related to witness protection and to deal with gang members because, you know, the reality is this is an issue for all of Manitoba and especially in northern Manitoba.

But we're not communities that will just sit by and wait for—you know, for the problem to go away. We'll sit at that table together with all sectors of the community, including the justice community, the RCMP community, policing community, all councils within that immediate area. We'll talk about how we can work together in addressing these issues, eradicating the issues of gangsterism in the communities. And we will work together with those communities. We'll be at that table too. And for me that's important. And we'll show and we are showing that, you know, very serious in this area. In fact, we're partnering up with the RCMP to create new police cadet programs in northern Manitoba. Thompson to start, and hopefully, you know, it'll spread throughout northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I think, with the Throne Speech that was presented to us and to the public, it's important for us to communicate to the Aboriginal community, for example, that there is hope, that there is opportunity and we can realize all those visions that we have talked about and described in the past, will come to pass.

And we fully realize why we need to include the Aboriginal community, because the Aboriginal people make up the youngest and fastest growing population in Manitoba and the Aboriginal youth represent an increasingly important part of our labour force. So there is a strong consensus from all parts of our province that it is simply not acceptable that on-reserve schools are funded below the level of off-reserve schools. We want to explore this area to

increase the opportunity for a higher level of education, higher standards, better opportunities.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, earlier this year, for example, the Business Council of Manitoba assembled businesses in the community—the business community, First Nation and Metis leaders, to discuss the future of our province. All agreed on the essential importance of investing in Aboriginal education for the strength of our economy and the health of our communities. And the Premier's economic and education councils have made similar recommendations to equalize federal funding levels and develop more focused approaches to boosting Aboriginal education rates and learning outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, we want to build on the successes seen in communities such as Fisher River Cree Nation, for example, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, where strong leadership and a dedicated, parent-run school board and local workshops—workforces have produced positive results: over 90 per cent attendance and graduate—graduation rates. That's huge, you know, and that's why the young people today, the young Aboriginal community today, can see the light at the end of the tunnel and has hope for the future, and it's because of policies that this government has to move forward with the various communities in Manitoba, including the Aboriginal community.

* (15:00)

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I thank the Assembly for giving me this opportunity to express my satisfaction with the Throne Speech. And I also want to thank the people in my constituency for giving me this opportunity to express their needs, to express their issues and their views. I'm very grateful that they have entrusted that responsibility with me, and I take that very seriously.

And I want to thank my colleagues for the support throughout the—throughout this session here. And, quite frankly, I was glad to see everybody in this House, Mr. Speaker, including yourself, and the table that's sitting here in the middle, for all the wonderful jobs that they're doing, and the pages and that. I enjoy working here. And—because I can see things moving forward.

An Honourable Member: Fourteen more years.

Mr. Whitehead: Fourteen more years.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, indeed a pleasure to have so much support from my colleagues here at the Legislature.

It is indeed a pleasure, though, to rise and speak to the Throne Speech that was brought forward just last week, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, take a few minutes today to outline what we think are some things that were certainly missed in the Throne Speech, even though the speech was probably one of the longest in Manitoba's history. There was a lot of things discussed, but, again, it's about what the essence of the speech is all about, I think.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I, certainly—it is indeed a pleasure to be back in the Chamber, over our very fairly short recess that we did have. It was a short recess and time for many of us to catch up on some of our summer projects that we didn't get done because we were sitting here throughout the summer and discussing provincial sales tax and other such issues.

And it was also a good opportunity during the break to make sure we had an opportunity to have a good conversation with our respective constituencies and get their feel for what the issues are in their various communities and get a feel for them, in terms of what kind of a job the provincial government is doing, and always an interesting time and nice to share some time with constituents. And it's certainly a pleasure for me to represent the fine people of the Spruce Woods constituency, and just a great part of the province to live and raise a family. And I hope my colleagues from both sides of the Chamber will take time to visit that great part of the province over the winter and the summer going forward.

I certainly want to also welcome the table officers back and just commend them for the great job they do. Certainly yourself, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity, as well, and keep things running in order—we do appreciate the fine work you do. I also want to point out the interns that we have in our respective caucuses. I think it's an important, a very important program for the Assembly, certainly for the kids that are actually chosen as interns. I know it's a very valuable experience for them. And, having served on the internship committee for a number of years, I'm always impressed by the calibre of people that apply to the program, just overwhelmed by the ability that these kids bring forward and bring to the table. And year after year, it's a very difficult decision that the committee has, in terms of doing the assessments and just determining which ones of those candidates that

we're going to bring forward to—through the interview process.

And then further, you know, once we do pick the 12 or 14 that we're going to interview, the process of trying to evaluate which ones of those interns are—those candidates are going to serve as interns. And, Mr. Speaker, year after year, we have been very fortunate, in terms of having very, very good individuals come forward on both sides, working for both sides. And, again, this year, I've heard no negative comments about the interns and their performances, so that, I would assume, is a very good sign. I know we, on our side, are very happy with the interns we have this year, and I know they're excited to be here in the building, and just to have the opportunity to work in the building and learn, I think, is a very valuable resource that they will take with them for many years to come.

And, clearly, a lot of them are in the crossroads of their—both their education, looking at either furthering their education or potentially going on in the workforce. So this really provides them a really positive opportunity to decide what they want to do into the future, and I think it's a very valuable program that we have here. Certainly, I know we've had some changes in the program that we're going to encompass this year, but certainly they will have some new opportunities, I think, to have some travels and to visit some people and hopefully learn quite a bit as they do those conferences and also during their time of their travels.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne, we usually look for a vision. I think as Manitobans—and this is the opportunity for them to see where the provincial government is going to go in terms of the future and put on some policy and some vision for the future. And I believe the NDP missed an opportunity here to really lay out a vision for Manitoba, and I really think that is the key issue relative to this Throne Speech that I have taken away. And I hope the members opposite will have a close look at the amendment that was brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), the member for Fort Whyte. It fairly clearly lays out the issues that we feel were neglected in the Speech from the Throne, and I think it's very important that the members have a look at that so they will understand why we are opposed to the Throne Speech that was brought forward last week.

I just want to talk briefly about the issues that we raised in the amendment that was brought forward,

Mr. Speaker. The first issue clearly is the provincial sales tax issues. Clearly, the NDP used the Throne Speech, and most of the Throne Speech, too, to justify their increase in the provincial sales tax this past spring. We know the NDP ran on the premise of not increasing major taxes, including the provincial sales tax. Well, nothing could be further from the truth, because shortly after they were elected in the last election, the first thing they did on budget day was expand the provincial sales tax to a number of goods and services, goods and services that had never been taxed before, and that had a major impact on all Manitobans from corner to corner. And, clearly, that had a negative impact on the pocketbooks of Manitobans.

And the next year in the budget, Mr. Speaker, what they did was they increased the provincial sales tax by 14 per cent, again, on all the items that were added the year before in the budget. And certainly that generates an extra several hundred million dollars each and every year, and that money comes out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. And I know we've—they—the provincial sales tax was implemented. On July 1st it was brought in. On July 1st Manitobans were forced to pay that to the tune of about \$5 million a week that Manitobans are paying on the additional provincial sales tax. So that to date is over a hundred million dollars that the NDP has taken out of the pockets of hard-working Manitoba families. And now they're trying to—and they have for the last number of months—tried to justify that increase in the provincial sales tax, and what they're trying to do is trying to justify it on the backs of infrastructure.

And we know the track record that the NDP have on infrastructure. It's pretty clear that they have not spent their own budgeted targets in terms of infrastructure. And that, I think, is why Manitobans are a little wary about where—what the government is telling them these days in terms of their infrastructure—their commitment—pardon me, Mr. Speaker—to infrastructure.

*(15:10)

And, if you go back and look over the last four years and you look at all the categories of infrastructure, including such things as roads and schools and universities, health facilities, water infrastructure, housing, third-party assistance, public buildings, parks and infrastructure, they have consistently, year after year in each of those categories underspent their own budget. They've

underspent their own budget by 27 per cent on average over the last four years. And I would suggest to you that's why Manitobans are a little reluctant to believe what this Premier (Mr. Selinger) and this government are telling them. In fact, in 2012 alone, the budget promised \$1.7 billion in infrastructure spending, and Manitobans actually realize, then, that only \$1.2 billion was spent on infrastructure, almost \$500 million less than promised.

So that's some interesting numbers there when you look at the history behind the NDP and their infrastructure spending. Clearly, they found a new friend in infrastructure, and we will certainly be looking forward to seeing how that progresses into the future.

I do want to talk just a little bit about infrastructure for a minute. I know people in my riding are—certainly have concerns about infrastructure, and there's a number of areas there that they have concerns about. And clearly, you know, I was quite happy—Mr. Speaker, I must admit I was quite happy after nine years of lobbying the government to finally pave Provincial Road 340 from Shilo down to Wawanesa, the one stretch that hadn't been completed. I was very happy to see that the government has almost completed that project. And I know many residents of that particular area are quite happy that that particular infrastructure is almost done. I've had some positive comments on that.

But there's other pieces of infrastructure in terms of road infrastructure that do require attention, certainly in southwestern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I know there has been some talk from the government about Highway No. 10, and it certainly is in dire need of repair, both north and south of the city of Brandon, and hopefully the government will address those issues.

Number 5 Highway, now we are—have a casino put up between the communities of Carberry and Glenboro, and, obviously, we want—hopefully, that will attract a lot of Manitobans and people from other jurisdictions there. The unfortunate part is No. 5 Highway is in very, very poor condition, Mr. Speaker. It's an old piece of road that hasn't had any meaningful service work done to it for quite some time, and it certainly does require some attention, and I think, hopefully, as the population goes to the casino and also to Spruce Woods Provincial Park along that particular road, that the government will look at putting Provincial Road No. 5 on its

radar, because certainly there's a lot of agriculture movement of products along that particular highway as well and it does require some attention.

Communities of Killarney and that area, and certainly No. 18 Highway, they have raised and flagged that as an issue, Mr. Speaker, moving forward—again, with a lot of agriculture commodities moving in that area.

Highway 23 is certainly in disrepair, Mr. Speaker, and more recently we're having more inquiries from Veterans Way, certainly an important infrastructure going from the city of Brandon out to Canadian Forces Base Shilo, which is an important piece of infrastructure. And there certainly is flagged—being some safety issues that need to be addressed there as well.

Other communities in my constituency are concerned about water infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. And, clearly, if we're going to try to move the economy forward in those areas, we have to have water infrastructure and water available to those communities for—to increase development in that area. And I hope that the government will take notice of that. Certainly, a number of communities are looking forward to the expansion of rural waterlines to service their communities there. And we certainly hope that that will move forward very quickly, probably with the help of a provincial and federal cost-sharing arrangement on some of that key infrastructure that is required in the—in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about a few of the other taxes and the unseen taxes that the NDP government are collecting from Manitobans. You know, given my history in insurance, I always keep a tab on vehicle registration because vehicle registration fees are one of those hidden taxes that Manitobans—that motoring Manitobans are being forced to pay. And, in my view, it's clearly a tax on vehicles, because that money is collected by Manitoba Public Insurance through their broker network, and then that money is sent directly to the Minister of Finance to be deposited in general revenue. And I think Manitobans would believe or have been led to believe that the money collected by the gas tax and the money that's being collected from vehicle registration fees would be put into infrastructure spending, but it doesn't appear that that has been the case under the NDP.

And I know they increased the provincial sales tax last year substantially, and there was a huge

amount of money collected from the additional tax placed on fuel, Mr. Speaker. And the government made a promise there to commit 2 to 1 in terms of adding funding—additional funding to infrastructure, but we found out that the government did not do that. They did not increase the spending on infrastructure accordingly, and that's very unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, and the same thing can be said for vehicle registration fees. In 1999, the charge to passenger vehicles on vehicle registration fees was \$48 per vehicle. In 2012, the vehicle registration fee for passenger vehicles was \$154 per vehicle. The NDP have steadily increased the vehicle registration fees over the past 13 years. In fact, over the course of 13 years the increase has been threefold in terms of the vehicle registration fees. That vehicle registration fee takes \$160 million out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. And those hard-working Manitobans would think that that money is going back into infrastructure, but it appears that is not the case, and it's very unfortunate.

And that's why I believe the citizens of Manitoba are having a hard time believing what is said in the Throne Speech this year from this particular Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the NDP government, Mr. Speaker. And I guess the question goes back to integrity, and that's really the essence of some of the debate we're hearing in the Chamber. Can we actually take the government's word for what they're telling us?

Mr. Speaker, another part of the amendment that we wanted to point out here—I think it's pretty critical—and the issue is about a—making a commitment to have a review of government spending. Now, it's easy for government to increase taxes, to go to the people of Manitoba and say, we need more money for this, we need more money for that, but I think it's incumbent on the government to actually take a hard look at where they're spending their money. And part of the amendment we've brought forward is to ask the government to have a comprehensive expenditure review of each and every department of government.

And I think it's incumbent upon Crown corporations to review their spending as well, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's very important. So that's certainly one of the amendments that we brought forward, and hoping they would have a good look in terms of where their spending is going.

And maybe I'll talk just a second about Crown corporations. I want to talk a little bit about

Manitoba Hydro and some of the policies that they have brought forward over the last couple of months. And I'm not sure who's providing Manitoba Hydro direction. We know there's been government interference with Manitoba Hydro in the past in terms of the Bipole III hydro line. We know there's been direction given from the NDP in terms of where Manitoba Hydro's been directed to put the bipole line. And certainly Manitobans have a right to be concerned about that, because that is going to be a very substantial capital project and it will cost Manitobans into the future—well into the future on that capital project alone. And the line loss—the loss of electricity alone is a substantial part of why the hydro line should be placed on the east side of the province.

* (15:20)

But what Manitoba Hydro have done just recently, they've announced closures of 24 rural offices across Manitoba—24 announced just recently and it sounds like there could be other closures into the future, Mr. Speaker. And Manitoba Hydro are going to save—they claim to be saving potentially \$2 million on those closures. I know you—and to having conversations with the people that work at Manitoba Hydro, they question whether there really will be any savings with the office closures. Clearly, if we look at service, does the closure of those offices provide any better service for Manitoba ratepayers? I would suggest to you probably not.

The other thing that especially us in rural Manitoba encounter is we don't—we can't afford to be without electricity for too long a period at a time, Mr. Speaker. So clearly, closing offices across the province will have an impact on the serviceability of the system. If the individual workers at Manitoba Hydro have to travel longer distances to go to a downed power line or a broken transformer or broken poles, whatever the case may be, they have to travel greater distances. It's obviously going to impact the amount of time that people will be without service and this could have life-and-death implications for Manitobans, and it's a very important issue. I'm not sure Manitoba Hydro or the NDP government, whoever directed that strategy going forward, had given that due consideration. It's very important that I think they should have that due consideration.

Clearly, Manitoba families will be affected by the closures of those offices, and I know many families, individuals will be having to travel great

distances to go to different offices, Mr. Speaker, and that surely is a situation that should have been considered as well. There was no consultation with the staff on this decision and that is clearly something that should be undertaken, and it's something the NDP government has lost sight of.

They have shown a lack of consideration to Manitobans by not consulting on various issues, Mr. Speaker, and to point to municipal amalgamations as a classic example of a lack of communication and a lack of transparency. Municipalities across Manitoba did not know this was going to happen until the—just before their conference last year it was announced. So it caught all municipalities by surprise, and certainly it's causing a great amount of turmoil in Manitoba and across the province. And we have communities now that are fighting amongst themselves, and quite often one community will not necessarily agree with their rural municipality outside and it's causing a great concern.

The fact of the matter is the NDP did not run on amalgamating municipalities. The fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that municipal councillors of local government did not run, did not tell their ratepayers that municipalities would be amalgamating. So this is coming out of the blue and, clearly, now we're getting to the point where the local and the average citizen is becoming aware of these amalgamation plans, and they're actually having community meetings and certainly they are raising concerns with the forced amalgamation.

Now, we're not saying that amalgamation is necessarily a bad thing, but amalgamations should be driven by the local communities, Mr. Speaker, and it should be the government of the day that is there to help foster that amalgamation if the local municipalities decide that is in the best interests of their ratepayers. That I believe, is the role of government. The role of government should not be there to force the amalgamations, in effect, forcing the end of many of these municipalities that have been around for a 125 years. It is—it's something that certainly has been rushed into. They've implicated this thing and had very tight timelines where things have to get done, and it doesn't allow a proper consultation within communities to make these decisions that are going to be long-term decisions.

So, clearly, the government has to recognize the decisions they make around the Cabinet table will have impacts to Manitoba families and individual Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and issues such as this that

are brought forward have a dramatic impact on Manitoba families.

In terms of Manitoba families, obviously they are concerned about health care, Mr. Speaker. We had a great back-and-forth today in question period on a number of health-care issues around the province. Certainly, our view is even though there's more and more money going into health care and being expended in the health-care portfolio, we're not getting the results that we believe Manitobans should have. The fact is we have 18 or 19 emergency rooms closed under the NDP's watch and that number is increasing as well.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The other thing we're finding and, in fact, I find it in my own communities, that we have a number of communities that actually now share on-call emergency room services. And this makes it very challenging for rural communities and for residents of those communities. It's important that they try to keep track of which facility is open on any given day, so that they do have access to some emergency rooms. I know the communities of Glenboro and Carberry have been sharing services back and forth for about two years now. There's certainly no sign of that changing in the near future. And also now we have a situation where we have three communities—Killarney, Boissevain and Deloraine—are on a one-in-three rotation there, in terms of their emergency room on call.

You know, there certainly is a large number of people in that area to be served by those communities. It's one thing to have a large number of people in the area but it's another thing to have a look at the map and just see the geographical size of that area. And what happens when you have one of those facilities remaining open? It may provide or may necessitate a long drive for some of the residents that may be trying to access that emergency room. In fact, I had a look at the map earlier today and it could conceivably happen that some of those residents could be a hundred miles from an open emergency room facility and that, certainly in my mind, is a—clearly a life and death situation. So, I know we're spending money and the NDP say that spending money is a good thing but we want to make sure we're getting value for the dollars that we're putting into health care.

I want to talk a little bit about agriculture and rural development. I know the Throne Speech announced a change in the name of the Agriculture

Department or the Ministry of Agriculture, from Rural Initiatives over to Rural Development. Now, we certainly on this side of the House, are kind of curious what in fact that might mean. Is there going to be a different strategy coming forward out of Agriculture Department? Is there going to be some new policies coming forward out of Agriculture? What does the change in name really mean? What will it mean for future development in Manitoba?

And the other question is I have—we have—now we have a new Minister responsible for Jobs and the Economy. It looks like the NDP are maybe taking a page out of the federal government's handbook on jobs and the economy. We'll certainly see what the track record will be there. It certainly hasn't been very positive in the—over the first couple of months. You know, clearly, we've seen some job losses in Manitoba, whereas most regions in Canada are witnessing some growth in jobs. So we will certainly be watching that very closely.

And I was hoping there would be more in the speech from throne, in terms—Throne Speech, in terms of moving the economy forward and actually creating jobs, how we're going to create those jobs. It appears the government is determined that the only way to create jobs in Manitoba is for them to spend money. We firmly believe there's other options to create jobs and, in fact, create wealth in Manitoba. And, certainly, the private sector is there and I think there's options to work with the private sector co-operatively to move the economy forward. And I was hoping that the Speech from the Throne would, in fact, signal to the business community and the community at large that they were ready to do business and to really open up the doors and welcome opportunities and business and welcome that business to Manitoba.

*(15:30)

You know, we had a bit of a discussion about issues relative to the flood, 2011, 2012. There's issues that are still not addressed. There's claims that are still outstanding from 2011 that haven't been addressed, both in the Agriculture Department and Emergency Measures. We're hoping that those ministers will take some action and get those claims resolved that now are over two, two and a half years old.

And I want to talk specifically about the Assiniboine River producers. The government introduced legislation which was designed to protect those producers and provide them some kind of

compensation in times of flood. Well, we're two and half years out from the flood of 2011. No money has flowed to those agriculture producers. The NDP government is hiding behind their own legislation. And that's very, very unfortunate. I hope the Minister of Agriculture will take notice on some of those issues and move with the Minister responsible for EMO to address those outstanding issues relative the Assiniboine River.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech. There's so many issues that I'd like to address but, as we know, time draws short when we want to discuss issues such as the Throne Speech. So with that, I thank you very much for the opportunity to put some comments on the record on behalf of the fine constituents of Spruce Woods.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): I want to begin my remarks on the Throne Speech by thanking the people of Brandon East for their continued confidence in myself as the representative for the constituency and equally for their confidence in this government who has worked assiduously since 1999 to build Brandon and to build western Manitoba.

The Throne Speech that we're debating today continues the long journey of building Brandon and the long journey of building Manitoba in the face of considerable opposition to building the province from members opposite. During the question period earlier today, there were a number of heckles that may or may not have got onto the record about our government cutting ribbons, and as if somehow that was a bad thing. The members opposite were quite exercised, some of them about the fact that we are out across the province of Manitoba cutting ribbons on projects. Well, it does give me the opportunity to draw a contrast. You know, we're a government that believes in building this province. We're a government that believes in working together with Manitobans to build a better province for all people, inclusive of all people. We are a government that takes pride in cutting ribbons, versus the members opposite who took pride in cutting jobs and in cutting programs all through their time in office.

So there is a very clear contrast in this province between NDP governments who build and in fact who do cut ribbons together with community members throughout the province and members opposite who have made—had a very strong record of cutting jobs, cutting programs, hurting communities and damaging this province.

The Throne Speech this year, in context to the last 14 years, was a very modest Throne Speech. We do have significant challenges rising from the financial crisis that gripped the planet a number of years ago, followed up in Manitoba with the flood of the—in my neck of the woods, in western Manitoba, the flood of the millennium, one-in-350-year flood event which cost the Province of Manitoba over a billion dollars, and those costs continue to grow as we remediate dikes and flood control structures throughout the province as we address the damage that occurred on roads and bridges, and to infrastructure.

So we—the Throne Speech this year was, in that context, a fairly modest speech. Notwithstanding that, we can walk and chew gum at the same time in this government. We can address fiscal shortfalls and fiscal challenges while at the same time continuing to build the province and to grow the province and to not impact negatively front-line services in health care, front-line services in justice, in social services, front-line services in education in our public school system, in our post-secondary system, when in government we have a choice to make, and our choice is to continue to build the province while addressing in a serious manner the fiscal challenges that face not only Manitoba, but the entire world.

Members opposite when they were in office had that same choice to make during the financial challenges in the 1990s, and their choice was to cut programs, cut jobs to further punish Manitobans in tough financial times. Those are not the choices that this government make and, in fact, we were very vociferous in our opposition to members opposite when they were in government and the policies that were damaging to this province that they undertook.

And I'll note, just in passing, and I think it contextualizes especially for Winnipeg but also more broadly for Manitoba, the 1990s were the decade that the Winnipeg Jets fled this province and the 2000s were the decade when the Winnipeg Jets came back to this province. We built a new arena in downtown Brandon—or downtown Winnipeg together with our partners in the business community and we worked hard to bring the NHL back to Manitoba. So—and it's worth noting, as well, that members opposite voted against every penny of that investment in the MTS Centre.

So we are a government that believes in building the province of Manitoba. Members opposite are a government that takes particular delight in whinging

and in damaging this province in opposing every single investment that we've made since coming to office, in fact, hurting communities throughout this province, hurting my own community of Brandon, hurting the communities in western Manitoba that I also work to represent in my capacity as legislative assistant to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), communities like Deloraine, communities like Boissevain, communities like Killarney, communities like Virden, communities like Pipestone, Reston, communities like Minnedosa.

The communities of western Manitoba where I live have all been negatively impacted by members opposite when they were in office when they had two separate hydro rates, one lower rate in Winnipeg and one higher rate in rural Manitoba, when we had a public telephone system that is particularly important in rural Manitoba where distances are an obstacle often times to trade and communication, when we had a telephone system that had the lowest rates in the country and then was privatized, and you just have to look at the board of directors. The same people that were in government and sat in government benches for the Conservative Party are now on the board of directors of that company that they sold to themselves and their friends in the Charleswood-Tuxedo families.

So Manitoba is a very interesting province in that the differences between the two parties that contest for power are so stark and so clear—and, again, one party, the party that I belong to, the New Democratic Party of Manitoba, works to build this province and the other party, the Conservative Party, I won't call them Progressive Conservative—I think that they are about the same as their brethren in Ottawa who dumped the name progressive a couple of years ago—the Conservative Party of Manitoba who take particular delight in, as the member for Lindenwoods, the Leader of the Opposition call it, tough love, the delight in cutting and hurting communities and people.

And they certainly don't have any concern for those who are impoverished. You know, one of the first things we did when we came to office is restore the child tax benefit for mothers who are on social assistance, the poorest of the poor with children, and that benefit was clawed back by members opposite removing, literally taking food out of the mouths of children, the meanest, nastiest, most reprehensible sort of conduct and policy making that I can imagine in a civilized context in the western world.

So we—as I said, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We are continuing to build the province while addressing the fiscal challenges that we are faced with arising from the global economic crisis and the flood of the millennium in western Manitoba.

* (15:40)

Notwithstanding that, those challenges, this Throne Speech did provide for Brandon some very positive news. We are undertaking to develop and build the Daly Overpass in Brandon. That was announced in this Throne Speech, a very important project that will see the twinning into a four-lane bridge, the last remaining three-lane piece of infrastructure along 18th Street which is also No. 10 Highway in Brandon. That bottleneck was on that bridge arose, in fact, because we twinned 1st Street three or four budgets ago—twinning 18th Street three or four budgets ago to provide modern infrastructure throughout—through the city of Brandon on No. 10 Highway, also known as 18th Street as it's in the city, as it travels throughout the city. So the Daly bridge, the Daly Overpass as it's known in Brandon, wasn't scheduled to be developed until 2026. So we've moved that project up 12 years. More than a decade we've moved that project up to recognize the need for that infrastructure to be improved, primarily because we'd improved all of the infrastructure around it over the past number of years. It was also requested of us to move it forward by the City of Brandon, and we do work closely with the City of Brandon as we do with other municipal governments across the province.

I was—I had noted in the newspaper yesterday and the day before, when I was in Brandon attending to work in my home constituency, that the City of Winnipeg has partnered with the Province for approximately a \$600-million rapid transit system in Winnipeg, which is an extraordinarily good project for the City of Winnipeg, just as the Province of Manitoba and the City of Brandon is partnering to deal with an important project in Brandon in the form of the Daly bridge, Daly Overpass.

It's worth noting as well, I think, that once the Daly bridge is completed, once that construction is undertaken and completed, we will have reconstructed every single inch of roadway in Brandon that is a provincial responsibility since our time in office. The entirety of Richmond Avenue, the entirety of 1st Street, the entirety of 18th Street, the eastern access route, the bridge accesses over the

Assiniboine River on 18th Street, every single piece of road infrastructure that the Province is responsible for will have been addressed and redeveloped in one government's mandate, and I think that's an incredible accomplishment given that this province has been in existence for 140-odd years.

So we have been working very, very assiduously to build Brandon, to improve infrastructure not only on the roads and bridges, but also, again, a couple of budgets ago the complete redevelopment of Brandon's water treatment plant, water and sewer system with state-of-the-art systems to cleanse the water and provide for environmental protection for our very precious resource in Manitoba, our water resources.

We are a government that is very strongly engaged in building infrastructure, again, not only in Brandon, but with this Throne Speech and past throne speeches and past budgets, but also throughout the province.

This Throne Speech did announce the reconstruction of No. 10 Highway north and south of Brandon. It something that we've been engaged in undertaking over the last few years, but this Throne Speech committed ourselves to completing that work to the American border and to the north of us to Minnedosa. That No. 10 Highway is a very busy provincial highway, and I'm just very, very pleased that in this time of fiscal challenge that we can find the wherewithal as a government to commit to building hard road infrastructure in western Manitoba and more broadly throughout the province, but I'm going to confine myself, my remarks, to Brandon and western Manitoba, but we're doing it throughout the province.

The Throne Speech also addressed this year the development of a graduate program in the environment and life sciences at Brandon University, the first graduate program in the sciences at Brandon University, and I'd like to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), the Minister of Education, who is really stepping into that role in an aggressive fashion. It was very, very good to have him out to Brandon for his first announcement at Brandon University to inaugurate the first graduate program in sciences.

I know we in Brandon have a very, very strong record as a government historically since 1999 of investing in our post-secondary institutions in Brandon at a level never before seen in the history of the province of Manitoba. It's kind of a common

theme. Our infrastructure, there—it's been completely reconstructed in Brandon over the last 14 years.

In the post-secondary field, we've invested at a level never before seen in provincial history. First and foremost, a project that's very near and dear to my heart, is the historic transformation of Assiniboine Community College with its relocation—ongoing relocation to the architecturally outstanding campus on Brandon's north hill. It will result when it is completed, in the finest college campus, I believe, in Canada—certainly in western Canada—but I would suggest in Canada.

We're about halfway through that process. It's going to involve tens of millions—dare I say hundreds of millions of dollars—to complete, but we are halfway through that process. We have completed the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts in an outstanding Edwardian building, a provincial heritage site, at the ACC campus on Brandon's north hill. We've completed the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology, which is an extraordinary redevelopment of a second building on that site. This past summer, there were several millions of dollars invested at the ACC campus on Brandon's north hill to develop the infrastructure needed to a—expand our construction activity into the Parkland Building, which is a massive structure, a building that's—in terms of scale, approaches the size of this Legislature. It's a massive building which will provide a complete home for Assiniboine Community College on that architecturally outstanding campus on Brandon's North Hill, as we move forward through the years ahead, investing at Assiniboine Community College.

At Brandon University, my alma mater, and also the alma mater for the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), and also the alma mater for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) and, Jennifer, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), we've got—I think there's also the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) is also a graduate of Brandon University, so I'm aware of five people in this House that are graduates of Brandon University, alumnus of Brandon University.

And I'd be remiss when talking about Brandon University if I didn't also say that it is the alma mater of Tommy Douglas, our greatest Canadian, former leader of the federal NDP party and premier of Saskatchewan, the father of medicare in Canada, and the honourable Stanley Knowles—both of those men legendary figures in Canadian politics, and both of

those men very, very notable alumni and notable Canadians, but alumni of Brandon University.

So Brandon University, since our election and 'ongoingly,' we've been investing in programs and capital infrastructure. I mentioned the graduate program in sciences, but I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the recently opened Henry Champ healthy living centre that has just opened this year, multi-million dollar investment, as well as the Health Studies building that was completed a few fiscal years ago now, both buildings undertaken and constructed on our watch.

*(15:50)

In terms of health care, we are continuing to invest in health-care excellence in the province of Manitoba. And again in this area, since coming to office, we have, as a government, invested in health care excellence in Brandon at a level never before seen in the history of Manitoba. We've completely redeveloped the Brandon Regional Health Centre. Last—18 months ago now, I guess, we opened the Westman cancer treatment centre, the first cancer treatment centre in the province outside of the city of Winnipeg, an extraordinary facility that is saving lives today and making lives more bearable for those families and individuals who are undergoing cancer treatment in western Manitoba.

Previously—as those of us who live in rural Manitoba know, previously if one had cancer and lived outside of the Capital Region, the stresses of treating that disease were almost matched by the stresses of having to travel to Winnipeg, make accommodations in Winnipeg, travel back home. The travel and the stress involved with all that travel in conjunction with treatment was a double whammy for those who were dealing with cancer. And I'm proud to say that the Westman cancer treatment centre in Brandon is only the first initiative that we are looking at as a government towards providing better service closer to home throughout the province in regards to health care.

All these projects—there's a theme with some of these projects, but all of them, these are multi-year projects as well. We often hear from members opposite, what are you doing for us recently? Well, you know, we live in a world where you don't sprinkle pixie dust on a college campus and have a hundred-million-dollar renewal take place. It takes many years to develop the business plans, the engineering and the architectural work required to do a job right in investing in a hundred million dollars

in health care, for example, the Brandon Regional Health Centre, or a hundred million dollars at Assiniboine Community College on Brandon's North Hill, or tens of millions of dollars at Brandon University or hundreds of millions of dollars, for that matter, in waste-water treatment plants and flood remediation and roads and bridges. These are projects that take place over a span of years, not a span of days or weeks. So I'm always kind of amused when members opposite, who vote against every single penny we invest in every single community in this province, whine and whinge about, well, that was last year's project, well, that was last year's project. What are you doing for us recently?

I don't know what world that members opposite live in sometimes. I don't know what sort of fantasies they have bouncing around between their ears. I'm not sure I want to know some of the fantasies that they have bouncing, dancing around between their ears. But I certainly know, in the real world, in the world of reality and the world of bricks and mortar, that when you are investing a hundred million dollars in a project, it does require one, two, three or more years to roll that investment out, to do the job and to do it right.

And I'm very, very proud, as a government, that we have been, on almost every level, making historic investments in our health care, in our education, in our infrastructure, in our other areas of government—social services, family services, affordable housing. In Brandon we've—you know, this past year we opened the Westman seniors housing co-op on McDiarmid Drive in Brandon. We completed the Massey Manor redevelopment of a warehouse building in downtown Brandon. We've developed several hundred units, approaching 1,000 units in Brandon since we've been in office, with ambitions to do far more.

The job, really, it's under way; there's no doubt about it. We've done a lot of good in the province over the last number of years but the job is far from done, and we've got great energy in this caucus. We've got great ambitions to continue building Manitoba, and this Throne Speech is another benchmark along that journey to build the best province possible for the people who live in this great, great province of Manitoba. And, again, I'm very proud to support this Throne Speech. I'm very proud to stand with this government and to stand with a great group of men and women who represent every region of the province—north, south, east and west—who represent the wide diversity of ethnicities

in this province, who represent the gender diversity in this province, who represent young and old in this province, to stark contrast the members in this House, the faces of the minister, the members in this House with the faces and the construction of the members opposite. We do represent the full spectrum of Manitoba's population, and we're very proud to recognize that full spectrum. We don't represent one interest group or one single ideological viewpoint. We represent optimism, we represent hope, we represent all of Manitoba and this Throne Speech continues to build all of Manitoba.

Thank you very much.

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Failure to Call the Morris Constituency By-election, brought 'fiward'—forward by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: For the information of the House, in accordance with rule 31(9), it is announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Failure to Call the Morris Constituency By-election, brought forward by the honourable member for Steinbach.

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Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It's always a pleasure to stand in this Legislature and be able to address the issues of the day. This isn't exactly my first Throne Speech that I've spoken to. In fact, I think this is No. 15 for me. And I'd have to say that the—instead of getting—instead of this government, like a bottle of wine, getting better with age, they in fact get worse. The Throne Speech is—[interjection] However, you know, where they lack in quality and substance, they've certainly made up with in time this time.

And I felt that the Lieutenant Governor did a fantastic job, but it was an incredibly long Throne Speech. It covered a lot of ground, over and over again. It was one of these kind of in-a-circle throne speeches. It seemed to go nowhere fast, particularly focused on the top priorities of the government. The top priority, that's 15 of them. And a lot of interesting things that were in the Throne Speech, none of them particularly germane to where Manitobans are.

But, before I get into my comments on the Throne Speech, I do wish to, as usual, thank the good people of the constituency of St. Paul, which is comprised of East St. Paul, West St. Paul and now about half of Springfield, which is Dugald and Oakbank. You know, as I travel the nation and the country, people say to me, tell us about your constituency. And I tell them, you know, you just have to look for God's country, and that's where it is. You know, it's—it is the best constituency in the province of Manitoba. There are others that come close, close second. You know, clearly, Winkler-Morden would be one of those. And there's—there is another one, and the name escapes me, there's another one.

An Honourable Member: The third largest city of Manitoba.

Mr. Schuler: Oh, right, right—Steinbach. I'm sorry; I missed that one. So, great communities in this province, and I'm very fortunate that I get to represent those communities in this Legislature.

I also want to thank, as we all should, those individuals who work for us in our office. I would like to thank Gayle Dowler, who actually worked for my predecessor, Glen Findlay, and she inherited me and has done a magnificent job, not just for Glen Findlay, but also for myself. She makes sure that things are going well in the constituency and does a great job at it, and love her lots and appreciate the work that she does, not just for myself, but on behalf of the people that I represent in St. Paul.

* (16:00)

Also want to thank Gladys Hayward Williams, who is working now very few hours because of other work commitments, but still has, from time to time, the ability to do some work and, again, lives in the community and is always texting and emailing me about things that are going on and happenings and what she's heard, and I thank her for that.

Of course, Matthew LaPage, who is downstairs in the office right now and listening, I'm sure, with great attention, I thank him very much for the hard work and for the efforts and what he does for myself and my office, and I know he is—I know he's very much coveted by the honourable member from Winkler-Morden, but, you know, he works for me not for the—for that member, and so I just want to make it very clear that I appreciate Matthew and what he does and hopefully he doesn't leave anytime soon. Newest addition, Marc Neufeld, who's working

just part-time, a great young individual. And glad to see him come on board with all kinds of enthusiasm and kind of passion that he has, and we've gone out to some events and he says to me, you know, it's actually really neat, he says, you see individuals on the news and finally you actually get to see them up close and, you know, it's—you get a different impression of people. So, great to have him on board.

I do also want to thank the Clerk's office and the pages that we have and the Hansard office, and I really appreciate all of what they do and the—you know, least we forget—security downstairs, all of them, everybody has a part to play. I do want to talk about the Clerk's office and the kind of professionalism that they have and that the way they conduct the affairs of this House, we really appreciate it because it makes our job so much easier. I would like to—I probably shouldn't single anybody out because that would show some kind of a favouritism, but I'm going to have to do it. Rick Yarish, I'd like to thank him particularly, and not just for the kind of things that he does in this Chamber, but—not—almost equally as important, the fact that he always parks and allows me an extra foot or two so when I swing into my parking lot I have a little bit of extra space. But, again, I'm not showing favouritism here by singling him out.

And we—no, we appreciate each and every individual who—each and every individual is much appreciated in this Chamber, especially all my colleagues who feel that they need to speak while I'm standing. And that, you know, I appreciate the fact that, you know, they've had nothing to say all day and now I stand and all of the sudden they've got all kinds of stuff, all kinds of input, and that's healthy. You know, it's healthy that they have so much to add, and it's good, you know, when people are paying attention to what you're saying and give you instant feedback. You know, this is way better than any of that technology stuff my kids are on. This is—*[interjection]* I—yes, iPods and iPads. I mean, this is instant response here, I—and I appreciate that.

So, to each and every one of the officials in this Legislature and throughout this building, we appreciate very much what you do and, you know, we know that you sacrificed a lot this summer. You certainly had to sit here, and I know how riveting every speech and question and everything is, and we appreciate that. Yes, we appreciate especially—yes, least I forget, the—you know, the wonderful words put on the record by the member for Steinbach—

many, many, many wonderful words that he put on the record, we want to thank him for those and I know that the Clerk's office hung on to every word. Yes, Hansard, you know, those individuals who got to transcribe all of those many, many, many, many, many, many words that the member for Steinbach and the rest of us put on the record. It was an important time; it was a watershed for this province. I think it indicated to all politicians that just because you have a majority doesn't mean you necessarily just get your way the way you want it.

And I've—over the very short break that we had where we—instead of having a break, we had the opportunity to have all the Crown corporation committees and all the legislation committees and all the rest of that. But, as I was out and about, a lot of individuals said to me, you know, good for the opposition to hold the government to account, and felt that that was the right thing to do. We felt it was the right thing to do at the time and we know that Manitobans have indicated to us that that, they felt, as well, was the right thing to do.

I do want to address a little bit the Throne Speech. It was certainly an attempt by a government to try to hit the reset button. For those members who maybe don't know what the reset button is, that's—a really good word picture would be, just read the Throne Speech and that would explain what a reset button is. You've got a government that has struggled with governing. They went through an election campaign where numerous, numerous commitments had been made. They have consistently run in campaigns that they would adhere to the taxpayer protection act or, as we often know it, as the balanced budget legislation. And each and every New Democrat candidate, those that won or didn't, ran on that commitment, that they would keep the taxpayer protection act.

The other thing that happened in that campaign was the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba, the member for St. Boniface, was asked about a PST increase, and he said that the thought of a PST increase was nonsense and those are his words. That it was nonsense. And we know that candidates would have went door to door, all 57 New Democrat candidates, and when they were asked, how are you going to pay for it, they said, you know, basically, don't worry, be happy. There won't be a PST increase. There, in fact, will be no increase in taxes, none whatsoever. That, however, was not to happen. In fact, if there's one thing that we have learned that the New Democratic Party misled Manitobans.

They lied to Manitobans in the last campaign. And Manitobans have paid bitterly for those campaign commitments that were not made and that the NDP government has now put into place.

The first budget that we saw put forward actually started the groundwork for the second budget which was the PST increase. What they did is they went through a lot of various segments of the economy and they deepened where the PST was to apply. For instance, they went after insurance policies, and we know that one of the scariest things that you can actually do is not have home insurance. And there are lots of individuals who find that that is an expense that they can't afford.

In fact, I had the opportunity—and I try to do this as often as possible to go to the Salvation Army, the Toy Mountain of hope and help with handing out toys. And Mark Young, who's the captain who runs that particular program, indicated to me that they always try to hold back some of those toys. And he says they put them into storage because throughout the year a lot of families will have a house fire where everything is destroyed, and that is very catastrophic for children because they have no toys left, and they have nothing left and it's very traumatic for them. Not just the smoke and the flames and the fire trucks and all of that and the 'ungst' that comes with it, but also they find out they have nothing.

And the fire department and the police know that one of the places they can come is Salvation Army, and these children are allowed then to go through these toys and are allowed to choose some toys that they can take with them. Often they then go into a hotel room until they can figure out where they can find a residence. But they can actually get some toys, whether it's a stuffed animal, whether it's a doll or whatever it is that they can find some comfort with, and I think that is very important.

But what's unfortunate is that most of these individuals don't have house insurance because it is increasingly—and it's spiralled under this NDP government. And how unfortunate that the raising of taxes in the first budget and raising it on insurance policies was a direct and complete frontal attack on the working poor. It was an attack on individuals who are already struggling to make ends meet, and we know that on—at the kitchen table of Manitobans all across this great city of ours, city of Winnipeg, and all across this province, people sit around the kitchen table and they have discussions. What can or can't we afford? And a lot of families slowly say, you

know what, we've never had a fire before. It probably won't happen to us. It's way too expensive, and they make the wrong decision because of financial hardship. And they cut their house insurance, and there's a direct correlation between that and this NDP government. How insensitive could a group of politicians be?

* (16:10)

In fact, we have one politician on the other side who gets up, and every time she's backed into a corner, talks about the tough decisions that they have to make. Those tough decisions are nothing, nothing like the decisions that families have to make day after day, week after week and month after month at the kitchen table about what can or can't they afford, and how unfortunate that one of the places that this insensitive, out-of-touch government went after was insurance policies. We know for a fact that a lot of individuals are going to start walking away from life insurance policies. How unfortunate is that? They're going to walk away from a lot of different things because it just gets too expensive.

Now, if that wasn't bad enough, and I haven't listed all the things that they applied more taxes on to, but in the second budget—and I remember sitting here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this very seat, and the government announced that they were going to raise the PST and I was one of those who was shocked. I did not think that you would actually see a government that (a) had run on not raising taxes, and then done so in the first year, then went so far as to announce that they were going to go against exactly what the Premier said he wouldn't do. It wasn't that he didn't say anything; he actually said he wouldn't—he would not raise the PST. He also said he wouldn't raise taxes, but, more importantly, he wouldn't raise the PST, and I think that action showed how out of touch and how insensitive and how uncaring this NDP government has become that now I think Manitobans recognize they cannot be trusted.

And I know when I went door to door, East St. Paul, West St. Paul, as I canvassed the streets of Oakbank and Dugald, there were still individuals—yes, there were still individuals who felt that they should vote NDP for whatever reason, and maybe it was because they, at that point in time, trusted. Maybe they still trusted the NDP, that the NDP would stick with their word, that they were as good as their word. How disappointing for those people of St. Paul who put their trust in the NDP and now realize how betrayed they were by this Premier, the

member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), and the rest of the NDP party. How unfortunate for all those individuals across the province, across the city, who went to the door—who had a candidate come to the door, an NDP candidate, came to the door and said: We will not raise taxes. We will live up to all of our commitments and then some, balance the budget and then some, and not have to raise taxes.

And that's where the rubber hits the road. Manitobans all across this province feel let down. They feel betrayed by the NDP party. They feel that the New Democratic Party of Manitoba lied to them in the last campaign because they said they wouldn't, and now it's Manitobans, not like the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) who talked about oh, oh, the tough decisions they had to make at the Cabinet table and gave no—absolutely no—concern, gave absolutely no consideration, gave no thought to the tough decisions that then would have to come at the kitchen table, and those families across this great city of Winnipeg and across the great communities from one end of this province to another sit at their table and now they are the ones that have to make the tough decisions. How unfortunate.

And I would like to say to this NDP government, this NDP caucus, I think I've mentioned before, there's a really great individual Thomas Cunningham from the US Naval Academy Fire Department, and he talks about leadership. And he mentions one of those points, and one of his key points is integrity, character and honesty. And he goes on to say, of all the qualities a leader must possess, integrity may be the most important one of them all. And I say to the NDP members across the way, where in your raising the PST, when you gave your word, if you will, you gave your covenant to the people of Manitoba, where is the integrity? You have proven that you cannot be trusted if you say one thing during an election campaign and then do exactly the opposite a few months later.

And I think I've mentioned before it's not like this was a rookie mistake. It's not like this was a government that had just gotten into office; this actually came from an individual, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), who had been the Minister of Finance for almost 10 years. This was not a rookie mistake. This was a concerted—concerted—effort.

Thomas goes on to say integrity involves the three Rs: respect for self, respect for others, and responsibility for all your actions. And I'd like to ask members opposite, where is the respect even for

yourself by saying one thing in an election campaign and then coming into this Legislature and doing exactly the opposite? Where's the respect for others? Well, we've covered that one off already.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And more importantly, when will this government take responsibility for their actions? And that's what I find incredible: The government takes no responsibility for it. They want to blame anybody and everybody; they've gone from the federal government to civic government, they've gone from school boards to international government, they even tried to pin this on Mother Nature. They will pin it on anybody and everybody, but they will not take responsibility themselves. And that, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to actually look at a failure in leadership, therein is the crux of it.

Thomas goes on to say a leader is the role model by which the group, or the province, that they command is most influenced. Eventually, this will lead to a moulding or modelling of the group's behaviour. This is why a leader must have and maintain the highest standard of character and integrity whether on or off duty. Integrity of one's character will consist of honour, virtue, allegiance. Without integrity you can never garner the respect and confidence of those you wish to lead. I'd like to say that—I'd like to repeat that again: You can never garner the respect and confidence of those you wish to lead without integrity.

And I would like to ask members opposite, maybe there's a reason why your government flounders and flails on a continuous basis. That's why we've had this reset Throne Speech; that's why, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps they should look within themselves and try to figure out why it—what should they do? How should they try to take responsibility instead of trying to blame everybody else? Why do they need to bring in a Throne Speech to try to reset the message? And we know the message has changed from week to week, month to month, Throne Speech from budget speech, and it doesn't get any better.

The fact is, as Manitobans go upon their daily business and try to make ends meet, they are facing this terrible increase in taxes two years running; taxes that were never committed to, that were denied when they were confronted with it and now it's Manitobans that have to deal with it.

And, Mr. Speaker, Thomas goes on to say individual integrity is never easy and it's never

supposed to be. At most, it may be the most difficult of all personal qualities to hold intact because of its complicated nature and the multiplicity of its dimensions.

We heard the member—the now Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), the member from Fort Rouge, talk about somehow that it was tough raising the PST and completely negating the kinds of tough decisions that are going to be made and are made on a daily basis at the kitchen table.

And Thomas goes on to say that doing the right thing—individual integrity is never easy, but it's not supposed to be and it's probably the most difficult of all personal qualities. And it's interesting, it's the one that the NDP very, very callously threw overboard as soon as they got elected, because there is no integrity in going door to door and saying one thing and denying that you are going to do something, and then coming into this Chamber and doing exactly the opposite. There's no integrity in that, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:20)

And thus Manitobans are faced with a budget speech that they felt terribly betrayed by. They've now had a Throne Speech which tried to reset, tried to hit the reset button, and yet—and yet—Mr. Speaker, had 15 different priorities, prioritized stuff that had been prioritized long before. It's suggesting that they're going to fund stuff that has basically already been funded and built. It's a cynical document, and it leaves Manitobans, it leaves those individuals that are making the tough decision at their kitchen table, it leaves them cold because they expected more from this government. They wanted more from this government, and they actually thought maybe in the Throne Speech they would get something better.

One of the things, unfortunately, that wasn't part of the Throne Speech was the fact that, yes, this government agreed with the previous Conservative government on the balanced budget legislation, the taxpayer protection act, and they committed to and ran on not changing it. In fact, the first leader was Gary Doer, the former premier, as leader of the opposition, voted for it, he and his caucus. And they said that they would stay with the balanced budget legislation as it was. Manitobans never thought in their wildest dream that it would be tinkered with the way it was.

So not just did Manitobans feel betrayed that their government had committed to (a) no tax increases; and (b) no PST increase, specifically; but

then the last shoe to drop, if you will, the third hit on Manitobans was the fact that the one thing they counted on, the one thing that they knew they always had in their back pocket was the taxpayer protection act, and they found out soon after the budget speech that they were going to also lose that. Not just did this government turn its back on integrity, it went one step further and basically turned its back on an—on any kind of democratic principle, the principle that people were supposed to have a right to vote on whether or not they agreed with a major tax increase. How unfortunate for all of those individuals who went into the ballot box and thought wrongly, they thought wrongly, that they were voting for an—a government with integrity. How wrong could they have been? Because now this NDP government has been unmasked. Not just did they go back on their word on taxes, but, more importantly, they went back on their word for protecting democratic rights and principles.

I've, in the past, talked about the former minister of Finance, the member from Dauphin, who was the biggest champion, helped to fund and talked about referendums when it came to the Wheat Board. He was Mr. Democratic Rights. He was the guy, the biggest proponent for referendums, except for when it came when he was minister of Finance and standing up for a referendum on a PST increase. And then, all of a sudden, he turned a one-eighty and went in a different direction. How unfortunate for those Manitobans who thought they were voting for a party and a government with integrity, for a party that actually had democratic in its name and didn't stand up to those principles. How unfortunate for those Manitobans that sit at a kitchen table and have to make the tough decisions for their families, knowing—knowing—that they actually voted for this. How unfortunate. How badly they must feel that they were misled, that they were betrayed by an NDP party. How unfortunate for them.

This Throne Speech cannot cover the lack of integrity. This Throne Speech cannot cover up for the kinds of things that were committed to before an election and the opposite done after an election. The Throne Speech will not—will not—reset this government because Manitobans now see the NDP party unmasked for what it is. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the NDP and the members across the way should actually have a look at this document, and if any of them would like a copy, I would send it to them, from Thomas Cunningham, in which he says that it's—that of all the qualities

a leader must possess—and I would say, of all the qualities a government must possess, of all the qualities a premier or a political party must possess—integrity may be the most important one of them. And this NDP government, when put on a scale, has been found wanting; it has been found too light.

How unfortunate for Manitobans who actually believed that this was an NDP party that has democratic in its name and it was—has proven itself to be anti-democratic, has shown no integrity, has proven to Manitobans that they say one thing in an election and do exactly the opposite, when it comes after an election. And I feel poorly for those Manitobans who were misled by the NDP party, went along with it, and they're now the ones—they voted in something that actually they now have to pay the price for, and that is a terrible amount of tax increases, an economy that's faltering, jobs that are being lost. When this government came into office, we were the province with the lowest unemployment rate; we've slipped down to third and it just keeps getting worse. How badly must those Manitobans feel.

But, Mr. Speaker, the good news is that, in time, they too will have the opportunity to change the course of history and undo the mistakes they've made by making sure they never vote for this NDP party again, and I suspect many of them won't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to get up here today, and I want to thank my constituents first for allowing me this honour and privilege to get up and speak in the House today.

I have to rebut a couple of points that I heard from the member from St. Paul on some of his speech. I mean, in fact, Mr. Speaker, most of his speech, you could sail the Titanic right through it and never scrape up against a fact. He talks about integrity and character and honesty and then he talks about election time. Well, in election time, they actually outspent us when they were talking about promises during election time. But then, after the election, the true side of the Conservatives came out where they said they would cut a half a billion dollars from the budget, which would've seen things like flood protection, roads and bridges be cancelled. So, during the election, they said one thing, and then afterwards they say another. We saw the true side of them come out when they talked about cutting.

You know, the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) was saying that we're insensitive. I would argue the opposite. We're the ones who voted for free cancer-care drugs for Manitobans. That side of the House voted against it. Who's insensitive, Mr. Speaker? We're talking about free cancer-care drugs. He talks about wanting things where the rubber hits the road. You're right, the rubber's going to hit the road—newly paved roads that create great jobs—good high-paying jobs for people, keeping people working in Manitoba and keeping people coming home to Manitoba.

You know, we talk about the things that they put on record. I mean, was I correct in hearing that the member for St. Paul went around saying that the priorities of his constituents were not this Throne Speech? So, his constituents' priorities are not about jobs, they're not about building, they're not about roads, they're not about hospitals, they're not about the economy. I don't know where he canvasses, Mr. Speaker, but it's obviously not the same Manitoba that I canvass, because when I was on the doorstep, I heard nothing but those.

We listened to Manitobans over the summer and over the break, and we focused in on what they were saying. And they said they want good jobs. They said they want people to stay home in this province. They said they want good roads, they want good infrastructure, they want schools, they want daycares. They don't want us to slash and burn the province like the Conservative Party suggests on the other side.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, we hear them day after day with the same tired petitions, talking about how Minnesota's sales tax is 5 per cent. How's their health care in Minnesota? Break your leg in Minnesota. I ask you that. How would that be in Minnesota? How much is that going to cost you? They don't have a clue when they talk about that stuff. They want to cherry-pick from here and there. Well, you know what? Maybe in Colombia you can buy coffee for cheaper. Why don't you look at that?

I mean, you want to cherry-pick from all these jurisdictions. That's not fair to compare. Minnesota and North Dakota don't have health care, so they have lower sales tax. Well, imagine that. They also have a federal government that supports all of their roads—pays for every ounce of the road infrastructure. So it's nice that they want to cherry-pick.

You know, I just—I can't stand when the members opposite put so much false information on the record. You know, they want to talk about how negative the province is. You know what, Mr. Speaker? If they just stopped telling lies, we'll stop telling the truth about them. I mean, that's the way it is.

You know, I know that my time is running short, you know, Mr. Speaker, but I'd really like to say thank you once again to my constituents and to all my colleagues on this side of the House who support a great budget, and I look forward to the vote in the next 30 seconds where we're going to vote down the members opposite terrible motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 45(4), I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the questions on the motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), that is, the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do the members wish to have the amendment read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Members wish to have the amendment read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a yes, so therefore I'm obligated to read the amendment.

But this House regrets that:

- (a) That despite hearing from thousands of Manitobans in opposition to raising the provincial sales tax and calling the idea ridiculous during the last election period, the provincial government has chosen to ignore both the will of Manitobans and the law by choosing to raise the PST by 1 per cent from 7 to 8 per cent; and
- (b) That despite continued calls for respect for the law, the provincial government's approach of

continuing to disrespect the tenets of the balanced budget and fiscal management act, including raising major taxes on Manitobans without a referendum and exempting ministers from established salary penalties during deficit periods represents a failure to respect the rule of law and the democratic rights of Manitobans; and

- (c) That despite the fact that Manitobans experience the highest food bank usage in Canada, especially amongst children and an inflation rate that is more than twice the national average, the provincial government continues to impose taxes on Manitobans at a lower level of income than what is found in all but two provinces, and has failed to provide an increase in the basic personal income tax exemption to the national provincial average; and
- (d) That despite the many calls from individuals and community groups, the provincial government has failed to protect the most vulnerable Manitobans by refusing to raise the rental allowance portion of employment and income assistance to 75 per cent of median market rents; and
- (e) That despite the largest increase in revenue of any Canadian province in 2013 and the highest projected growth in revenue of any province in Canada over the next several years, this House regrets the provincial government's commitment to increase spending in the absence of a comprehensive expenditure review to evaluate return on investment and program outcomes across all departments of government; and
- (f) That despite the promise to invest in core infrastructure, the provincial government has consistently failed to follow through on past commitments, demonstrating to the House that the provincial government cannot be taken at its word since numerous core infrastructure projects cited in the Speech from the Throne constitute reannouncements of long-standing projects committed to prior to the proposed hike in the provincial sales tax.

As a consequence of these and many other failings, the provincial government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

All those in favour of the amendment will please signify by—shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In the opinion of the Chair, the Nays have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): A recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

* (16:40)

Order, please.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Rowat, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 18, Nays 34.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

House Business

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader):
On House business, Mr. Speaker. Would you canvass the House to see if there's leave to call it 5 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 21, 2013

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