

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	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	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	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
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 23, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 300—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I move, seconded by the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 300, The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la « Mount Carmel Clinic », be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: For almost 90 years, the Mount Carmel Clinic has been providing quality health services to Manitobans. This bill will modernize its enabling legislation by reducing the number of directors from a minimum of 25 to between 12 and 15. It will also update the language respecting its relationship with the provincial health-care system.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

St. James-Assiniboia Parent Child Coalition

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, raising young children isn't easy. As a parent, I know that having a supportive community behind you makes things simpler.

The St. James-Assiniboia Parent Child Coalition has become a much used resource by parents in Kirkfield Park. Under the leadership of Family Resource Coordinator Sandra Doell, they are creating happy, healthy families in our community. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome Sandra and her team to the Chamber today.

In partnership with community organizations, the coalition works to support programs and services for families, with an emphasis on activities that involve parents, grandparents and children. Activities are based on several core principles, including positive parenting, nutrition and physical health, learning and literacy, and community capacity building.

St. James-Assiniboia has created healthy and holistic programming. Their Family Chefs program instills lifelong healthy eating habits with a hands-on approach to preparing nutritious snacks and meals. They offer a free Literacy Links program where trained facilitators will visit families with children entering kindergarten and help them with literacy and numeracy skills. Their parent child drop-in centres provide a safe, nurturing environment for families to connect with each other and find support.

The goal of the St. James-Assiniboia coalition is to allow families to build connections with their neighbourhood, while supporting early years development and building parent capacity. They take care to extend programming to all families as early as possible, sending out information packages to new parents with public health nurses. They strive to build parent capacity and empower families to create healthy, supportive environments for their children. Many parents, myself included, are grateful to St. James-Assiniboia and their partners for all their hard work. They are committed to promoting the best possible outcome for our children.

Thank you to Sandra Doell and her—for her energy and dedication. I wish them even more success in the future.

Municipal-Provincial Relations

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, with the AMM annual convention taking place in Brandon this week, I can't help but wonder what new levels of

disrespect this NDP government will display in their dealing with municipal government.

When municipal leaders asked the federal government to remove the GST from municipally purchased goods, the federal government complied. When municipalities made the same request of the provincial NDP government, they were refused. The PST on municipal purchases is essentially a tax on tax to all Manitobans, either from property taxes or other municipal services.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP didn't only refuse the request for removal of the PST on municipal purchases, they went a step further. First, they expanded the list of things that the Province would be charging PST against, including municipal property and liability insurance, and then a year later raising the level of PST charged to 8 per cent, with no consultation with municipalities in either case.

Mr. Speaker, when the FCM, on behalf of municipalities, was approached for the federal gas tax share, the federal government agreed and set up a dedicated share of gas tax that went directly to municipalities.

When the NDP provincial government received the same request, they ignored it. Once again, no respect. The NDP instead set up a smoke-and-mirrors fund called the Building Manitoba, which resulted in less revenue reaching municipalities than before. Once again, no respect, no consultation.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his NDP government once again showed their disdain for municipal government with their announcement of municipal amalgamation, once again with no consultation whatsoever with the AMM.

The NDP effectively said one third of municipal reeves, mayors and councillors were no longer needed. The rationale was that there would be cost savings. That hasn't happened. In fact, many municipalities are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on amalgamation issues. In my municipality alone, boards and partnerships have had to be restructured; three of our councillors who used to drive 10 to 20 kilometres for meetings now drive over 100 kilometres for those same meetings.

Mr. Speaker, these are all examples of municipalities paying more to this Premier and his NDP government—

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

Siloam Mission—Home for the Holidays Fundraising Gala

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, no one plans to be homeless. It's something that unfortunately might happen to absolutely anyone. Thank goodness organizations like Siloam Mission are here to help.

This month I attended Siloam's Home for the Holidays annual fundraising gala at the RBC Convention Centre. The gala featured wonderful food, a silent auction and live entertainment by local musician Erin Propp. It was an evening of uplifting stories, rich with vivid descriptions of life on the edge, which made plain what Siloam has to offer.

Ron Bodhan courageously spoke about his struggle with childhood and substance abuse, job loss and homelessness. Siloam Mission was there for him, and he's now walking the road to recovery.

According to their latest count, this year alone, Siloam Mission has provided over 470,000 nutritious meals. And they provide those meals three times a day, every day of the year.

* (13:40)

Since 2007, Siloam's emergency overnight shelter has been a refuge for those who have no bed to call their own.

Siloam Mission helps people get back on their feet with Building Futures, a program that helps people who visit Siloam find fulfilling, sustainable jobs. Through MOST, or mission off the street, Siloam patrons develop skills by shovelling snow, clearing streets and collecting litter. Since MOST started, they've cleaned over 1,000 kilometres of sidewalk, removed nearly 900 bags of litter, helping to keep Winnipeg beautiful.

Every year, thousands of Canadian families cope with poverty and homelessness during the holiday season. I'm proud that in Manitoba, Siloam Mission is here to help. Thank you to Siloam Mission and your volunteers. Your compassion is a beacon to anyone struggling through hard times.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined here today by the CEO of Siloam Mission, Dr. Garry Corbett, the manager of communications—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this member statement has elapsed.

Agape Table

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, every morning for the past 35 years, people have lined up outside 175 Colony Street for a warm breakfast provided by Agape Table. Founded in 1980, Agape Table was established to serve free hot meals to people in the inner city. Today, up to 250 guests will be served a hot meal without qualification or judgment. To get perspective on the enormity of their work, they provided 130,000 bowls of hot soup in 2014.

Agape offers people in the community so much more than emergency food. Their programs include subsidized breakfasts and a grocery co-operative that offers our community members access to the nutrition they require.

Poverty has many faces. Guests of Agape Table are single parents, working poor, expectant mothers, unemployed seniors, people with disabilities, and most concerning of all are the children among those who desire access to nutritional foods.

But whatever their individual circumstances, they are people who deserve our support, from a hot meal to a friendly conversation to a welcoming smile, something I've witnessed first-hand volunteering with my three children so they can understand they form part of the solution.

Guests of Agape are imparted with hope, dignity and empowerment. Poverty and food security are complex problems with no single solution. Agape is a testament to the giving nature and compassion of Manitobans. They should be extremely proud of the work they do and the profound effect they've had and continue to have on our community.

At their recent 35th anniversary breakfast, board chair Aaron Margolis noted that his ultimate goal for Agape Table would be to be put out of business. Until they are, I would like to acknowledge the directors, staff, volunteers and the many community partners that make the access to nutrition possible, several of whom are with us today.

So please join me in thanking Aaron Margolis, Dave Cunnin, Al Rogowski, Karen Brown, John Thompson, Stephanie Behl and Nancy Chippendale.

Thank you, and congratulations on all you do for our community.

Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Mr. Speaker, November is Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month. Crohn's and Colitis Canada is a charity dedicated to finding cures and improving the lives of people affected by these chronic diseases. I'm excited to spread the word about their innovative GoHere Washroom Access Initiative.

Crohn's disease and colitis are lifelong diseases that cause inflammation in the gut and have no known cures or causes. More than 9,000 Manitobans currently suffer from these diseases, including a dear friend of mine.

The GoHere initiative encourages local businesses to open their washrooms to the public without restriction. Tens of thousands of people with inflammatory bowel diseases like Crohn's and colitis must use washrooms from five to 20 times a day.

Easier washroom access improves the quality of life for people living with IBDs, along with anyone who suffers from incontinence. Knowing they will not have to explain their condition to an employee helps them break free from the fear of leaving their own homes.

I encourage businesses to visit the GoHere website to order free decals which shows the public they're committing to this wonderful project. There's also a mobile app which helps people find the closest GoHere washroom.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 42 grade 9 students under the direction of Michael Hall and Katie Williams, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

And, also, seated in the loge to my right we have Mr. Doug Martindale, the former member for Burrows.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Intraprovincial Trade Government Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I noticed on the weekend, Mr. Speaker, with some disappointment, that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had insulted the Premier of Saskatchewan and called him a flip-flopper in respect of his views on the New West Partnership. This is the kind of thing that doesn't help relationships.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for his attack on the Premier of Saskatchewan was that the government of Saskatchewan has now taken to not allowing Manitoba companies to participate in tendering on certain Crown corporation jobs. And it's interesting because the NDP has not been allowing out-of-province companies from Saskatchewan to participate for some years here in Manitoba in tendering for jobs here in Manitoba.

They've also been excluding non-unionized manufacturing and construction companies from participating here as well, Mr. Speaker, by forcing them to pay union dues. This is a practice which is, of course, illegal throughout Europe and abandoned in most other provinces as well.

Now, the Premier now says that he is after a national free trade deal. Why does he oppose free trade within our province, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): The one thing we do agree with with Saskatchewan, of course, is a strong national plan for trade.

But we also believe in keeping our Crown corporations public. In fact, we know they're incredible assets to our provinces. They help grow jobs. They grow our economies. They keep prices affordable, like heat and electricity and insurance. In fact, in Saskatchewan, they even keep their phone plans affordable, Mr. Speaker.

I travelled to every single one of those members opposite's ridings, and I heard the same thing over and over again: The sale of MTS is absolutely devastating. Those are the facts. The Leader of the Opposition sold MTS, made his friends richer, why everybody else in Manitoba had to pay more.

I ask those members opposite, where their—when their own constituents are telling them that that plan was a terrible plan, I ask the Leader of the

Opposition: Is that the same plan he has for Manitoba corporations now, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Pallister: We have, on this side of the House, unlike the member and his colleagues opposite, we have tremendous respect for the people who work hard at MTS to provide services to Manitoba customers.

Back to my question to the Premier. Of course, the Premier and his colleagues have a double standard when it comes to open tendering practices and zero credibility when it comes to saying they support open trade across the country when they don't even support it here in Manitoba.

The Premier attacked the Premier of Saskatchewan. He said he was a flip-flopper, but Brad Wall, as I recall, promised balanced budgets and delivered, as opposed to the Premier. Brad Wall promised that he would not hike taxes, and he delivered. So Manitobans know who kept their word and who didn't. The member for St. Boniface and his colleagues broke their promise to the people of Manitoba.

Now, their record on free trade is one that is hardly one they should be proud of, Mr. Speaker. During questioning in the Estimates process, the—a senior member of the government's own bureaucratic staff said that the Premier had broken his word so frequently on the rules that Manitoba was known as a province that broke the rules when it came to internal trade.

* (13:50)

If that's their record, how could the Premier say he has any credibility in negotiating a national free trade agreement?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, here's the facts: We're committed to a strong trade agreement with every other premier in the country. In fact, when it comes to interprovincial exports per capita, our province does it better than anybody else in the nation, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts.

Also, the fact is when the Leader of the Opposition sat around the Cabinet table, businesses were closing, storefronts were going dark, buildings sat empty, Mr. Speaker. It got so bad that not only did the Winnipeg Jets leave town, the Leader of the Opposition left town in the middle of the flood. He sits there and he says that he's proud of that plan. He says that's going to be the best plan that Manitoba has ever seen.

I ask those members opposite, every single one of them, have they asked their leader, is that the same plan he has for Manitoba now? Is that the same commitment that they have for families that when the going gets tough, you leave town, Mr. Speaker?

On this side of the House we stand with families, we stand with businesses, Mr. Speaker, and Manitobans know that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, well, I fought for Manitoba from Ottawa, Gary Doer from Washington—Gary Doer in Washington, and the entire front bench of the NDP decided to vacate Cabinet so they could fight for Manitobans, the entire front bench, I repeat, of the NDP. Those with any credibility left the front bench to fight for Manitobans in the best way they knew how.

Labelling one another is not the way to achieve positive gains. I recognize that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his colleagues like to take the approach of labelling people in the media. I believe it to be insulting and demeaning. I recognize the government has 192 communication staff, but picking up the phone might be a better approach than using communicators to try to insult your neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier cannot build relationships even within his own caucus, and he surely cannot pretend that he is standing up for free trade in our country when after years of sincere invitations he simply refuses to respond yes to joining the New West Partnership.

Why not stop insulting our neighbours and instead say yes to opportunities for Manitobans?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, businesses are telling us to stay committed to a strong plan on trade; we're doing that. They've asked us to invest in world-class trade infrastructure; we're doing that.

I've offered the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Tuxedo, any time they want to come down to Connie's Corner and hear first-hand from businesses, they can do that. They'll have bannock and tea and the best fried baloney in Winnipeg's North End.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, even the Leader of the Opposition can't serve up better baloney. The fact is his record shows businesses were closing, storefronts were going dark, buildings were sitting empty. We know that's the leader's plan.

I ask the member from Tuxedo, I ask the member from Steinbach, on his plan, is that a plan that you support? Does the Leader of the Opposition even consult his caucus when it comes to a plan, Mr. Speaker?

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we stand with families, we stand with businesses.

Ex-Red River College Employees Senior Staff Severance Packages

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I believe the members on this side of the House are full up on the baloney that this minister is giving out this morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Advanced Learning had no idea what was going on with a quarter of a million dollars paid to the past president, Ms. Forsyth, of Red River community college.

He's had the weekend to catch up, so I ask the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning today why the former president of Red River College was paid a quarter of a million dollars of taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I think we know that with the departure of the former president of Red River College that it ended a short but sad chapter in the life of that particular institution.

What the record clearly shows, however, Mr. Speaker, is that when troubling allegations were made about the activities of the former president, this government acted. We had a full and complete investigation that was published online and published for public consumption, and the college—there were 45 recommendations in that report and the college accepted all 45.

Since that time, we've installed a new board chair, a new president has been hired, and this Legislature has passed a new Red River College Act to enhance governance and financial practices at the college.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to defend public education all along the way.

Mr. Ewasko: You know, Mr. Speaker, this is just another example of NDP waste and mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars that could be better directed to front-line essential services.

This minister was chair of COPSE, became an MLA, became minister, squashed COPSE and

brought the power right into his own department. For him to say it wouldn't be appropriate for him to comment on the compensation is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the last four years, severance was paid to ex-senior staffers at Red River community college that will add up to over \$3.7 million 'amortized.'

So my question to the Minister of Education: How did you miss that?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've said that the government took strong and transparent and accountable actions to deal with the issues at Red River College. But let's be clear about this. The former president was employed by Red River College, not by the government of Manitoba, was employed by Red River College.

The details of the compensation agreement were determined between the former president and Red River College, and we are not a part of that process. And for the member to suggest—for the member to suggest—that we—that the government should be involved in that means that he doesn't understand public education in this province and he doesn't understand the nature of institutional autonomy in this province. He doesn't understand education at all, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ewasko: So let's get this straight, Mr. Speaker. So if there's a photo op—if there's a photo op—this NDP Minister of Education is in charge. If there's a controversy, nothing to do with it—nothing to do with it.

The main issue, Mr. Speaker, right here today is that the NDP waste and mismanagement is hurting our No. 1 stakeholder, our Manitoba students. The situation seems very simple to me, whether it's the minister and his government deceiving Manitoba taxpayers that they actually have the information and they're sitting on it or they don't know what's going on in his department.

So here's the question: Which is it, Mr. Speaker? Is he deceiving Manitobans or is he incompetent or is he both?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, better training and education opportunities are the key to keeping Manitoba on that right track. More people with access to a better education will translate into a well-trained workforce that's ready for the jobs of

tomorrow, and that's precisely what this government does. That's precisely what Red River College does.

Eighty-three per cent of the graduates from Red River find employment in their field. Enrolment has increased by 62 per cent since we formed government. We partnered with them on the new Skilled Trades and Technology Centre.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, while we invest in public education, the opposition has no plan for education, except to fail students and tell grade 9 boys they don't have a future at all.

Child and Family Services Universal Child Care Benefit Payments

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, every child in Canada is eligible for the Universal Child Care Benefit paid to the adult or agency responsible for that child's welfare. Since 2012, this government has had in place an agreement that converted this payment to Children's Special Allowances, which the Province then keeps.

Can the minister tell this House whether children in care benefit directly from the Children's Special Allowances, or does it just disappear into general revenue?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): I'd like to discuss with this House what we've been able to do with the devolution of child welfare across this province.

We've devolved into four agencies. We're working with the authorities and the agencies every day to provide support to children. What we did is we've increased the funding to all of the agencies and the authorities. We've increased more money into prevention.

We're going to continue to do that as we work all of our—with all of our partners, not like the members opposite when they slashed funding, cut rates to foster parents and then stopped providing services to children 16 years and older.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, prior to 2012, the agreement in place stated that the agency responsible for the care of the child was to receive the Universal Child Care Benefit. Most agencies had a practice of putting half the money in trust for the Child and Family Services child until they reached 18 and gave the rest of the money to the foster family for extra things for the child in care.

Why did the NDP government end the practice of directly benefiting the child in care?

* (14:00)

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Every day in this province, we have many, many professionals that are working to support families, whether it's in the health-care sector, whether it's education and also in the child welfare.

We have agencies every day going and meeting with families and talking about what are the solutions and what supports do you need.

This government is a government that's invested in prevention. We'll continue to make those investments in prevention. We will not go to those dark days where funding was slashed, there were no prevention programs. We're going to continue to invest in all of Manitoba children.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, this government is the one with 11,000 children in care.

Prior to 2012, CFS agencies often ran deficits due to ever-increasing numbers of children in care. This NDP government decided to take the money held in trust for CFS children when they turned 18 and use the money to pay off the deficit in that agency. No agreements were in place to allow them to do this.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government stole this money from the trust fund of the children in care, and in so doing, stole their good start in life.

What gives this NDP government the right to steal from these most vulnerable children?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what we're doing to support vulnerable families across this province. We are investing in poverty reduction. We have the ALL Aboard strategy, which is making those supports to Manitoba families.

We are not going to do what the member opposite suggests: slash poverty reduction, return back to the drawing board. That is reckless. That is concerning.

What we're going to do is we're going to keep investing to support families. What we've done is we've increased the funding to support the child-welfare agencies every year. We're going to continue to do that.

We've hired more staff, not like them where they laid off staff. We're going to continue to support

foster parents, and, most importantly, we're going to invest in prevention: \$29 million a year goes to prevention to support Manitoba families.

Seniors' School Tax Rebate Residence Entitlement

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government made many promises to our seniors, which, of course, means many promises broken. Seniors on a fixed income are struggling to pay for increases in hydro, home insurance, auto insurance, gas, groceries and the PST increase.

This government is breaking their promise to remove the school tax from tax bills that seniors pay. It's almost Christmas 2015, and it's clear that the NDP are destined to hand out gifts of more broken promises again this holiday season.

Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP government continuing to nickel and dime the hard-working men and women, like Germain Roy and his wife, who built this province?

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): I thank the member for the question.

I think that everyone on this side of the House certainly appreciates all that seniors have done for this province, and that's why we have made in—the investments that we've made to ensure that seniors are able to live comfortably in this province.

Now, I know that the member opposite asked about the tax credit for seniors. This is something that we brought in. It is something that we are going to be making sure that seniors are able to access if they so wish, and it's something that we're very proud that we've done on this side of the House, and I suspect it's something that maybe they're a little bit envious that they didn't think of doing themselves.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, this school tax will not be removed from a hard-working senior from the RM of De Salaberry, Mr. Germain Roy. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because his wife and him rented an apartment for a few months in the city for the winter in Winnipeg so they could be closer for medical appointments. And, as you know, highway medicine is a new trend in our province under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, because this senior has a temporary residence, or a cottage, if you will, in the city, why is he not entitled to the school tax rebate on taxes? Why are the NDP government clawing back the school tax rebate from Mr. Roy?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I'm pleased to inform Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, the—it's our government brought in the school tax rebate last year. We—in fact, this budget that we brought in doubled that. Now a senior could claim up to almost \$1,500 off their school tax. It's our goal, as a government, to completely eliminated that—eliminate that in next year's budget.

We came into office, the property tax credit was \$250. We increased that to \$700. You know, we need no lessons from this member when it comes to supporting our seniors.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are tired of paying more and getting less with this NDP government.

And since the NDP see fit to punish our seniors who have cottages as well, will the minister please tell me why the clawback to the many Manitobans who may spend time out of the province this winter or in the city where they're closer to medical attention, where they wouldn't get it in rural Manitoba? Why are you clawing that back if you have any desire to help the seniors in this province?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we brought in a rebate for seniors, school tax rebate of \$235, this year \$470. Again, you could potentially save up to \$1,500.

I remind members, I'll remind the House, I'll remind that senior that he talks about, Mr. Speaker, that member voted against that. That member stood up in this House; when he had a chance to vote for seniors, that member said no.

Air Ambulance Services Timeline for Helipad Use

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, when patients are airlifted to Winnipeg by STARS, the helicopter lands at the airport and a land ambulance has to pick up the patient and transfer the patient to a hospital. This is happening because there is no helipad for them to land on. This is valuable time lost and also adds more risk because of the number of times a patient is moved.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us why it is taking so long for the new helipad to be ready for use.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

STARS does wonderful work, and I'm so thankful for everything that they do and the number of lives that they've been able to save, the training that they also provide on the ground. They do amazing work.

And the helipad is just one part of the larger investments that are going in to the entire transformation that is happening at the Health Sciences campus. And I look forward—the members opposite, stay tuned.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, we have been told by a concerned citizen in the construction industry that the helipad was basically completed a year ago.

Can the Minister of Health tell us: If this is the case, why isn't it being used now to improve patient safety?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

As we all know, STARS is now integrated into the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. It enables medical crews to enhance their experience and training in Winnipeg's high-volume emergency and critical-care medical system. And the helipad, as I said, is being built at the Health Sciences Centre, slated to open later this year.

When they resumed partial service, they did so under the supervision of Dr. Brian Postl and Clinical Oversight Committee. These teams were working strongly together, and, again, I'm really thankful for the work that they do and I'm thankful, again, for the lives that they have been able to save.

And we will continue to work with them and the rest of the EMS system to ensure that Manitobans get the best emergency care when they need it.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health did not answer the question.

And it relates to the fact that this helipad, according to somebody in the construction industry said, was finished a year ago. This concerned citizen also said that they were told to stop working on this helipad project by the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) promo people.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why and can she address these serious allegations? Has this project been ready to go for a year and nothing has happened?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the member opposite and remind the concerned citizen

that there have been a lot of infrastructure investments going in at the Health Sciences Centre, including the helipad, and I would remind that concerned citizen that it's infrastructure and construction that's been backed by this side of the Chamber, that if it was up to those folks, there would be no STARS and there would be no helipad.

Sustainable Harvesting—Lake Winnipeg Whitefish Population Discard Rate

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, in November 2008, the minister assembled a task force of scientists and fishers to assess the sustainable harvesting of Lake Winnipeg. In January 2011, a consensus report was received, and, like most other reports received by the Selinger government, it was ignored.

On page 52 of the report, it noted that estimates of biological activity are not possible with the data available, and one way that could be improved is better information on bushing.

* (14:10)

Can the minister share with the House the most recent estimate he has received from his department as to the volume of whitefish being trashed in the bush to rot?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I thank the member for the question. Gives me a opportunity once again to put on the record the major accomplishment of this government working in conjunction with fishers here in the province of Manitoba to achieve eco-certification of Waterhen Lake in co-operation with the First Nation in the area. This is historic. This is the first lake in the western hemisphere that achieved this status and only the second lake the world.

So for the member opposite to suggest that, you know, we're somehow lacking in regard to managing the fishery, I think, is a little disingenuous, to say the least.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the issue of bushing was also referenced in SeaChoice's scathing assessment of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis as, quote, comparable to some of the most poorly managed fisheries in the world, end quote.

They note, on page 31 of the report, quote, in lieu of any reliable information on the subject, a discard rate of 40 to 60 per cent is selected on the

assumption that this rate will be conservative. End quote.

Can the minister confirm that this is the same level reported to him by his department in a briefing last month?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's always entertaining when members opposite bring up the topic of Lake Winnipeg. The climate-change deniers across the way seem to think that everything's just fine on Lake Winnipeg; that, you know, for example, water quality issues, members opposite, if they were in government and they had the challenge of upgrading the North End waste-water treatment plant in the city of Winnipeg, they would ignore that. They'd—their leader himself has termed this a waste of money.

So, really, when you want to talk about Lake Winnipeg, the climate-change deniers opposite, their strategy of doing nothing is clearly on the record.

Fisheries Monitoring Cuts to Fisheries Branch

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, the most prevalent theme coming out of the minister's own Lake Winnipeg Quota Review Task Force in 2011 and last week's Seafood Watch report was a lack of data upon which to make informed decisions.

Can the minister identify on what page of the 118-page Winnipeg quota review task force the recommendation was made to eliminate the director of fishers position and that branch as a stand-alone branch, Mr. Speaker? Because I can't find it.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, in reference to that report, which was a good analysis of the fishery, just a few short weeks ago, we stepped it up a notch in terms of calling on a very vested Manitoban, Mr. Harold Westdal, to lead up a committee to follow up on that and take us to the next level in regard to eco-certification. We will be looking at the three lakes in question, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis, putting in place lake management plans in order to improve the situation even further and add even more lakes in Manitoba that have the eco-certification recognition.

ABA Therapy Treatment Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, it is fundamental that when a child has a condition that

has been identified and there's a treatment for this condition which can make a difference and can last a lifetime, that that child be diagnosed and treated promptly.

For example, though a child may be diagnosed early with autism, access to effective treatment with ABA therapy has very long wait times in Manitoba. This is not the right thing to do.

What immediate action will the government take to ensure every child diagnosed with autism can begin receiving treatment within four months of diagnosis?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities): Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record of supporting children that are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. We provide a continuum of services to the child and to the family. We've even gone so far now with our new strategy to the age of 21. It happens in partnership with Health, with Children's disABILITY Services, with our partners at St. Amant, the Autism Outreach workers.

We continue to make those investments. We know about the rate of the diagnosis is increasing. We are adapting our system to meet those needs and we will continue to walk this journey with all of Manitoba families.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, today's NDP has a strong record for delay, delay, delay, wait, wait, wait.

Manitoba families with autism, who have a child with autism, have faced waiting lists so long that their child can start school without even beginning to receive ABA therapy. Let me be clear: There is a critical window for ABA treatment in the first few years of life if one is going to achieve maximum lifelong benefit. This NDP government has so mismanaged the program that some children may age out of eligibility without ever even starting treatment.

How will the government address this urgent situation right now?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We will continue by supporting all Manitoba families.

When children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, it takes the whole breath out of a parent. I've had those conversations.

We need to make sure that when we are developing a system that it is equitable, that it is

sustainable and that it provides as—for the continuum for that child in that family, that it is important that we offer them other services, multiple services, that they can choose from. We have services that happen throughout the health-care system, throughout Education, through Family Services itself, as well as we have many not-for-profit organizations that provide valuable service.

It is about an investment, a consistent investment. We have \$23 million that we have invested. This province is continuing to make investments for children diagnosed with autism and their families right up to the age of 21, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Gerrard: All Manitobans except many with autism, many who've had their kids taken away by CFS, many who are protesting even today in front of the Legislature at the poor performance of this government.

The minister tries to bluff out of her bad situation. While the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the minister huff and puff, Liberals will hire more psychologists and cover psychological services for children with autism under medicare to ensure no child has the long waits now being experienced under the NDP. Children cannot and must not wait until the NDP glue their broken house back together.

Why is the Premier not hiring more professionals and acting to include psychological services under medicare, which is so obviously the right thing to do to make sure children get the services they need when they need them?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, as I've said earlier, that we've continued to make investments, \$22 million. That's an 800 per cent increase since 1999.

And that investment has provided a continuum of supports for families. It could be an example of ABA, but it also is the Autism Outreach worker. It's speech and language. It's the supports through the health-care system. It's respite for the family. It's supports within the education, and what we've done is we've made those investments and we've continued to expand along the life cycle going up to the age of 21, making sure that we have transition programs at Red River College, making sure that if a family needs some support within their family unit that we're there to provide it.

We are going to continue to make those supports and we will continue talking to people about an 800 per cent increase.

**Travel Manitoba
New Funding Formula**

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Manitoba's the toast of tourism in Canada. Manitoba's tourist industry is booming.

Last week alone we had some incredible stories that highlight Winnipeg and Manitoba: Winnipeg was dubbed the National Geographic's best trip of 2016. Gimli's own Crown Royal Northern Harvest was named the 2015 World Whisky of the Year. Cheers to that.

* (14:20)

In total, Manitoba has won 18 international and national tourism awards. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights attracted almost double the number of expected visitors in its first year.

Just this morning, we announced we'll be introducing a brand new funding model for tourism Manitoba so they can keep more hard-earned tourism dollars to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time on this question has elapsed.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Now, who should take that question?

You know, Mr. Speaker, today we are pleased and proud to announce a new funding formula for Travel Manitoba. They've been the winners of 18 international and national tourism awards. And Travel Manitoba, we are investing more, and tourism businesses in Manitoba are getting more. We're very, very pleased to invest in tourism in Manitoba.

Members of the opposition said no to the MTS Centre, no to the Jets, no to investors stadium and no to the Bombers. If it were up to the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives, they would have said no to National Geographic's announcement about Winnipeg. They would have said, yes, go to Saskatchewan, if you listen to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, Travel Manitoba is really, really an important institution that we support wholeheartedly. Investing more, we're going to get more.

**Manitoba Hydro Transmission Line
Minnesota Line Route Concerns**

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): This Selinger government is tired and out of touch with everyday Manitobans.

This is especially true when it comes to the current route for the Minnesota-Manitoba hydro transmission line. After three rounds of public engagements and a strong opposition to the current route, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro is not listening to the residents of southeastern Manitoba.

Can the minister say why he is ignoring the concerns of Manitobans and community residents and their recommendations for a less intrusive route?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised this question on a number of occasions, and let me repeat what I've said to him previously. This line will indeed contribute to our province's reliability, not only here at home but, indeed, by doubling our province's capability of importing electricity during periods of drought and other system emergencies.

Let me further say, as well, the selection of the route and the submission of—the selection itself took a lot of years in planning, way before our time here, and it has endured, as well, environmental studies, engagement with stakeholders, many of the farmers that are a part of this.

And the route itself is going to be built between the Dorsey station and—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Mr. Smook: It's Manitobans' hydro line.

I have read several petitions with hundreds of signatures. I have asked this question of the minister during question period before.

I know that the member from Dawson Trail has received complaints on the current route. The RM of Reynolds has offered to have the line run through their RM.

Manitobans feel disrespected and are tired of this Selinger government mismanaging Manitoba Hydro.

Will this minister tell Manitobans the reasons for selecting the current route over a less intrusive one,

or is NDP politics deciding where this line will go, like it did with Bipole III?

Mr. Robinson: The agreement itself with the Manitoba-Minnesota line, Mr. Speaker, is part of Manitoba's overall hydro power sales totalling over \$9 million.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, I don't need a lecture from that member to tell me that Manitoba Hydro is owned by all Manitobans.

Mr. Smook: The minister continues to refuse to answer the question and is not listening to Manitobans.

This project affects the lives of so many people in various communities of southeastern Manitoba. Even Manitoba Hydro employees have stated they would not like that line running close to where they live.

I will once again ask the minister to answer the question, to provide Manitobans with the reasons the current route for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line was chosen over a less intrusive one.

Mr. Robinson: Again, Mr. Speaker, the selection of the route and the submission was made a long time ago, way before any of us—

An Honourable Member: How long ago?

Mr. Robinson: I don't know how long ago. It was a long time ago. These things are planned out years in advance.

Now, let me say this, Mr. Speaker. As part of the regulatory review process, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the project and the final preferred route through Manitoba, and that's being done through my colleague the minister and his department that he's responsible for, the Conservation and Water Stewardship Department.

So, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that the public has not been engaged in this process—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister's time on this question has elapsed.

Recycle Program Rebate Cheque

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I recently met with Ross Bailey from Gimli, and his question for this minister is the rebate cheque that he received from them on a fridge that was through the recycle program. And the interesting part about this, Mr. Speaker, is this cheque is drawn on Quebec.

The government says they stand up for Manitobans, yet they do business in Quebec.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, if the member would provide us with more information, we will gladly respond to it.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by J. McEwan, R.M. Korman, J. Kosheluk and many other fine 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?

Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

Residents and businesses in the Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

This lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government repair and reopen provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

*(14:30)

And this petition is signed by D. Rae, K. Dziejie and D. Pelland and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behavioural Analysis Services

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, known as ABA services.

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention and ABA therapy for children with autism.

The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 68 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 148 children by September 2016 despite commitments to reduce the waiting times and provide timely access to services.

The current provincial government policy now imposed on the ABA service provider will decrease significantly proven, empirically based and locally proven program and force children to go to school at age five before they are ready, thus not allowing them full access to ABA services providing them—promised them as they wait on their wait-lists.

Waiting lists, forced decrease in service and denial of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

This petition signed by C. Arns, H. Webster, D. Springer and many more Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to moving on to orders of the day, I want to take this opportunity to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us family and friends of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). We have Don Mitchelson, who is the husband of the honourable member. We have Michele Kisil, who is the daughter. We have Serah and Lauren Kisil, who are the granddaughters, and Sheila Michalski and Cathy Cox.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to orders of the day, government business, and we'll—to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Education, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to complete my speech that I began on Friday morning around my complete and utter support for the Throne Speech and for the kind of progressive, activist, altruistic government that we provide the people of Manitoba. We work in partnership with them every single day to create a better province and we're going to continue to do that in the future, just as the Throne Speech indicated.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I finished on Friday morning, I was at the point of saying that in our education—in public education we try to make sure that we're taking care of the full continuum of education in this province. We begin with sound investments in early childhood education, making sure that there are child-care centres in schools all across this province, and then the Throne Speech included a commitment to universal child care so every family's included so that there's a place for every child and to ensure that as they move forward through the education system that we focus on the fundamentals in those early years so kids have that strong foundation when they begin learning.

And then from there, Mr. Speaker, we go into trying to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills so that children are prepared for—to resolve the issues, the complicated issues of the 21st century. And then from there, as they move into the post-secondary sector, they go from—they not only now have a strong focus on fundamentals, the development of critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, but then in high school we develop their job skills as well.

We have invested literally millions of dollars in building state-of-the-art skills facilities all across this province because we want to make sure that in addition to that focus on fundamentals, in addition to problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, that children, our students, our young students are also prepared with job skills on their way out of high school. And we know that our First-Year Now program and our dual credit system is working. Kids now in high school can now complete level 1 of their apprenticeship program before they've even left their high school, Mr. Speaker. Then they're prepared to choose the program that they need, either in a strong college or university circumstance, and then from there they have the full spectrum of education that we want: good numeracy and literacy skills, good problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, good job skills, a fine post-secondary education. That prepares them for the jobs of tomorrow. Our government is committed to providing opportunities for young people at every stage of the education system, and they will eventually find good jobs right here in Manitoba as a result of our investments and then they will continue to build this beautiful province for generations to come.

Now the—on education, the Throne Speech was very, very strong. I mentioned on Friday morning that we'll be following the recommendations of

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by 'introducing'—introducing legislation that ensures that all Manitoba students learn about the histories and the languages, the cultures and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples.

I kind of have to point out at this point, Mr. Speaker, that, by contrast, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't even support an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. He even, in fact, fired one of his staffers for calling for one. So we know where they stand on those kind of important issues for our indigenous students.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech commits to investing more in community schools, in early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city and in northern Manitoba because we know that we need to provide wraparound supports in our education system in order to ensure that children can be successful learners.

As I just mentioned a moment ago, we will ramp up our First-Year Now initiative to ensure high school students earn university and college credits to get a head start on their careers. There's nothing more important in an education system than allowing our students to ladder themselves through the system in order to prepare themselves for the job of their dreams in the future, and that's exactly what we've been doing. The Throne Speech calls for more action in that area, and we're going to continue to do it.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, when you're in a post-setting—secondary situation, housing is going to be an important issue for you. And we've—the Throne Speech again commits to developing more mixed-use housing for students, especially with partners like Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg, where student residences are in the process of being built. And we'll continue to look at more student residences as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, as I said on Friday, we govern for all the people of Manitoba. We're very inclusive. And in particular, we want to ensure that young women have an opportunity in the future to have the job of their dreams. That's why we're doubling the number of women apprentices in the skilled trades. Those are good-paying jobs. Those are sophisticated jobs. They take an incredible amount of skill. And, if it's anything like in my house, my wife does most of those high-skilled jobs in our house. I—we know that women are more than capable. It's time that they became fuller partners in our apprenticeship

programs, and that's exactly what the Throne Speech commits to doing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the North, we've also committed through the Throne Speech to partner with University College of the North and Mystery Lake school division, and here we're talking about R.D. Parker high school, to build a new trades training centre to help students take advantage of the good jobs created by Manitoba Hydro and make sure that our investments in northern infrastructure and mining remain strong and have good, skilled labour to do that. And what we're trying to do is to make sure that jobs in the North are available, in the first instance, to people who live in the North, and I'm talking about northerners of all stripes, but in particular we're talking about the indigenous community in the North. We want to be sure that they have opportunities for good jobs.

That's why we're taking advantage of the opportunity to invest in a new trades training centre that will be situated right between UCN and R.D. Parker, which fits right into the wheelhouse of this government, which suggests that we want to make sure that our education system is as seamless as possible, so that our students can move through the education system, so that there are no wrong doors, so that there are no dead ends, but, in fact, they can go through multiple pathways in order to take advantage of good, strong educational programming in our educational facilities and then go on to get a good job.

* (14:40)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss in the short time I have remaining not to mention the so-called alternative speech from the throne. And I don't like to use alliteration all that much, but it seems to me that it was a throne speech that was lacklustre, an alternative throne speech that was lacking, an alternative throne speech that was lamentable, that, in a word, that an alternative throne speech that was, quite frankly, lame. And it was lame for any number of reasons, but I can only think of something that speaks really quite wholeheartedly to me.

In the alternative throne speech, and it's peppered in the language of my friends across the Chamber, they like to talk about this thing called common sense, and that seems like a pretty neutral kind of term, Mr. Speaker: ah, we should just use common sense. But that particular phrase has particular meaning in politics in Canada.

Members opposite know that I'm from southern Ontario and I moved here in the mid-'90s during Mike Harris's Conservative so-called Common Sense Revolution in Ontario. And, if that's what the Leader of the Opposition is proposing for the people of Manitoba, then I want to tell him, no, thanks; we don't need his particular kind of common sense in Manitoba.

Now, that common sense began in Ontario under Mike Harris with a full-scale war on teachers and the teachers' union in Ontario. Mike Harris and his Conservative colleagues went after teachers and the public education system in Ontario like none other, and they wanted to call that common sense. It was uncommon sense, Mr. Speaker, it was retrograde and it had, as its only objective, was to undermine the teachers' union because there was no more virulent anti-union party in this country than the Conservatives in Ontario and now the Conservatives in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, we want to be very careful when the opposition uses that kind of language not to recognize it for what it is, a full-scale war on public education, a full-scale war on teachers and I can tell you quite categorically that this side of the House is never going to roll over for that kind of common sense. In fact, we're going to go on the doorsteps of Manitobans and explain exactly what they mean which is a frightening, scary, threatening version of public education that only benefits the very few people that these folks are here to represent and, as I've said many times in this House, we govern for all the people of Manitoba all the time.

But I also had the chance, Mr. Speaker, to see the Leader of the Opposition's interview in the Free Press this week and in which all three leaders talked about their vision for Manitoba. And I couldn't have been more upset reading the Leader of the Opposition version of events for Manitoba. I can't think of anything that would make me more afraid for Manitoba, more upset, more worried about the future of the—of this province than the one articulated by the Leader of the Opposition, in which they tried to compare running the education system like it was a business.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the education system, the public education of—system of this province is not a business. It's not to be run for profit, it's not to be utilized only for some and not for others. It's a public education system that's there for every single child in Manitoba, and it's a frightening version for the

Leader of the Opposition and probably his Education critic, who doesn't really know what he's talking about when it comes to Education, but it's a scary vision that they're suggesting that isn't really, in fact, a vision. It's, frankly, an agenda, and it's to pay off their friends in high places and leave the rest of Manitobans hung out to dry. This is what they suggest when it comes to child care; it's what they suggest when it comes to hydro; it's what they suggest when it comes to health care; it's what they suggest when it comes to education. In fact, the list is frighteningly, frighteningly long of the things that the opposition would attack, would undermine and would frankly destroy were they ever to get their hands on the wheels of government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in the one minute I have remaining, I simply want to go back on record as saying that I enthusiastically support the Throne Speech. It is one—it's a Throne Speech that has ambition, that has aspirations for Manitobans. It's one that puts Manitoba people right at the centre of that vision. It's inclusive. It belongs to all the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, I'm proud to support the Throne Speech and I can tell you we are never, ever going to roll over for a vision of this province which has benefits for only a few and doesn't include everyone. On this side of the House, we govern for all the people of Manitoba all the time.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'm not—I don't need it yet, but—and I began this journey in 1986 and I thought at that time, boy, I can give just five or six weeks to run as the Conservative candidate in the constituency of River East, and, Mr. Speaker, how wrong I was. I stand here today in this very magnificent Chamber 30 years and eight elections later, humbled by the awesome opportunity I've had to serve my constituents and all Manitobans for all these years.

And, Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't have been possible to survive eight elections without strong, organized campaign teams run by volunteers committed to me personally and to our Progressive Conservative Party. Some were there from day one and always seemed to find just one more campaign in them and they stayed right until the very last one. Every election brought new and enthusiastic volunteers that helped make it happen. I've always said that you are only as good as the people that surround you, and I have been truly blessed with the

best family, the best organizers, the best fundraisers and the best volunteers that any candidate could ever ask for.

Thanks also to the constituents in River East for placing their trust in me. River East is not what you would call a safe Progressive Conservative seat. In fact, in 2007, Mr. Speaker, it was a real squeaker for me where I won by only 52 votes.

None of us can take anything for granted. Not many professions require employees to reapply for their job every four years. We can lose our job even though we may have performed extremely well when the electorate decides that they want a change in government, and any of us can get caught up in the winds of change, and that's democracy.

I will always remember the words of my colleague Harry Enns, who we affectionately called the dean of the Legislature, who said, never take yourself too seriously. There is a role for us to play in government or as a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and both roles are important in a democracy. It's a humbling experience to go from government to opposition and to see some of the things you've worked so very hard to accomplish change when a new government takes over with a different agenda. And no government stays in power forever. I experienced opposition, government and then opposition again. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, government is the place to be. Many of you will have the opportunity to experience both government and opposition in the years to come.

We should be proud members of our profession and the career paths we have chosen. We are all here as a result of hard work and a community that voted for us, but we can and we do get caught up in the adversarial nature of our jobs. We should respect each other and remember we are all human, and politics should never get in the way when any of us has a personal problem or a family crisis. I know personally the support I have received and genuine concern from my colleagues and from members opposite when our family has had to deal with health and other issues, and I say thank you.

* (14:50)

I'm almost as nervous, Mr. Speaker, as I was in my maiden speech 30 years ago. I want to thank all of those of you that work with us and support us in this beautiful building: the Chamber staff, the clerks, the pages, Hansard staff, security, our interns and all Government Services staff who clean, who repair

and who showcase this wonderful heritage building which belongs to every Manitoban.

Thanks, too, to all the professional career civil servants who are required to change direction and adjust when a new government gets elected and sets new priorities.

And last, but not least, thank you to the very special people, both past and present, who have worked with us when we were in government and continue to work with us in our PC caucus in opposition. Thank you for believing in us and supporting us through the ups and downs in the world of politics. We've laughed together and celebrated our successes. We shared funny stories and happy family occasions and had many good times. We've cried together through the tough times, through illness and through the loss of those we hold dear. Your professionalism and dedication was and is second to none.

Let me turn now to my time in the Legislature, 30 years of significant personal growth and great life experiences that I've had the fortune to be a part of and that I would never trade away. There have been both challenges and opportunities to make a difference. The first two years, from 1986 to 1988 of my political career were spent in opposition, listening and learning the ropes. I had great mentors and learned from the best.

There were many good things that happened in the late '80s and in the '90s, and in 1988 I had the good fortune of being re-elected as part of the new Filmon government. I want to thank Gary Filmon for his leadership. We governed for 11 years through some difficult economic times.

When the federal government was cutting, not increasing transfers to provinces, we balanced spending while providing essential services for those who needed it most. I was proud to be a part of the Filmon team and I want to personally thank Gary Filmon for expressing his confidence and trust in me by appointing me to his Cabinet. And, Mr. Speaker, he will always be my premier.

For five years I had the responsibility for Culture, Heritage, Recreation, Multiculturalism and Citizenship, as well as Lotteries. We proudly introduced the first and only multiculturalism act, recognizing Manitoba's ethnic diversity. That same legislation remains in place today.

We began negotiations on the very successful Provincial Nominee Program which was the first in

Canada. We continued provincial funding for Manitoba's film and sound industry when the federal government withdrew their funding. The industry continues to survive and thrive today as a result of that.

During that time my colleague and my mentor, Gerrie Hammond, undertook the Women's Initiative. She led a team of four people who extensively travelled the province listening to women and women's concerns. They made recommendations to government to better serve women all across Manitoba. We listened, Mr. Speaker, and we acted. Significant recommendations were implemented, including a total reform of the welfare system. Until then, there was a two-tier welfare system throughout the province.

Many towns and municipalities made decisions on their own on who received welfare and how much. We moved to a single system administered by the Province where universal standards were applied and provincial rates were established.

Before the consultations, women's shelters across the province were funded inadequately through different formulas. A provincial funding formula was introduced, safety measures were put in place, standards were established and workers were trained.

Second stage housing was introduced so more women could secure safe housing once they left shelters. A zero tolerance policy for domestic violence was introduced. The Winnipeg family violence court was established, which was specifically dedicated to dealing with issues of family violence, making the process faster and having personnel who are trained to deal with family issues. It became a Canadian model.

I'm so proud to have been part of a caring government, led by Premier Gary Filmon, who understood the issues affecting women and the importance of implementing visionary solutions.

In 1993 I was appointed the minister of Family Services and remained in that ministry until government changed in 1999. And I know that those members on the government side of the House who have served in that portfolio recognize and understand the challenges faced in dealing with vulnerable children and families.

In 1994 the Children and Youth Secretariat, the first interdepartmental program in Canada, was established. It was mandated to reduce barriers and

co-ordinate services in government for children and youth by working with families and communities. The Filmon government understood that government departments need to work together to find solutions.

As the minister responsible for the Children and Youth Secretariat, I was joined by seven of my colleagues on a ministerial committee where we worked together interdepartmentally to provide the best outcomes for children. I am proud that many of the programs we started through the Children and Youth Secretariat are still active today. The Children and Youth Secretariat was recognized by one of the top think tanks of the country as a model for other provinces to follow.

Through the Baby First program, every child in Manitoba—every child born in Manitoba was screened at birth to see whether the family would benefit from extra supports to raise the child successfully. About 1,000 families received help annually. Additional public health nurses were hired for the Baby First Program.

The Early Start program, offered through 35 child-care centres and daycare—family daycare homes, helped 450 Manitoba families annually by working directly with children age two to five years so they would be ready to learn when they started school.

The Women and Infant Nutrition program provided an extra monthly benefit and nutrition information to pregnant women and families with infants to ensure their children got a healthy start to life. There were 800 families enrolled in the first year.

Manitoba was the first province in Canada to establish an active program to deal with fetal alcohol syndrome. The Stop FAS program worked directly with women at risk of delivering a child affected by fetal alcohol syndrome to prevent future FAS births.

Adolescent pregnancy prevention initiatives such as the Baby Think It Over doll were introduced.

Many of these programs continue to support families today. And I am proud that we as Progressive Conservatives implemented such visionary and beneficial programs.

Taking Charge! was a successful federal-provincial new initiative which provided special supports and integrated single parents into the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, of course, the Legislature and the work that we do here is only part of our responsibility. We would not be here if it wasn't for our constituents and the constituencies we represent.

And I am proud to live in River East. And I'm proud of the projects in northeast Winnipeg that I was able to advocate for and accomplish, including the construction of 120 personal-care-home beds at River East Personal Care Home, 120 beds at Kildonan personal-care home, 140 beds at Concordia Place personal-care home, a 40-bed addition and renovation to Donwood Manor personal-care home—420 new personal-care-home beds in northeast Winnipeg during the Filmon government years.

*(15:00)

The creation and development of the congregate meal program for seniors in some of our seniors apartment blocks—and I was responsible for doing a survey in some of our seniors blocks asking seniors whether they would be willing to participate in a meal program right in their own block, and Martin Bergen, the owner of many of the blocks out in—off Henderson Highway, agreed to renovate the kitchens and bring them up to industrial standards and provide congregate meal rooms, common rooms, so that seniors could gather at lunchtime and have meal programs. That program is still working extremely successfully and has been mirrored in many other communities across the city. The apartments at 1630 Henderson Highway and 1100 Henderson Highway in Rossmere were the first two apartments that started congregate meal programs.

We established the very first ever seniors health and wellness resource team in River East, which has involved—which has evolved into the Healthy Aging Resource Team, and Sonya Lundstrom and Eleanor Stelmach were the pioneers many, many years ago. They started with a small office that Martin Bergen again built at 1630 Henderson Highway where they held blood pressure clinics and did individual assessments and provided supports to seniors, and it's grown and mushroomed and is serving all of northeast Winnipeg today, and I'm extremely proud of that.

We established a partnership between government and a dedicated group of volunteers with a vision to fund the start-up of Good Neighbours Retirement Centre which is now Good Neighbours Active Living Centre, the largest seniors centre in the city of Winnipeg today.

We also constructed the twin arenas for Gateway Recreation Centre and the Gateway soccer complex. We expanded the Calvin Christian School in north-east Winnipeg, and they have gone on to establish a high school in the member for Transcona's (Mr. Reid) area as well. We were responsible, too, for the completion of the northeast link of the Perimeter Highway from Dugald Road to Lagimodière Boulevard.

Mr. Speaker, there were so many positive initiatives in northeast Winnipeg. In fact, Gary Doer recognized good representation when he saw it and he chose to move his family into River East. In fact, he's my neighbour. He lives just down the street, and I am honoured to represent him here in the Manitoba Legislature, especially when he's home from his job as an ambassador. When it comes to doing things right, though, seriously, for northeast Winnipeg and River East, we've been able to set our differences aside and have worked together to strengthen our community.

I'm also proud to represent Harry Schellenberg, who was the former member of Rossmere, as well as the present member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun) in River East.

The most rewarding part of my job has been helping individual constituents access the services that they need from government. These are not the issues that make the headlines in the newspapers or the 6 o'clock news but make a difference in the lives of the people we serve. Over 30 years I've had many, many opportunities to do just that, but I just wanted to share one example where I had a lady call. She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer and she was having to go for a mastectomy the following week. She was the caregiver for her husband who had had a stroke and required heavy lifting, and when she called to get home care, Mr. Speaker, she was told there was none available and she would have to continue. And she wouldn't be able to lift her husband and to move him in the manner that she had to, so she called, desperate, trying to find an answer. Well, I was able to call the minister's office directly and get the kind of support, the home-care support, that she needed, and those are the kinds of things that make this job worthwhile.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize other members of this House who will not be returning. The member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), my friend and my colleague, who holds a very special place in my heart. We have much in common, have worked

together and have advocated for better services for those who need government support the most. I will miss you.

The member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) and I go back long before his days here in the Legislature to the days when he was the president of AMM. We met on many occasions and worked together on provincial-municipal issues. He's brought a wealth of knowledge and common sense to discussions around the caucus table, and his sense of humour is second to none.

On the government side of the House, I want to recognize the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), who I have much respect for as a person and as a professional, who spent several years managing the difficult Health portfolio. We don't always see eye to eye on every issue, but she was so supportive and helpful when I personally needed that support the most. I wish her well as she pursues new opportunities.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) and the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) have also decided not to run again. And I want to thank them for their service and wish them good health and best wishes as they join me in retirement from this Chamber.

I was fortunate 30 years ago to belong to a Progressive Conservative caucus that mentored me and gave me good advice to help me grow and learn. I was fortunate to have a strong leader and premier, Gary Filmon, who gave me the opportunity, took a chance on me and I gave 110 per cent every day to do my part for the team. I only hope that I have been able to be that mentor and support to those who came after me.

I know today we have a strong leader and a very, very talented caucus. We have many excellent new candidates that have joined the team, ready to be part of the change Manitobans are looking for. I want all of you and all of them as candidates to know that I want you to have the very same opportunity to experience the government side of the House that I have had.

I want you to know, also, that I am not going away. I am fiercely competitive and thrive on election campaigns. We have worked hard to keep River East PC, and I will be there in April 2016, to ensure that my successor, Cathy Cox, is—has the team and has the support that I have enjoyed over the

last 30 years. She is a terrific candidate; she is highly qualified, well-respected and a great friend.

Cathy, I want to—I'm wishing you absolutely every success. I'll be there with you and for you.

I have three very important men in my life: a husband, Don, and many of you do know that we are quite a political family. We have been through our ups and our downs, our wins and our losses and all the challenges that come as being in the public eye. Don has provided me with some of the best advice and has been an ever-faithful sign chair during all of my campaigns. He has supported me every step of the way along this journey. I want to say thank you personally and tell you I love you.

To our son, Scott, who worries about me and encourages me regularly to take care of myself physically. It's not easy being the child of a family in public life. Scott, we believe in you and what you can and will do. Believe in yourself, and that's going to be the most important part in what you can accomplish. I want you to know how much you are loved.

And to our son-in-law, Paul, who has been a welcome addition to our family, he's a great father and a great husband. I just want to say thanks personally to him for fitting into and adapting to our family so well, not an easy task.

*(15:10)

To the three most important women in my life: our daughter, Michele, who is the most thoughtful and caring daughter any mother could ask for. You mean the world to me, and every day I am so thankful that you've returned to good health. I'm so proud of the fabulous mother and teacher you've become. Thank you for all the special things you do, the special cards and plaques and the photo books that you prepare to remind us of all the special family times we share and we have together. I know that you had a special relationship with your grandmother, and so did I. She was a very special woman, and I think that you have some of her very best qualities. So I love you so very much from the bottom of my heart.

And to our two granddaughters, Lauren Elizabeth, who is nine, and Serah Ann, who is seven: It's been so exciting to watch you grow. No one can explain the special feeling of becoming a grandparent. You have to experience it to know it. I think of all the special moments we've shared: the many sleepovers; rock-a-bye baby; playing dress-up

and grocery store; shopping for all those special gifts, especially at your very favourite store, Hallmark; your visits to my office; our times at the lake; and the many holidays that we have spent together. We laugh a lot and especially when you say, come on, Grandma, you can do this, as you do the splits and cartwheels on the living room floor. You are so precious. You fill my heart with joy. I love you to pieces and I love you to the moon and back.

And I know that you've brought your special friends today with you. Maya and Brookie Kojima are here to share this special day with you, and Grandma B., and I'm so happy to have you, along with your mommy, Amanda Haines, who is a very special friend of Michele's.

So thank you all for being here to share this moment.

Mr. Speaker, as I close this chapter in the book of life and open another, I feel truly blessed to have had the tremendous opportunity to serve to the best of my ability and to make a difference. Thank you to my family, to my friends, to my volunteers, to my colleagues and to my constituents for sharing this amazing ride.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Indeed, that will be a tough act to follow.

So I'll start my comments this afternoon by picking up, really, where the Throne Speech ended just a week ago. And that Throne Speech ended with a recognition of valour as we announced that Remembrance Day will soon have treatment as a full statutory holiday in Manitoba to fully give recognition to people who fought for Canada, who defended Canada and have preserved our democracy and everything we hold so dear.

And valour certainly is top of mind for a member like me, representing Minto. Like most members in this House, probably almost all members in this House, I attended a local Remembrance Day ceremony, which happens on Valour Road. I attend a service each year at the Valour Road plaza. It's an event which is put on by the 38th Canadian Brigade Group, and over 400 members of the community gather outside to commemorate Remembrance Day and also to commemorate one of the most incredible stories in Canada's not just military history but Canada's history.

Mr. Speaker, you may be aware that there were three young men who all lived on Pine Street in Winnipeg's West End, who were all awarded the Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest award for bravery in wartime in World War I. As far as we know, it's the only street in the world where three people won the Victoria Cross and, indeed, after the First World War, Pine Street's name was changed to Valour Road to mark the spectacular coincidence.

The day before Remembrance Day I make a tradition of going to Clifton School. It's an elementary school. It's nursery to grade 6 and it is probably the smallest school in the Minto constituency.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I've always been impressed by how seriously students take the ceremony which includes not just gathering in the gym but actually walking out to the Valour Road plaza because, as I look around the students in that school, it's easy to see that the great majority of them are immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants. And when I ask the question in the classroom, often 80 per cent or more—per cent of those students will say that their parents or they were born in another country.

And I've always sort of wondered how it is that students at Clifton School, whose families don't have a long history in this country, actually find Remembrance Day to be so meaningful and so moving. And I had a bit of an insight this year when I got to Clifton School and was ushered into the gym, of course, by very serious grade 6 students, and I spoke with Justin. Justin's a young man who helped to emcee the ceremony. He also played handbells in the handbell choir and he also sang Flanders Fields; he's a Renaissance man. And I talked to Justin. He was very worried about the impending winter because he wanted me to know how much colder it is here than where his family came from. Him and his family came here from the Philippines just three years ago.

But it struck me that Justin and his family have lived here in Manitoba just about as long as Frederick William Hall and Robert Shankland, two of the Victoria Cross winners had when World War I began. And sometimes we see Remembrance Day as a old-stock Canadian ceremony, that we'll go down to the gym and there'll be a veteran who will come in and tell us their stories. And it may not be that moving to people in the reality of Winnipeg and Manitoba but, in fact, it's an immigration story. And

Justin, in our little conversation, maybe helped me to focus on that.

So when I was at the Valour Road plaza the very next day I was able to tell people about that story and remind people that the value—your capacity to provide value and service to your country is not limited by how many years or how many generations your family's been here but, indeed, by your actions and your deeds.

And you'd think most people would agree with this, and that's why I'm surprised and I'm indeed disappointed every time opposition members get up in this House and they ignore new Canadians. Even though Manitoba's population has grown by 150,000 people over the past 16 years, you wouldn't hear that by the opposition members' questions. To them—and I cannot believe this, but every time they get up they reaffirm it—to them new Canadians are invisible. And that's why in the West End members of the opposition are invisible and always will be.

If I was to follow their logic, of course, and I hear the moans and sighs already, if I was to use the logic or the so-called logic of members opposite, Leo Clarke, who was born in Ontario, might be celebrated, but I guess we wouldn't celebrate the other two winners, Shankland and Hall.

Well, when we gather in Valour Road, we don't stop to ask how long they'd been in Canada. They served and that's what counts.

And, you know, Remembrance Day is not going to look the same as it did when we were all through school. And I have a friend of mine who is a retired police officer, has served decades in the reserves. He would be considered the straightest arrow there is, and he was invited this year to attend the Remembrance Day service at Tech Voc High School. And, of course, my friend John has been to many, many Remembrance Day services, and he said this was unlike any service he'd been to before.

He said he walked in the gym, the students had prepared the ceremony. There was hip hop, there was rap music. He said it was unlike anything he'd ever seen, and at first he was horrified, until he looked around the gym and realized the students were engaged and they were as moved as students he had ever seen at any other Remembrance Day ceremony.

* (15:20)

And it was moving for students because they were asked to consider how young many of those

who fought for Canada and gave their lives for our country were, and that was very, very meaningful. So, certainly, Remembrance Day may not look the same as it has for the past many years in Canada, but it is going to be important, and I believe that by making this a statutory holiday, we will further make sure that the courage and the valour is never forgotten.

Now, I was also very pleased to listen to the speech of the mover, the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), and of course the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), sitting in the Speaker's chair right now, who both gave great speeches moving and opening the debate on the Throne Speech. And I was very touched when the member for The Pas spent some of her time talking about restorative justice, which was referred to in the Throne Speech, and spoke about what that would mean to her as the first Aboriginal woman ever elected to this Legislature, coming from OCN, of course, the First Nation very close to The Pas, and the positive things that restorative justice will do for her community.

And I want to take a few minutes to say how proud I am that restorative justice was part of the Throne Speech just the other day and, in fact, has formed part of the events following the Throne Speech. Last Wednesday morning, the Attorney General (Mr. Mackintosh) proclaimed this to be Restorative Justice Week in Manitoba. Manitoba is one of only three countries—or three provinces in the country that actually recognizes restorative justice, and we are seen as the leader on this front.

And, as well, there was a very, very important announcement that day which gives me great joy and also great hope that we are going to get better justice outcomes in all of our communities across the province of Manitoba. The Attorney General on Wednesday announced that The Restorative Justice Act, which was passed in the spring of 2014, is being proclaimed into force and also provided details on what the Province's restorative justice strategy is going to look like. I was very pleased, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there's an advisory council which will oversee the implementation of a five-year strategy and help us to grow restorative approaches to include community and government representatives with expertise in restorative justice. The beauty of restorative justice is that it will fit whichever community embraces it. And restorative justice in the West End may look very different from a rural community or a northern community. The importance is that the community will be engaged.

It'll be victim centred to allow victims to have a voice and to be part of the solution which, in many cases, will result in much better outcomes for the offender, for the victim and for the community itself.

I'm very pleased that as part of the Throne Speech rollout, we've announced there will be funding for new and expanded mental health and drug courts. I was very proud as Attorney General to start Manitoba's first mental health court. We know there is a great demand. And we know that if we provide the right services to offenders at the right time, we can actually change their behaviour and we can result in, certainly, a better life for the offenders but equally importantly, more safety for the rest of us. And, of course, we have one drug court which has been operating for several years. Despite the lack of interest from the former federal government, I think there's every reason to believe that a drug court can continue to be expanded and perhaps we can even increase the number of sites in Manitoba, again, to provide a meaningful and a smart way to deal with people who commit crimes because of their addictions.

I'm very excited to hear there's a plan to establish a community court in Manitoba. A community court, of course, is a great way to get better outcomes by having a judge act less as a fact finder and a sentence imposer and more of a quarterback to help people get the treatment they need to build better community safety. I'm very pleased that we'll be supporting restorative justice programs in communities as diverse as Bloodvein First Nation, Portage la Prairie and Morden. I'm very proud we'll be investing money now to create restorative justice opportunities in Brandon and beyond in the Westman region, in Dauphin and beyond in the Parkland regions and also for Metis residents of Winnipeg.

I was very pleased to hear that there'll be \$10,000 to Candace House to help create a business plan to aid in delivering enhanced victim supports. I know what Candace House wants to do by setting up a safe place for the families of victims of serious crime to be safe, to gather, to prepare themselves for having to endure very, very difficult testimony in court, and that is a very, very good investment by the government.

As well, this strategy will establish a restitution recovery program to help victims collect court-ordered payments. Restitution is sometimes ordered by judges, and I know sometimes victims don't feel there's a lot of help in recovering that restitution. As

part of a restorative justice strategy, it then moves to the forefront, and that's a very, very exciting development in this province.

Our government will be creating five restorative justice hubs throughout the province to support existing programs and co-ordinate services and also improve the training and build awareness, and this is certainly important. We rely on communities that have healing circles or restorative justice panels, whatever we want to call them. It's going to be very helpful to assist those individuals to feel like they're part of something bigger, to get better training and learn best practices.

And, as well, there will be the creation of a unit of nine Crown attorneys, and Crown attorneys, of course, have always been busy people. They haven't always had the time they've wanted to be able to focus on restorative justice. With the substantial decrease in crime and the commitment of this government, it will then allow us to create a unit of nine Crown attorneys who will work on finding cases, not to close the door to restorative justice but to open the door to restorative justice.

And, you know, I suppose there was no more dramatic description of how important restorative justice is than a day I spent just a couple of years ago. I was honoured to attend an event at Nelson House First Nation. I won't pretend to say the name of the First Nation in Cree, because I might offend somebody; I'll simply call it NCN. And I was there with the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), and that community was looking to expand restorative justice. It was supported by the chief and council, by the elders and, indeed, by the entire community, and I know that this bill will help the folks in Nelson House and elsewhere to expand restorative justice.

And afterwards, the member for Flin Flon and I spent some time in the courthouse in Thompson. He hadn't been to court before and I wanted to give him an opportunity to see how our justice system works. And despite efforts to streamline the court system and despite the video-conferencing pilots that we were working on, it can still be a pretty intimidating thing to see how things work in our courts. I know there's always frustrations of remands. Sometimes it's frustrations by victims; at the end of the day they don't feel their voices have truly been heard, and I know that restorative justice will help in a great number of cases to get better results for everybody.

And, certainly, as the opposition parties in this House battle to see who can be more far right and

extreme, I am very proud that our government is moving ahead to get better outcomes and get better value and better security in our communities.

And I hear the members opposite chattering away. I know my five years as Justice minister, we reduced the crime severity in this province by 38 per cent, and I'm very proud of that, and we're going to continue to reduce crime and stop communities being victimized. *[interjection]*

Well, and I hear, once again, the member opposite across the way. I know if he ever has the chance, he'll cut RCMP officers, he'll cut police officers, he'll cut Victim Services. A New Democratic government will not because we support our communities and that's very, very important. *[interjection]*

Yes, well, the member opposite is not happy with a 38 per cent decrease in crime in five years, but people in my community certainly are. If he wants to come into my community, he's more than welcome to.

Of course, there's more exciting things happening in our community and I, for one, living where I do in Winnipeg, was very pleased to hear the announcement that we're going to start a dialogue on tearing up the tracks, on removing railyards from the city of Winnipeg, and certainly with a new federal partner it now opens the door to actually talking about issues that are important to communities like Winnipeg.

You know, Mr. Speaker, if you ever visit the Manitoba Museum, of course, one of the last exhibits, which is always the most exciting when you go on a school field trip, is Winnipeg recreated back in the '20s. I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but as you walk through the exhibit, there's a point where you actually cross railroad tracks, and that is meant to depict the difference between the North End of the city and the rest of the city, and the divide created by those tracks is still just as real as it was then. And, if you look at a map of Winnipeg from Main Street all the way out to McPhillips, there's only two ways to get across the tracks: one is Salter Street with the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge, and the other is Arlington Street.

Now, I do admit I'm a little bit nostalgic for the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge. That was the bridge I took to go pick up my date who wound up becoming my wife and the mother of my children. She was a North End girl after she arrived here.

* (15:30)

There's some nostalgia for that bridge. I don't believe there's going to be any nostalgia for the Arlington Street Bridge, which has effectively been condemned and will be coming down at some point in the near future. That bridge was never built for the volume of traffic. You can't take a truck over the bridge and, indeed, the No. 71 Arlington Street bus cannot go over the Arlington Street Bridge. And we know that traffic is a problem. McPhillips ends at Notre Dame Avenue; Arlington continues on, but it becomes a residential street as you head south and eventually ends at the river.

We can only imagine the possibilities of removing those tracks, which have divided the city for so long, to improve traffic, but more than that, to provide opportunities for improving the housing opportunities in this city, to be used for recreation, for businesses to have an opportunity to expand there and to truly bring this city together.

Many newcomers—most newcomers to Manitoba have and still do settle in either the North End or the West End of our city, and often the programs or amenities that might get started on one side of those tracks is not easily accessible to the other. Even education becomes an issue. Markus Howell, who was, of course, a Daniel McIntyre football star who went on to play in the CFL and is now an assistant coach with the Bombers, he tells his story of getting his exercise running over the Arlington Street Bridge, so he could get to classes at Daniel McIntyre. If you go the other way, you'll see students from the inner city walking over the Slaw Rebchuk Bridge, so they can go and take some of the great programming at R.B. Russell school.

And, in terms of safety, of course, Seven Oaks General Hospital was—it was conceived and it was built as the first hospital north of the tracks. For decades and decades in Winnipeg there was no hospital in that area, which created many, many difficulties for ambulances, for emergency personnel, and that hospital, of course, was built to try and deal with that issue. And, of course, maybe that's why Gary Filmon and his government wanted to close it down in the '90s, but thankfully they never got the chance. We know that for those living near the tracks, tearing up those tracks, even with Seven Oaks there, will provide better connections, faster response times and greater safety for people living in that area.

And, of course, it makes sense for cost as well. I went to an open house put on by the city to talk

about what's going to happen when the Arlington Bridge ceases to exist. Some of the proposals are for a replacement bridge; some of them are for tunnels. As you can guess, any option runs into the hundreds of millions of dollars, and there's no question that getting to a position where we can tear up the tracks and build something better is going to be costly, but we will also be saving other costs if we're able to get there in a timely way.

It's not going to be easy. Railroads are not always the most responsible landowners, and I'm sure if we did testing of that soil, we will find a lot of heavy metals and other difficulties. However, I know it's now under way in Regina. I've had a chance to see some of the excitement that's being built in Regina with the tracks being torn up, and I look forward to a true partnership between the federal government, the provincial government and the city on moving forward.

And it's important to remember that this is only possible, we can only have this conversation because of CentrePort, which is now being built, because it makes sense to take the rail lines outside of the inside of a very important city and put them outside the city where there can be better access to highways, better access to the airport, greater safety and more convenience for everybody, including the railways.

Now, first, there are many great things in the Throne Speech, but perhaps none are greater and nothing is more important than helping our young people to thrive.

In 1999 when the NDP formed government, only 71 per cent of Manitoba students were graduating from grade 12. That number is now up to 86 per cent. That's a good start. There's more work to do, but it is great achievement over the past years.

In Minto there's two high schools: Technical-Vocational High School, otherwise known as Tec Voc, and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute, known as Daniel Mac or DMCI. When I was first elected, DMCI had just over 200 grads at that first ceremony I went to; Tec Voc was well under 200. Now the Tec Voc grad has more than 200 grads and DMCI's grad is pushing 300, which makes for a long morning but a very, very joyous event. And it's been exciting, as the MLA now for 11 years, to watch students progress through our public school system and go on to take a trade or go to college or go to university and do whatever they want to do here in Manitoba.

And it's our plan, and it was in the Throne Speech, that we intend to do whatever we can to keep post-secondary education affordable. That's top of mind in my household, I have to admit, with a daughter graduating in June with plans to go into a science field and with another graduating in the next two years who is more on the arts side of things, and we know that keeping university affordable is very, very important in communities like mine.

The last time we had a Progressive Conservative government in this province, the cost of post-secondary tuition rose by 150 per cent and that slammed the door in the faces of young people in areas like mine who learned they would not be able to afford to go to university when they were finished grade 12, no matter what they'd accomplished in school. And we're not going to go back. We're going to continue to make university and college affordable so that everybody, all the best students in Manitoba, have the opportunity to follow their dreams right here in Manitoba. But it's not just what we do when we get them to university; it's a longer commitment to young people.

I'm very pleased in the Throne Speech that there's a commitment now to move to universal child care to build up and add 12,000 spaces to the system. It's not going to be immediate, it's frankly not going to be easy in many parts of the province but it's a continuing commitment, first of all, to allow parents to be freed up to do what they want to do. And for many, many parents that means the opportunity to return to the workforce. For some parents, that means the chance to join the workforce, maybe for the first time in their lives.

We know we do that by paying child-care providers a decent wage, that's why we created a pension plan for those working in early child education to make sure that those opportunities are there.

I see the investments in our schools, smaller class sizes. I had a chance to attend an event with the Minister of Education at Sister MacNamara School, very close to Minto, and it was a celebration of what we can accomplish, with students being given a little more attention and a little more time by their teachers.

I see how the community schools program works in schools like Wellington School and John M. King School, where parents who maybe haven't always had the best school experience in their own lives, maybe because of residential school, maybe they

didn't have the chance to attend school because of circumstances in the country they came from, but it means that those parents now become engaged and willing partners in their children's education.

Support means that children are comfortable in learning, whether they're from Aboriginal families, whether they're new Canadians, whether they may be children who have a particular challenge. It means giving more to those students to help them. But it also means supporting excellence, and I'm very proud of my older daughter who's in the International Baccalaureate program, in addition to playing in a band and playing in the jazz band and curling; the kid's got a much better slide than I have ever developed in my time. Her class has students from all over Winnipeg School Division and beyond.

My younger daughter is in French immersion. She's also in band and jazz band, big on the artsy side. She's in the Shakespeare Club and she thinks it's pretty cool. And her class also has students from across the Winnipeg School Division, north of the river, south of the river, east of the river, who see that our public schools provide excellence and can provide a great foundation for whatever it is people want to do here in Manitoba. And certainly my kids and their classmates have spent their entire lives growing up in a school system with a benevolent provincial government in place.

We will not go back to what happened the last time the Progressive Conservatives were in power, when teachers lost their jobs, when programs were cut and schools in the inner city were left to their own devices without the ability—

An Honourable Member: Name them.

Mr. Swan: Well, if the member wants me to name off every person that I know that went through our school system that had to leave this province in the 1990s because there weren't jobs for nurses or for doctors or for academics—[interjection] We only have five minutes left so I'll tell the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) there wouldn't be enough time to put on the record the names of people who left because of that government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Lac du Bonnet loves to chatter from his seat. I can only hope that he'll have the chance to talk, I only hope he'll have the chance to talk. Despite what the member for Lac du Bonnet and otherwise would tell you, there is much to celebrate in Manitoba, and there is much work still to do.

For the people of the West End, I am proud to support this Throne Speech because it builds our values in the West End: the recognition of valour, respect for hard work, pinning hopes on our education system and a vision of a province on the rise.

Thank you very much.

* (15:40)

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a little bit of a problem with my voice today, so I'll try to keep it down so I can last through the 30 minutes.

It's an honour to be speaking after the member from Minto, because I have a few words in there for him. But my concern is right now the member from River East. It's been an honour to work with her and to follow behind her. It's not going to be easy to create a speech like she did, but it is an honour to be here today and representing La Verendrye.

The great people of La Verendrye have been kind enough to vote me in to be a part of this House, to represent them in what happens here. La Verendrye is a very diverse riding with a lot of different things that happen. They're everything from a bedroom community to Winnipeg to some of the best areas for recreation, and I'm sure a lot of the members opposite have been to the Whiteshell or been to Buffalo Point or any number of areas there.

There's a lot of people from Winnipeg who have part-time cabins throughout La Verendrye for hunting and fishing. And it is an honour to represent them, because being such a diverse riding, I not only represent the people from—that live there but a lot of city people who come there on weekends. And I get to talk to a lot of people who have ideas of what's happening and are not satisfied with the last 16 years of NDP government.

I would also like to thank all the retiring colleagues, especially the ones on our side here: the member from Riding Mountain, the member from River East and the member from Agassiz. They've been terrific mentors for me. They've always been—the member from River East has been a great mentor. The member from Agassiz, he always had a joke for us to keep things lightened up. And the member from Riding Mountain was always able to be a good sounding board. And it's been a pleasure to have worked with all three of them. It's not easy to step up and fill those shoes, but I'm going to try.

I'll also like to thank all the members opposite for working and the ones that are leaving who have—I'm sure when they all came to the House, they all had the same ideas of doing something good. A lot of them now are leaving from different—for different reasons. Some of them are leaving because they just feel that they've—that it's time to retire. And I give all of them credit, even the rebel five, because it takes a special person to come up and admit when something is not right and it can't be part of your life from then on. The member from Minto stated, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has become more concerned about holding on to his leadership than governing in the best interests of Manitobans, the Manitoba people. It takes something special to be able to come out and say that. So I'll give all five of them credit for that.

I will especially give credit to the three members who have left because, as the member from Seine River said, I assure you, this isn't easy, but being truthful and holding on to your integrity is something that my parents raised me to do, and I honour them today with that. And that is true. Coming from a business world, it's—something to me has always been important is your integrity, your honesty. And I can honestly say those members who have quit because they were not happy what was going on, I give them an extra special thanks to you. Because having this job is not the easiest job in the world. It takes a lot of family life; it's important to the people of Manitoba, but it's very hard on the MLAs. Anybody who is public office, it's important that we all understand that they all deserve what they have. Also, the member from Flin Flon—that the Premier should resign. I don't understand why he hasn't resigned as well with the other three.

The people of Manitoba are tired of the same NDP broken promises and want a change for the better. And I can see that coming on April the 19th of 2016. Manitoba has a broken government. This Selinger government has done a lot of things that have made a lot of Manitobans very unhappy, and I can say that their actions speak louder than their words. They are not a team. They are not working together. And they run Manitoba in such a way that Manitobans have got to distrust them. And it's important in any function that you do, whether it's in business or government, you have to have the trusts—the trust—of Manitobans.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Speech from the Throne is, once again, more promises from the Selinger government to break. This Speech from the

Throne is all about making promises, not about what can be done. It's all about making promises to try to convince the voter that this is the right thing to do, that they should vote for them because they are going to do everything that they can. Well, I can't understand why Manitobans would be fooled with this, and I am hoping that they won't be.

This is just a laundry list of things that should have been done over the last 16 years. The government has had ample time to do a lot, but they seem to have failed in a lot of the different areas that they failed at—or they attempted. In listening to my colleague from River East, she stated a lot of things—good things that happened during the '90s, and I can see that all this government does is focus on what they say are bad things from the '90s, and I don't believe that this is necessarily true that that's happened.

The government, what they should be doing is focusing on what they have done, but, unfortunately, I don't believe that this government has a record that they can run on; otherwise, they would. They would be out there bragging about all the good things they've done, not making promises to break.

I mean, I believe that this Selinger government will not be fooling Manitobans anymore. If I was Santa Claus, I would make sure that every member opposite got a lump of coal in their stocking this year for misleading Manitobans in all the things that they've done.

One of the areas that I'm really—there's a few things in my constituency that are really important to the constituents. One of them is cellphone service. Cellphone service is very lacking in southeastern Manitoba. One of the things that is in the Throne Speech is our government will partner with local communities to expand cell service and broadband access across to better connect families and entrepreneurs.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I've been here for four years, and that has been one of the most important issues. In southeastern Manitoba, we've had two major fires that destroyed a lot of property and a lot of timber and everything else. The biggest concern with all the emergency people was lack of communication. There's a lot of people that are weekenders out in southeastern Manitoba, that their only means of communication is with a cellphone. But, when they come out to the southeast corner of the province, they have no coverage, and that, to me, is very important, is to fight for cellphone coverage.

And, after I got elected in 2011, right here in this House, I had talked to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) about cellphone coverage, because I—there were candidates during the 2011 election talking about, oh, yes, cellphone coverage is something we should expand.

Well, the Premier basically told me that there's a—I was dreaming because there was nothing going to happen for cellphone coverage.

After the major fire in Vita, along with the RM staff, we met at the school, and I asked the Premier, is there anything that can be done about cellphone coverage? He says they will not be putting one penny into cellphone coverage because that's the job of the federal government and the companies like MTS.

So I really have a difficult time in standing and listening to that Throne Speech when they're talking about our government will partner with local communities to expand cell service and broadband across Manitoba to better connect families and entrepreneurs. I believe that this is another promise that they are just going to break because they made the same promise before the 2011 election, and now they're making it again. But for these four years, when there was very serious emergency concerns, nothing was done. Absolutely, nothing was done. But I can give credit to MTS because just a couple months ago they made an announcement in Piney that they were going to be putting hardware on the tower in Piney, so part of the southeast was going to be covered with cellphone service. But they also said there was not one penny of government money being put into that cell tower; it was strictly MTS. But the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Mr. Chief) was sure there for a picture as part of the ribbon cutting, but yet I've heard nothing from this government about cell coverage. If it wasn't for private business, then we probably would not have any cellphone coverage in that area of the province because it is the MTS who put that in there. There's also other companies, I believe, now, that are looking at expanding cellphone service and high-speed Internet, so I'm just hoping that the government won't—will not be there just for pictures because that is not right for the people of southeastern Manitoba.

* (15:50)

Health care, there wasn't a lot mentioned about health care in the Throne Speech. And it's been something that has been a thorn in my side in regards to ER closures. There's as many as 24 ERs closed at any given time in Manitoba, and one of them

happens to be the ER at the Vita & District Health Centre. It's been over three years that this health centre has been—the ER has been closed. We've gone through three different Health ministers during the—just a month later after the ER was closed, I had asked the question in here, and I was told by the minister at that time that it'd probably be 30 days and the ER would be reopening. Well, that has never happened because it's been over three years.

Later, the following spring—this happened in October—in the following spring, they talked about bringing in a CEC which would, you know, use more, I guess, nurse practitioners and a different ER—different EMC service. They were going to use it as a pilot project. Well, as far as I know, that got as far as Treasury Board and it stopped. Does this government really care about Manitobans? I mean, I believe that if they did, a lot of these things would happen. But it seems they're very good to stand up, take a picture, do a ribbon cutting, be part of an announcement but, yet, nothing happens there afterwards.

Three years, the southeast corner of Manitoba has not had an ER. And I've discussed this several times with the minister, the three different ministers, and they've all promised that something was going to happen almost immediately. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing has happened. It is not right for the people of southeastern Manitoba not to have health care after the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and other members have said, doesn't matter where you live in Manitoba, health care should be the same for everybody in Manitoba.

Well, obviously, the people of southeastern Manitoba don't have the same health care as the rest of the province.

The Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line is another sore subject for southeastern Manitoba. There's been three different consultation periods, and at each one of these, the people had come out, and they were concerned of where the line was running; right alongside their properties, right through their yards, you know, within a mile of a school. And they had concerns to the government, why the government wouldn't move this line over to a less intrusive area.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it seems that the government is just bullying their way through there, going to do what they want. You know, it was really interesting to listen to the minister responsible today stating that, well, this was probably planned years ago. Well, what kind of open and transparent

government is it that will put three different periods of consultation but yet say that, well, this was all planned a long time ago? So what good does it do? It just shows that they are not listening to the people of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, how can Manitobans trust this Selinger government? They have a pay-more, get-less approach to governing Manitoba, and it is hurting Manitoba families. Manitoba family that would live in Regina, the same income, the same dependents, would pay \$3,200 a year less in taxes in Saskatchewan, in Regina, than they do in Manitoba. And I can't understand why the government won't listen to this. They talk about increasing the minimum wage, but they're not looking at increasing the basic personal exemption, which I think would probably do more for those low-income people than the wage because it would give them more money in their pockets.

Since 2008, Manitoba's debt has doubled. We are well over \$30 billion in debt. That is a lot of money to leave to all of our children, our grandchildren and their children. That is not—it's not fair. I mean, what business could run with having—always being in the hole? They would be bankrupt sooner than later. And yes, we understand it's government where deficits are always something to do. But to continually run a deficit is not the answer in government.

Manitoba spends \$6 million a day more than it brings in. How can this province expect to ever get out of the hole? What are they leaving for our future generation? The government, with their—\$800 million is roughly what they pay in interest or servicing the debt. What could that \$800 million do for the people of Manitoba? And, with this Throne Speech, they want to spend billions of dollars more. They've done nothing but increase the deficit every year for the last number of years, and, in this last year, half a billion dollars or more. When will that stop? When can they stop that if all they're doing is promising to spend a lot more money? I mean, I know we need services, but I think it's not so much about what they're spending, it's how they're spending.

The Manitoba government is—they are not very efficient in the way they spend their money. If they were a business, they would have been broke a long time ago. And I think that they have to start looking at ways to cut back a little bit. And the biggest thing that they can cut back on is doing things like pay off

to friends, untendered contracts, severance pay. It's very interesting because when you have untendered contracts, I know that, coming from the business world, there's times when I've put out tenders and there's been a difference from the bottom tender to the top tender of two or three times the amount. So, if the person who ended up with the tender at the low end had no problem supplying and delivering and doing the job, can you imagine if that was \$1 million and the top tender was \$3 million? How much money is being wasted by not tendering that job?

And I believe that this government is not doing a proper job of watching their finances. They are spending money. It's a spend-spend-spend government. And they're not doing it in an efficient way. Coming from the business world, we know especially on—we talk about infrastructure. Well, you underspend, you underspend, you underspend, and then all of a sudden now you spend like crazy because it's the year before an election year. And you can see what's happening with some of the roads.

Just on No. 12 Highway, they just finished working there last week; they were still putting pavement down. The—it's been raining; they're putting gravel on the shoulder. The gravel's like soup. They're going to have to go back next year and fix that all up. So why don't they do the job the right way the first time instead of continually redoing the job? That only costs more money. But it's about making it look good to the ordinary person that they—that this is what the NDP is doing. They're not helping Manitobans by doing that; they're hurting them.

Especially in a time when, if they're tendering it all in one year, none of the contractors have the ability to do that much work in a year. They need to plan it out over two and three years and give out proper tenders so people will be able to plan for it and do a good job for less money. Because we all know there's a lot of private jobs that have been done on time and on budget, whereas there's a lot of government jobs that have come—they can't even come close to that.

There's a lot of your hydro-generating plants, the Hydro building—there's a number of jobs that have been double of what they are—the stadium's a good example of a rush job. Why would this government rush into building something and not do a proper job of it? To me, that's just not right. They—

An Honourable Member: Photo opportunity.

Mr. Smook: A photo op is the thing. They love photo ops. This government loves photo ops.

And I believe that they need to start changing their ways if they want to continue being in government, which I believe the Manitoba people will be changing that in April. They are tired of this government. They are tired of this spend-more-get-less NDP government.

*(16:00)

And we talk about our kids. Like, everybody says, well, we need this. Let's just build and keep growing the debt. But not only that we're growing the debt, we're growing—we're taking what our children are going to need in the future. What are they going to have to build when the roads that they're building now fall apart in five years' time because they haven't done a proper job on it? It's going to cost more money. And, really, all it is, is a tax deferral. Keep putting, you know, spending more money; it's a tax deferral.

Somebody's going to have to pay that eventually. Now, if you don't do a good job, if you're spending money unwisely, it's going to be more money for them to have to pay. And I personally think that our children are important to us. And that's the reason I believe that most of us came here into this legislator—Legislature to make things better for the future. Now, I think that by creating such a large debt for our kids to pay off isn't the smart thing to do.

When we talk about breaking promises, one of the first things this NDP government did when they came into power is during the election campaign they went around knocking in everybody's door, telling them: Don't worry. We won't raise your taxes. We're the nice guys here, we're not going to raise your taxes, all the time knowing full well that it had been already talked about, that they had already had plans to raise the provincial tax, and I think that's being very unfair to the Manitoba voters.

And this Throne Speech is not much different. It's making all kinds of promises. When you take a look at the billions of dollars they want to spend, how—I don't know how they'll ever find that—all that money.

We talk—they're talking about moving the railways, but yet they have plans to redo McPhillips; they have plans to redo Arlington, which there'll be money, provincial money, so what—where do you—when are you going to stop and say, okay, we're not doing this, but we're going to do this? Or are we

going to build a bridge over the—replace the Arlington Street Bridge and a year later decide to move the yards? Is that something that's going on, or what is the NDP government doing? I don't think that's fair to Manitobans. They need to have a plan, and they need to have a plan that's going to work, not just make empty promises. The government is famous for their empty promises, and that's all they're doing.

The provincial tax going up from 7 to 8 per cent, it hurt the low-income family in Manitoba. Seven to 8 per cent is really a 14 per cent increase, and that's a huge increase for a family who is just barely making ends meet. They also increased a lot of different areas of what they charge tax on. Home insurance: As a former firefighter, there was a lot of times when we asked the homeowner, who's your insurance company? They didn't have one because they couldn't afford to pay the insurance. And I've talked to a lot of businesses today. This—it's not hard for a business to have a \$10,000-insurance bill. Ten thousand dollars in insurance: What does that give you? That gives you \$800 in provincial sales tax, and that means \$800 of profit that you need to pay. That profit is coming right off the bottom line. It means you can't hire that extra person that you'd like to hire. It means you can't do a lot of things: renovate your building to make it less energy—more energy efficient.

There are a lot of areas that this government in this Throne Speech are not doing a proper job, and I'm looking forward to supporting our leader's amendment to the Throne Speech because it makes sense. Manitobans are looking for a government that they can trust. They're looking for a government that's open and honest.

Mr. Jim Maloway, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Integrity and trust are the two things that people on this world really need to have in a government. But this NDP government is not providing those for the people of Manitoba.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I look forward to the rest of the debate on the Throne Speech. Thank you.

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy): It is my pleasure to stand and speak before this Chamber as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Logan constituency and as the Minister for Multiculturalism and Literacy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to belong on this side of the House, and I declare my support for the 2015 Throne Speech delivered to us by Her Honour Janice Filmon on November 16, 2015.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my constituents in Logan for their continued trust and support in me. Logan constituency is home to Manitobans of diverse cultures with a large population of First Nations and Aboriginal peoples, newcomers from all over the world and long-time residents who are several-generation descendants of immigrants. Our constituency includes small and big businesses, schools, seniors homes, daycares, places of worship, medical facilities and institutions, family dwellings and community centres. I can proudly say that Logan constituency represents the face of Manitoba as we know it today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm delighted to talk about last week's Throne Speech as it is a document that I can happily share with my constituents and declare to them their government listens to their needs and is embarking in broad and strategic programs to advance economic development and prosperity for all Manitobans.

I'm so thrilled to tell my Logan constituents through emails, flyers and personal visits what the 2015 Throne Speech is all about. In my meetings with various multicultural groups—and there are several events coming up, I know, as I see my calendar—I will gladly inform them that our government recognizes the valuable contributions they are giving to Manitoba with their presence and participation in the cultural, social and economic activities that has made our province enjoy the second lowest unemployment rate in the country and the top economic 'performalin'—performer in all of Canada.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In the news report by Martin Cash of Winnipeg Free Press early this month, he said and I quote: "Since 2009, Canada's economy, including Manitoba's, has been growing.

"But the surprising thing is, Manitoba continues to lead the country in a number of economic metrics averaged out over the last five years.

"That's happened even though the fundamental dynamics in Manitoba have not changed. It remains one of the most diversified economies in the

country, with 11 different sectors making up at least 5 per cent of the provincial GDP. But that ballast has proven to be very valuable in the post-recession years as a reset has been going on throughout much of the North American economy.

"At Thursday's annual outlook conference held by the Manitoba Association of Business Economists (MABE), Narendra Budhia—who crunches the economic numbers for Manitoba Finance—showed how Manitoba's economic performance has quietly turned the province into a little star.

"Budhia aggregates the numbers from the nine banks and other public economic forecasters. Those forecasts see Manitoba as having the second-strongest economic growth in 2015 and the third-best in 2016.

"Over the past five years, the economic profile has been so sturdy as to exceed Manitoba's normal pattern of quietly slipping back to the middle of the pack when the country recovers from the downturns. For example:

- this year, Manitoba is leading the country in employment growth at 1.9 per cent;

- it has the second lowest unemployment rate;

- it has the second-highest population growth rate;

- from 2009 to 2014, Manitoba has the highest average annual growth rate in residential and non-residential construction investment at 8.9 per cent (as measured by building permit values); and

- since the Great Recession, Manitoba has had the third-strongest growth in manufacturing jobs." Unquote.

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are truly heartening news that reinforces the many good strategic programs being proposed in the Throne Speech.

What is the 2015 Throne Speech all about? The Throne Speech is about presenting a forward-looking and optimistic vision for our future. The Throne Speech is inclusive. It ensures indigenous people, newcomers, children, seniors and families all have opportunity to contribute and belong. Many friends at Rossbrook House in the Logan constituency will be delighted to learn their outreach programs and activities in the neighbourhood will continue, including the culturally sensitive educational programs in their centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2015 Throne Speech is strategic. It promotes steady growth, creates good jobs and builds the critical infrastructure we need. It makes life better. It improves our quality of life, invests in our thriving cultural scene to attract new tourism dollars and recommits to protecting our water quality in lakes and parks.

And our 2015 Throne Speech is ambitious, but within reach. That is our five-year plan. It's grounded in the values and priorities of Manitoba families and we imagine Manitoba as we build towards 2020.

As we all know, during the recent federal election, Manitobans and Canadians rejected the politics of pessimism and division. Instead they chose inclusiveness, diversity, a focus on families and a respect for environmental and indigenous rights. These are the values that represent Manitoba today.

We will work with the federal government to lift the cap on immigrants and refugees which has been imposed on Manitoba for too long. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are ready to work with the new federal government to bring refugees to Canada. We will work with our partners in Settlement Services to ensure refugees get support when they arrive. Newcomers will get language and literacy training to ensure that they have tools they need to succeed and feel welcome in our communities.

Speaking of literacy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2014 our department, which is in charge of adult learning and literacy centres, saw 1,366 adult students graduate with a high school diploma from an adult learning centre. During 2014-2015 program, our adult learning and literacy programming was delivered at 139 program sites in 69 communities across Manitoba. According to the 2013-14 data, 8,400 learners registered and attended adult learning centres across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my constituents will welcome expanded programs that will help skilled newcomers get good jobs in their chosen careers across the province.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba we have a strong economic foundation built-to build on. The Conference Board of Canada projects we will have the strongest economy in Canada in 2016, and also affirms that our 5.5 billion plan in creating nearly 60,000 good jobs.

In Winnipeg, as Manitoba's capital city is approaching a population of 1 million, and we

are committed to a series of forward-looking investments to make Winnipeg an attractive and affordable place to raise our families, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many newcomers settling in Winnipeg reside in the Logan constituency. As we ramp up our plan, we will forge a new partnership with the City of Winnipeg. This will be an enhanced and flexible partnership totalling \$1 billion over five years for critical infrastructure, including roads, public transit, waste water treatment plants, and recreational—and recreation centres.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are building on our strong economic foundation with smart strategic investments that move Manitoba forward. We will ramp up our infrastructure plan by extending it beyond 2020 for a total investment of more than \$10 billion. This is a record-breaking commitment for infrastructure unprecedented in our province. It will create good jobs and grow our economy. Likewise, the new partnership will renew roads in every neighbourhood in Winnipeg, including those roads in the Logan constituency. We are moving rail tracks to open up opportunities for urban renewal. This will create opportunities to build stronger and safer neighbourhoods for communities with less traffic. Again, this will be another welcome development for Logan constituents.

For rural and northern families, we will launch a new Growing Communities Fund to build and renew roads, bridges, water and sewer infrastructure and recreation centres. Our government will partner with local communities to expand cell service and broadband across Manitoba to better connect families and entrepreneurs.

Back to Winnipeg, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our city residents are best served when we work together on innovative ways to improve services. Together, we will complete the southwest leg of rapid transit connecting U of M to downtown and commit to partner in future phases of rapid transit. Our government is providing new money to add electric buses to the Winnipeg Transit fleet. This will create good jobs right here in Manitoba and will make our province a leader in green innovation.

As we will work—likewise, we will work with our partners in Winnipeg's business community to develop a strategic innovation plan to grow clusters like Innovation Alley. We will support the conservancy in its next redevelopment of Assiniboine Park. In partnership with Nunavut, Manitoba will showcase Inuit art to the world, and our government

will support the building of the Winnipeg Art Gallery's new Inuit Art Centre which will house the world's largest collection of Inuit art.

Our government believes in a strong, socially responsible and publicly owned Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, which is consolidating its operations into a new headquarters and bringing 400 jobs to downtown Winnipeg. And this new consolidated operation of Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries will be right in the middle of Logan constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are committing a full one third of the current cost to upgrade Winnipeg's waste water treatment plants. Our share will increase by nearly \$100 million which will also help keep—helps keep Lake Winnipeg healthy. We will help the City of Winnipeg implement its own curbside composting program. Our government will support an exciting new partnership with the Reh-Fit Centre to build the Pan Am Clinic of the future. We'll improve palliative-care services for Manitobans by creating new hospice beds in partnership with Jocelyn House, support a new research chair in palliative care with the University of Manitoba and partner on the International Centre for Dignity and Palliative Care.

Mr. Speaker, the 2015 Throne Speech will invest in healthy families. We are ushering in a new era of women's health care with a state-of-the-art Women's Hospital, an expansion of the Women's Health Clinic, more access to midwives, a breast milk bank and an expansion of the Fertility Treatment Tax Credit. Speaking of the Women's Hospital which is located in the Logan constituency, that is the medical facility where my very first grandchild was born 11 months ago. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm a grandmother. My grandson's name is Elias *[phonetic]*. *[interjection]*

* (16:20)

Oh, yes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Elias *[phonetic]* is named after the hero of a novel written by Philippines' national hero, Dr. José Rizal. Elias was the revolutionary and visionary character in *El Filibusterismo*, the second novel and sequel to the first novel of Dr. Rizal, entitled *Noli Me Tángere*. All Filipino students in the Philippines should know about these two novels.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government will also partner and take important, first-in-Canada steps to provide paid leave to Manitobans who are victims of domestic violence and will make legislative changes

to strengthen protection orders. We will partner with our post-secondary institutions to make our campuses a safer place for all students, with policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment. One of those campuses, the Red River downtown campus, is in the Logan constituency, and it is buzzing with activities and services, which include the well-known and respected culinary arts program, graphic arts and digital media, business and accountancy program, among others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2015 Throne Speech will be investing in children and young people. We will invest more in community schools, early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city. We will develop more mixed-use housing for students, in partnership with post-secondary institutions such as the University of Winnipeg.

With \$150-million commitment to the University of Manitoba, our government will leverage half a billion dollars to ensure students get the supports, education and research opportunities they need to succeed in our modern and ever-changing labour market. By working with teachers, business leaders and economic development agencies such as Yes! Winnipeg, students will connect with good jobs in science, technology, engineering and math-related professions.

We are announcing an ambitious goal. We will create a universally accessible child-care system with 12,000 additional spaces for families and expand Manitoba's workforce of early childhood educators with our partners such as Red River College and Université de Saint-Boniface. In the Logan constituency alone, I have visited and have spoken to staff and directors of seven daycare centres.

The staff are so appreciative of the increased pay scale, opportunities for career development and, most especially, the pension plan introduced by our government. We are committing to eliminating the wait-list for child care by adding 12,000 more spaces for families and expanding Manitoba's workforce of early childhood educators.

The Leader of the Opposition has said he will privatize our child-care system, doubling the fees for parents. In contrast, we will invest more in community schools, early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city and northern Manitoba.

We'll ramp up our First-Year Now initiative to ensure high school students earn university and college credits to get a head start on their careers. We will expand community-based programs that help skilled newcomers get good jobs in their chosen careers across Manitoba.

We will develop more mixed-use housing for students with our partners like Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg.

We will double the number of women apprentices in the skilled trades. In the North, we will partner with the University College of the North to build a new trades training centre to help students take advantage of the good jobs created by Manitoba Hydro, our investments in northern infrastructure and mining.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the North, we will continue to promote Churchill as a tourism destination and gateway to the North with world-class research facilities in Arctic science. We will ramp up our investments in tourism to grow the industry and create a sustainable funding model to boost tourism and market Manitoba to the world.

We're already known across Canada as creative hub for the arts.

We want Manitoba to become a craft beer destination; that's as many as 10 new craft breweries operating in the coming years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Canadians went to the polls last month, they chose a vision that puts smart, strategic investments in creating more jobs first. The Leader of the Opposition should take note of the things people rejected, like the idea that you have to cut front-line services to balance the books at all costs and divisive politics that pit families against each other. Next April, families will choose between two very different futures for Manitoba: the failed policies of deep cuts and privatization that hurt families or a smart, strategic, forward-looking plan, grounded in the values and priorities of Manitoba families.

The Leader of the Opposition doesn't represent average Manitobans. He's out of touch with the values of everyday Manitoba families, and he's working hard to hide his extreme conservative views. He's in for his wealthy, well-connected insiders and big businesses. His reckless plan to balance the books before it's reasonable means he will be forced to choose between deep cuts to our schools and hospitals, cancelling infrastructure, selling off our

Crowns, like Manitoba Hydro. The Leader of the Opposition's plans to privatize Manitoba Hydro would cause rates to skyrocket, just like rates skyrocketing after the Conservatives privatized MTS, and would threaten the affordability that gives our businesses an advantage. His agenda for cuts to services would cancel many of the projects that are making our province an exciting place to live and visit and providing Manitobans with good jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's also dismaying to see that the new Liberal leader is leading her party to the right, abandoning the traditional Liberal values that the MLA for River Heights had advocated for so long. It's especially concerning that she's taking a page from out of the Leader of the Opposition's Conservative playbook on privatizing our Crown corporations and cancelling important downtown projects that would help revitalize infrastructure.

Going forward, Mr. Speaker, last week's Throne Speech signified that our NDP government is steadfast in making sure Manitoba families thrive, prosper and enjoy a high quality of life for all.

Manitobans, take heart. This government will stand up for you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I'd like to start off today by mentioning and thanking the constituents of the Lac du Bonnet constituency that back in—on October 4th, 2011, had given me the green light to go ahead to have the privilege and the honour of serving them as their member of the Legislative Assembly here in this great institution we have right here in—on Broadway here in Winnipeg, Mr. Acting Speaker. I'd also like to, of course, thank my family as well because without their support you couldn't do a job like this, and I know that all members from both sides of the House must have some sort of major family support in their lives to help them do this type of work, because it is a very honourable position.

*(16:30)

And, when I go to various events and hear people talk about politicians and, you know, various speeches and whatever, I always—I never speak or talk down to any of the elected officials whether it being federal, provincial or municipal or as well as school boards. Because it takes a special person to put their name on the ballot, and I strongly believe that a great, high percentage of the people elected for public life do it because they want to see a

change possibly for the better, or they want to get in to absolutely represent the people that they're representing.

So family is very, very important. I know that Tracey and Brayden and Jarvis, each and every day, you know, we talk about the challenges, of course, at times, you know, for myself getting home well after bedtime. But I try to make it home most nights so that I'm there at least for a little bit in the morning and then try to spend as much time as I possibly can when the job isn't asking me to do so.

I would like to pass along my condolences publicly to the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum) for his most recent loss of his father. I know that within the last year—lost my dad as well. So it's been a big challenge and burden put on my brother and myself and my mom for having to deal with that hole or that vacancy. But at the same time, it reassures and affirms my job here because I know that he's extremely proud and is up there watching over me and our families as we move forward.

Since this Throne Speech is just before Christmas, I'm going to wish each and every one, you know, hanging on every word, as most people do listen to Hansard and tune into exactly what we're saying each and every day, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I wish everybody a very merry Christmas and a safe upcoming holiday season because I know that there's many challenges, you know, even here in this great province of ours, Manitoba. I know the many people that call Manitoba home cherish it and even though there are times when people head south for the winter for a little bit of time to get away from those very, very cold days, those hard days in the winter. But my family really enjoys the winter sports and that, and we would find that, you know, even though I know that Bell TV probably has some good coverage down in the States somewhere for getting some of the curling and the various hockey games and that, there's just no place like home.

I'd like to thank, of course, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the deputy sergeant and Chamber staff and gallery staff, the clerks, of course, and the Deputy Clerk, Clerk assistants for all the time and effort that they put in here keeping us on track. Of course, the pages here, as well, I know that some of them are on, you know, are on the sessional type of agreements and that, and they're taking their time away from their studies at school. So, obviously, they're extraordinary people and students in their own

schools to be able to take the time away from their studies.

Of course, Hansard staff, I know that on a daily basis, you know, we often make comments and chuckle at times of what members across the way on the government side and even our own members have put into Hansard. And I know that that's got to be a challenging job, to make sure that we're all being recorded and represented fairly and exactly what we've put on the record.

I'd like to give a big thank you to the—to a couple of the members who are going to be leaving us after the next provincial election, which is April 19th, 2016, and it gives me great pleasure to be standing up today and doing my speech to the amendment, because just a few—couple speakers ago, I had the pleasure of sitting and listening to the member from River East, who I know many members on this side of the House are going to be taking a lot of her tutelage and mentorship in moving forward with a lot of the great things that she said in her speech, but also knowing that she doesn't just say it—she walks it. And she's been a great representative for her constituents in River East, and I know she won't be very far and she'll continue to support all of us here on this side of the House.

I would like to—I know that the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum) is—has got a heavy background in history and social studies, and I'd like to give just a quick history lesson, and, I think, if members from the government side, those of which who maybe didn't have the opportunity to listen to the speech to the amendment by the member from River East, I think it would be worth their while to actually, later on, when Hansard gets the documents all prepared and emailed to us, I think it would be worth their while to take a good read and to really realize that some of the things and some of the heckling that happens during question period and that, many of the great initiatives, that some are still going on today and some, you know, the government side has decided for one reason or another to stop. But a lot of great initiatives were brought forward by the member from River East when she was in Cabinet in the Gary Filmon days.

And, you know, they often say—the government side often heckles and says, well, you guys never built anything, you guys never did anything in regards to social programming and that. And that couldn't be farther from the truth. And the one thing, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I hold dear and true to my

heart is, from listening to the member from River East today, it reaffirms the fact that we know that the government, the provincial NDP, are going to tell lies about our party as time goes on and as we get closer to the election, but the nice thing is that I know that all we have to do is to stick to telling the truth about them and Manitobans are not going to be fooled again.

I can't believe that some of their members would stand up and fear monger as viciously as they have done, not only today but each and every day in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, and some of the things that are said are absolutely outrageous and not based on any fact. And, again, as a nice little history lesson for some of the members on the government side, take a good read of what the member from River East had to say today.

I would also like to thank and congratulate the member from Riding Mountain who, as well, will not be joining us again after the next provincial election. I know her heart has been absolutely in the right place, and she's strived to make some changes. I know that she's brought forward many private member bills that have actually been passed, which I know doesn't happen too, too often when you're in opposition, but her heart is absolutely in the right place and she has represented her people in Riding Mountain absolutely fantastically. And I know that we're going to miss her, as well, when we get into government after April 19th, 2016, Mr. Acting Speaker.

*(16:40)

And, of course, I could not forget about my Agassiz buddy. He's moving on, as well, after the next election, and it is amazing on how much knowledge the member from Agassiz has brought with him over his years and experience within municipal politics. And just the way that he works with and deals with people each and every day is sure a great role model for those of us at our—of the class of 2011 and even those that have come before us. And I know that he won't be too far away if we need to be asking for some advice in the years to come.

At this time, I'd like to also mention a couple of the members from the government side that is going to be leaving us after the next provincial election as well, due to whichever reason, I mean, whether it is their—obviously, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is their own choice for leaving, but getting to—just sort of listening to and just seeing how difficult of a

portfolio the Health portfolio is, I'd like to thank the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) for her years of service in this House, and I know that that could not be an easy portfolio to handle. And especially this day and age in Manitoba, it seems like there's an awful lot of challenges within our health-care system, and I get emails and letters, quite a few of them on a weekly basis, with some of the challenges that hard-working Manitobans are having to face on, again, a daily basis.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is deciding not to run again. And I had the pleasure—and I'll say the pleasure—the pleasure of meeting him quite a few years ago on some very thin ice, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it was actually during a curling game during the Manitoba Curling Association Bonspiel, which is the MCA Bonspiel and now it's turned over and it's now the CurlManitoba open spiel. But I had the pleasure of curling against the former, you know, minister of Conservation, the minister of local government, the former Finance minister as well, and he was truly a great sportsman on the ice. And it was—I'm not going to say one way or another how that game went, but it was an enjoyable game and it was nice to see a member, you know, continue competing and, you know, taking part in a sport that he is so passionate about. And to this day, I know that we're also members of the same club here in Winnipeg, so we get to see each other once in a while and I get to watch him throw some rocks once a week or so.

So I wish all members who are deciding to leave this institution all the health and success in whatever they are choosing to do after serving here for, I believe, many of them, for quite a few years. It hasn't just been a, you know, a one term or something along those lines. They've absolutely made a great and left a great impression to those people, not only here but all the Manitoban—all the Manitoba people that they actually serve within their own constituency.

I see that there's an awful lot of time and a lot of things to be said, Mr. Acting Speaker. And I see that I still have just over, you know, half my time available here, and it is interesting because it's going to give me the opportunity to speak to the amendment which was a motion proposed by our leader, the MLA for Fort Whyte.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And, basically, the reason why you bring in an amendment to the Throne Speech which was

delivered by the government is because there are certain things that you need to point out so that those people reading Hansard, listening to what is being said here in the government each and every day, so that we get a say as far as what we're seeing on the inside that needs tweaking or needs fixing or things that could be done better, Mr. Speaker.

And it, you know, I know earlier I was thanking the Chamber staff and the clerks and all that. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for—as far as I'm concerned, I mean, you've only been the only Speaker that I've known here in this House, but as far as fairness and a person who, I believe in this Chamber and within the Legislature and also with probably—no doubt within your constituency, you're doing this job for the right reasons and your heart's in the right place, and so I'd like to thank you for being fair as a Speaker.

And that's, you know, that's what the job entails as far as you to be fair between the government side, the opposition side and, of course, the Liberal, as many of the government side jests once in a while when the member from River Heights stands up. So it is very important that we have a person like yourself sitting in that Chair and making sure that all members have a fair shake when it comes to speaking here in this Chamber.

So some of the things that I wanted to mention before, of course, my time elapses here, Mr. Speaker, is—what do I say? In 2011, I was running to become the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, and my competition back then, the person running for the New Democratic Party and, of course, the person who was running for the Liberals and, of course, the Green Party as well, they were all running on various different policies and platform ideas and it just so happened that two of the three of those people I had connections with with the school system.

And over the 17 years that I had spent teaching—being a teacher in the Sunrise School Division and Agassiz for a little bit before that, I strongly feel that I served and represented the students and the parents and helped out with the admin and senior admin within the school system to the best of my ability. And I really do feel that my track record within the school system and the education system speaks for itself, which was sort of interesting that the Minister for Education and Advanced Learning today decided to stand up and put some of the contrary on the record.

So that was a little disheartening, but I do understand where he's coming from. He's very scared. He's scared. His government's scared of losing that power, and that's what happens when you've been in government for so long that you get so used to that power that you absolutely, Mr. Speaker, stop listening to the people that put you there and you get this sense of that power to the point where you sometimes lose the capability to listen and to hear people and what they're asking for.

And what was interesting to me in the last election there was 57 NDP candidates that went around the province, and they were knocking on doors and they're making various promises, much like the promises that we heard in this Throne Speech again. They went door to door looking people in the eyes, and they said, we're going to promise you this, we're going to promise you that, and, by the way, we're also going to do all this without raising taxes. That's what they said, Mr. Speaker. They said that they were not going to raise their taxes.

This is a party, the New Democratic Party, that likes to pat themselves on the back, and pretending to Manitobans that they are the working people's party; they are the party of the poor or the hard done by. That can't be farther from the truth, Mr. Speaker; if that was the truth, they would've tried to find ways to find those dollars that they promised as opposed to raising that PST or expanding the PST.

* (16:50)

Within six months of that election, they went and they decided to take the various services that absolutely everybody needs in this province, whether it's home insurance, whether it's automobile insurance, you know, life and death certificates, they went and they added—they added—the PST to that. And I know the member from Point Douglas spoke today about various baloney and he put a lot of it on the record, and there was many members on their side of the House that put on the record, and—but I'm off topic a little bit, Mr. Speaker.

But the point I wanted to make was the word of trust. And these people, these New Democratic candidates, 57 of them, 37 were successful in the last election, and they had broken some of their trust with Manitobans. Again, door to door, they promised not to raise taxes. Within that six months, they raised the taxes and expanded it to a tune of about \$185 million a year to things, again, that absolutely every Manitoban needs to survive. We're talking needs, not

wants, but needs. And what did they do within the next year? They went and raised the PST from seven to eight, which was a 14 per cent increase. Those hard-working Manitobans do not get a 14 per cent increase. And the only people that are getting those increases are some of their past people that worked for them and made choices to leave the—their government working with them, and that was paid in the form of severances, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the things that we mentioned and—in the amendment to the Throne Speech, and our leader, the member from Fort Whyte, had mentioned in the alternative throne speech which was delivered, actually, before their Throne Speech—some of the things that we spoke about—and a lot of it's the positive stuff. And, again, Mr. Speaker, we know that they're going to tell lies about us within the next few months, and it's going to get quite heated. But the fact is is we're just going to continue telling the truth about them. Trust is a very important factor, and that's one of our pillars that we put in to the alternative throne speech, and that is something that we're going to bring forward. And one of the things is going to be the first open government bill which will establish new higher standards for transparency, accountability and MLA ethics. We're going to give real authority to independent legislative officers to investigate and report on government and MLA activities.

And the third one, which is very important under the trust pillar, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we're going to ensure an open and fair contracting procedures for business, not friends of the government. And I know that people on that side of the House, members on that side of the House feel that it's okay to exclude people and sole-source contract on their side of the House, but many of them have not done any business themselves and they just don't see it. They just don't know—they don't know what they don't know, I guess. Then again, some of those things I feel that they should actually open up the speech from the member from River East today as well.

Compassion. This is a government right now being in government for 16 years. They've lost that compassion. And I know I mentioned the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) a little bit earlier as far as her health-care portfolio, that she was the minister of Health, and I think there's an awful good reason why she has decided to leave politics, and that could be the fact that she's seen that her government has started to lose some of that compassion. We're going

to reduce the cost of ambulance services or fees, reduce the cost of ambulance fees that Manitobans now pay, establish a physician recruitment and retention program for Winnipeg and rural communities in the province. I know that in my own constituency—[interjection] I know that the member from Dawson Trail is going to want to get up and put a few words on the record, and he'll have his time shortly. And I know he enjoys some time in the Lac du Bonnet constituency as well. And so maybe when he decides that it's time, and maybe, you know, if he, you know, maybe come April 19th, maybe he won't have that choice, necessarily, to spend more time at the cottage or the cabin in the Lac du Bonnet constituency. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's going to be democracy, and that's going to be the time that the people will make those decisions.

Some Honourable Members: More, more.

Mr. Ewasko: So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just needed a sip of water. Thank you.

With the various issues that we're having in the Lac du Bonnet constituency, and whether it be physician recruitment and retention, we know that we're 27-plus physicians short in the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, and I know that the member from Point Douglas wants to get everything ramped up here, but, you know, I could throw a bunch of baloney into this speech, but I just have to stick to the facts, Mr. Speaker, unlike the member from Point Douglas who felt that it was his opportunity earlier today to just throw a lot of baloney up onto the question period.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we know that we are going to be delivering on and promising to increase and to, I guess, have those higher standards that Manitoban students and—from K to career deserve, and under this NDP government, all we're seeing is promises followed by broken promises followed by more spending thrown in. Results are all-time low. Manitobans are tired of this NDP waste and mismanagement and broken promises, and I know a change is coming for the better, and that'll be April 19th, 2016. So thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on the Throne Speech debate for

this year and the amendment of the Conservative opposition.

And listened to a number of the members now, and I have to say that I think this is probably the 30th Throne Speech that I've actually spoken to, and, you know, I got to tell you that when I listened to the new Lieutenant Governor deliver the speech, and she did a very terrific job doing that, I noticed that across the way, a lot of sad-looking members over there. No one—not a member on the Conservative side cracked a smile for the whole 40 minutes of the Throne Speech—[interjection] I think so. I think the member—our member had said they're depressed.

This is got to be certainly the best Throne Speech that I've heard in this Legislature in the last 30 years. And it amply demonstrates why they are very unhappy group over there. They—the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, they just can't stand good news, and they got it in spades in the Throne Speech.

The member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) was speaking the other day, and he was talking about, you know, a outflow of people from Manitoba. Have to ask this member: Where's he been for the last number of years? All he has to do is get in his car and drive out to Transcona. There's nothing—there's construction everywhere. Have him drive down to south Winnipeg. There are houses being built. So how in the world are we building these houses everywhere in the city if the population is decreasing? I ask him to go to Polo Park. There are lineups there. Try standing in line at the Starbucks; you'd be there half a day. I mean, the member has to just simply look around.

This is a very, very active economy. We have one of the—

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) will have 27 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, November 23, 2015

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