

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 21, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom 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 4—The Personal Health Information Amendment Act

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 4, The Personal Health Information Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements médicaux personnels, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: These changes to the act would strengthen the protection of Manitobans' private and confidential personal health information by making it a finable offence for a person to use or access personal health information without proper authorization or to knowingly falsify that information.

The Ombudsman has made some excellent recommendations in this regard, Mr. Speaker, and this legislation will respond to them and more. Thank you.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

PTH 1

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

Mr. Speaker, the background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government presently maintains a freeway system for PTH 1 through the province of Manitoba.

(2) By definition, this would lead to the elimination of all traffic lights on PTH 1 by building overpasses at every major intersection along the highway.

(3) The Town of Virden and the local planning district have never adopted a 1997 Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation overpass plan for the community at the junctions of No. 1—PTH 1 with King Street, PTH 83 and PTH 257.

(4) This freeway system overpass plan is impeding business development in Virden. Presently, a Virden businessman is virtually prohibited from relocating his business to his own land because it sits on the footprint of the planned overpass, even though his relocated business would generate \$700,000 in provincial sales tax annually for Manitoba.

(5) Manitoba's infrastructure deficit has reached a record high. This deficit, paired with the number of existing projects still awaiting completion throughout Manitoba, will render the proposed overpass project financially unfeasible for decades to come.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation consider abandoning the Manitoba freeway proposal for the junction of PTH 1 and Virden's three intersections, particularly the King Street junction.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by L. Lamb, M. Gray and M. Ivey and many, many others.

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

Further petitions?

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And the reasons for these—for this petition are as follows:

St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Schultz, A. Horben, L. Kelly and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Vita & District Health Centre

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

On October 17th, 2012, the emergency room at the Vita & District Health Centre closed with no timelines for its reopen.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by W. Styletski, V. Irvine, J. Pichlyk and many more fine Manitobans.

PR 433

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

Provincial Road 433, Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition is signed by S. Bidinosti, R. Bidinosti and C. Lofto and many other fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table the Manitoba Justice Criminal Justice Division Victim Services Complaints Annual Report for 2011-2012.

* (13:40)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we

have with us today, from Red River College, Nancy Wheatley, dean of construction and engineering technologies; Kevin Kozuska, instructor, construction electrician; Darren Ryan Kochenash, chair, electrical and math and science; Aaron Koodo, chairperson, construction administration; and also, from Saint-Norbert Collegiate, Bruce North, high school apprenticeship program co-ordinator, along with some of his students. And these are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau). On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery, from Tech Voc High School, we have 14 grade 12 law students under the direction of Ms. Amy McBride. This group located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan). On behalf of all members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro Development Concerns

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): We're hearing a lot this week from the government about changing global economy. As in, sure, we're breaking our promise to balance the books by 2014, but it's not our fault, it's the changing global economy. Or, yes, we broke our no-tax-increase promise, but it wasn't our fault, it was the changing global economy. Every time the NDP wants to backtrack on a commitment, that bad old changing global economy serves as a cover.

Mr. Speaker, so now the NDP's pushing super hard on an \$18-billion supersizing of Manitoba Hydro. It's the biggest investment in Manitoba history. It promises to double Manitoba Hydro's debt and make it equal to the provincial debt.

So how long until we hear from the Premier (Mr. Selinger), in the face of skyrocketing rates and dwindling profits, that it's not his fault, it's the changing global economy?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It serves to—it allows me the opportunity to mention two things.

First, the Premier is meeting with other premiers across the country of all political stripes to talk about a go-forward energy strategy that talks about

increased capacity to deliver hydroelectric power, Mr. Speaker, something this province is doing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the recent report that came out that talked about world oil resources increasing and the United States becoming self-sufficient by 2030 said that hydroelectric power would double by 2030. And we want to be in the queue to provide that clean, green power to people in Manitoba and around the continent, and we'll be there for them.

I'm sorry that members opposite do not want to build Manitoba Hydro and never have.

Mr. Pallister: Well, he speaks about being in the queue, but Manitobans have been lining up trying to get information on this giant proposal for quite a while.

I'm not sure that this government even understands what's going on in North Dakota, let alone the global economy, Mr. Speaker. Since the NDP announced its intentions to supersize Manitoba Hydro many years ago, the US electricity market has fundamentally changed, but the NDP's position has not changed. Full speed ahead. In just the last five years, the production of US natural gas has increased by 25 per cent. Wind generation capacity in our export markets alone has grown by 520 per cent. That's eight and a half Conawapa dams.

Now, Manitoba Hydro, during that same time period, has seen its profits, its net income, plummet by 90 per cent, and it projects rate increases of at least 40 per cent in the next 10 years. Manitoba Hydro experts, both past and present, are very concerned that the government seems oblivious and does not listen.

Now, rather than using the global economy as an excuse after the fact, why doesn't the government consider the reality of a changing global economy in advance of making a mega-mistake?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the way some—you know, the way things change, sometimes they always remain the same. When Limestone was built at \$1.4 billion, the members opposite said, don't build it. They called it lemonstone. It has paid for itself six times over.

The same member who sat in the caucus that cancelled Conawapa years ago, when Ontario needs power, when Saskatchewan needs power, when there's power needs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, is

sitting there as a leader saying, cancel our future projects.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to build Manitoba Hydro, not mothball it like members opposite.

Mr. Pallister: I take it from the member's comments, Mr. Speaker, that he's mildly confident about the prospects of Hydro going ahead and profiting with this amazingly large investment.

And if he's mildly confident, I'm mildly frightened, because every time that that government and that Premier (Mr. Selinger) gets super confident about something, it costs Manitobans big.

They said they were confident that they would not raise taxes, and they did. They broke that promise. They said they were confident that they'd balance the books—confident, Mr. Speaker—and they broke that promise a few days after they said they were confident.

And now they say \$18 billion is a great idea, but every time they get super confident, Manitobans end up paying a lot of extra money for it.

Now, if that member is so totally confident based on honest information I expect he has, then why doesn't he provide the information to the people of this province? Because it's their Manitoba Hydro; it is not a tool of the NDP.

Mr. Chomiak: You know, Mr. Speaker, that's one point that I agree on with the members opposite. That's why we won't sell Manitoba Hydro [*inaudible*]

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we had hours of Crown corporation hearings where members opposite had the chance to question Manitoba Hydro, and they did for hours.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, members opposite mentioned Saskatchewan next door. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition how much Saskatchewan is spending on coal and oil renewal over the next 10 years: \$15 billion—\$15 billion, while we're spending \$18 billion on renewable hydro that will last for a hundred years.

Same old, same old. Mothball. Don't look at jobs. Don't raise the minimum wage. Lay off nurses. Don't have a future for Manitobans. Manitobans know where the future is, and it is with Manitoba Hydro building for the future.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, in the last NDP budget, Manitoba Hydro's projected income was listed as \$65 million. Yet in the latest report, Hydro lost \$43 million in just six months.

With these dismal numbers, will this NDP government commit to take the entire \$18 billion of hydro development in front of the Public Utilities Board for an open and transparent process? Would they please do that now and not delay and not delay and delay?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Half of those projected losses are based on natural gas prices that are at their lowest ebb ever, Mr. Speaker, and are made up generally in the winter, depending how the winter climate is, if you believe in climate change, although members opposite don't believe in climate change anyway, but that's an aside.

Mr. Speaker, the bipole is before the Clean Environment Commission, the rates are before the Public Utilities Board, and we've already indicated that a NF—the alternative study will be done on Conawapa and a alternative study will be done on Keyask by independent people through the Public Utilities Board, and we're very confident that the facts and the social imperatives of building this hydro for the future of all Manitobans will be very clearly demonstrated to all Manitobans.

And he'll have a chance to appear before those committees, if he wants to, and provide his facts and figures as to why they cancelled Conawapa before and why they were so against Limestone and why they don't like hydro so much.

Mr. Schuler: This time last year Manitoba Hydro sat at a \$13-million profit. Today that profit margin is a loss of \$43 million. This has occurred despite the cumulative 17 per cent rate increase paid by Manitobans over the last five years.

With such large fiscal disparity, will this NDP government ask the Public Utilities Board to hold an open and transparent process of the entire \$18 billion of hydro development?

The minister speaks about alternative boards looking at the hydro development. Mr. Speaker, we can't handle any more of this NDP's promises and commitments, which they break no sooner than six months after they've spoken about them and made

them. These projects, all \$18-billion worth, must go in front of the PUB.

* (13:50)

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we've already announced that the Keeyask and Conawapa generating station projects and our power sales there will have a needs-for-alternative study by the Public Utilities Board. That's already out there in the PUB, and the member can present at that time. But I hope the member will consider at that time the fact that Manitoba Hydro has the lowest rates in North America—the lowest rates in North America. And further, we've committed in legislation to have the lowest rates, going forward, in North America.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, members opposite of the not build—the mothball party. But we've seen what happened in New York and Long Island with outages, with power failures. We're building transmission to protect Manitoba for the future, something members opposite never did. That transmission will provide security for all Manitoba customers. And it's just like the floodway, and it's just like Conawapa; they don't want to do anything except drive Manitobans and sell off our Crown corporations, like they did with MTS.

Taxation Possible Increases

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Just remind the minister that it was the Tories that built the floodway in this province.

Mr. Speaker, people are getting more and more worried about how this NDP government will pay for their big spending. They spend more than they take in. They've doubled the debt in just 12 years, and they've put Manitoba back into a deficit position. So it's obvious the old NDP is back.

Yesterday the Minister of Finance refused to say whether or not he will raise taxes to pay for his big spending. So I'd like to ask him again: Will this Minister of Finance raise taxes to pay for his spending?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, what is very clear—and maybe she can help us all in this task—what is clear is that yesterday her leader came forward in the House and put forward one proposal that would either cost Manitobans \$135 million in terms of public services such as health care and education, or he would add that \$135 million to the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, he had a chance yesterday to make a good first impression on this. He didn't do that. He wouldn't answer the questions. He wouldn't be open on that. He wouldn't be accountable on it.

We have a different approach than that. We have a much more supportive approach for Manitobans. Our approach supports Manitobans in—and Manitobans who live in low incomes. Our approach targets education and training dollars to help Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, to help Manitobans find employment, and we have one of the lowest unemployment rates—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: What is clear is that this NDP government says one thing and then they do another. A year ago they said no new taxes, then they stuck Manitobans with the highest tax grab in 25 years. They've raised nine taxes on gas, on haircuts for women, on property insurance, on group life, accident, disability insurance and others.

So I'm going to ask the minister again, because he's not answering the question: Is it his intention to raise taxes in Manitoba to pay for his big spending?

Mr. Struthers: An alternative that could have come forward yesterday from the Leader of the Opposition was to—would be to support our latest increase to the minimum wage in this province. If he is so concerned about poor Manitobans, poor income Manitobans, if that's the truth, he would support a 25 per cent increase to the minimum wage, which we did. You know what, Mr. Speaker? That minimum wage means \$385 in the pockets of Manitobans.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Struthers: Absolutely, it does, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, his vision—[interjection] They're touchy on this, I know. But his vision, as we saw in his first round in this House, was to claw back the National Child Benefit money, taking money right out of the pockets of single moms.

Mr. Speaker, this leader said that he thought the Filmon government was the—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, it's really hard to trust a government that misleads Manitobans over and over again. They said no new taxes in the last election and then they brought in the biggest tax grab

in 25 years. They said they would balance the budget by 2014 and now they're saying they won't.

And now this Minister of Finance is not standing in this House to answer this question, and it is a very straightforward question. He's spending a lot of money. Who's going to pay for it? Does he intend to bring up higher taxes in Manitoba in his next budget? Is that who's going to pay for his big spending?

Mr. Struthers: The proposal yesterday would cost \$135 million and we have no answers from the members opposite as to where they would get that money from, Mr. Speaker, no answers.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition had a perfect opportunity to tell us his thoughts on the HST in this province. He didn't yesterday. He didn't when the media approached him about it. The HST would cost those very same Manitobans \$400 million. It would cost our budget a further \$400 million, and yet members opposite feign support for Manitoba citizens. They feign support for the working poor in our province and they feign support for balancing our budget. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Child Poverty Rate Reduction Strategies

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): You know, that's really interesting to hear. If this minister would actually pay attention to the personal exemption option that we provided as an alternative, families in Manitoba who could use \$400 would be receiving that. Don't need the Finance Minister to be the go-between.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) bragged that Manitoba was amongst the top provinces for affordability, but statistics tell a different story. The 2012 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty identified Manitoba as continuing to have child poverty rates among the highest in Canada year after year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this NDP government, this yesterday's government: Exactly who is Manitoba affordable for?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Today's government is proud to stand up for all Manitobans, and in doing that we have developed the ALL Aboard strategy that looks at reducing poverty. It's all of our responsibility. We're working with the private sector, we're working with the non-profit sector and all

levels of government. And in our strategy we are improving housing. We're increasing minimum wage.

We also know that one of the best ways out of poverty is education and employment, and that's why you see the investments, record amount of investments that we're making. Today's announcement on Skill Build was one of those announcements where we are investing in trade opportunities for young students in school that will provide them with opportunities for the future.

Mrs. Rowat: I guess it's all aboard the poverty train, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Housing and this Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) have bragged about their ALL Aboard poverty strategy. Well, the 2012 HungerCount report indicates that there are 63,000 Manitobans using food banks; 47.6 of those users are children. Manitoba has the highest number of children using food banks in Canada. Children cannot afford to wait for this yesterday's government to start taking action.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: How can she brag about the antipoverty strategy that is failing Manitobans' families and Manitoba children so badly?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, poverty is not a laughing matter. Poverty is an issue that needs to be taken seriously and that's why we're taking the actions.

There are a number of statistics that are used that talk about the poverty rates. We have statistics that prove that the rates have reduced, but we're not stopping there. We're committed to making change and supporting Manitoba families. We've done it with reinstating the national child tax benefit, as well as we have the Manitoba child tax benefit, the opti-care program, the prenatal benefits. That's what we're doing. We're ensuring that we have more child-care spaces, that there's more homes, that there's more employment opportunities. You heard in the Throne Speech on Monday: 75,000 more jobs for Manitobans. That's how we're going to change poverty. That's how we're going to make sure that Manitobans all have a great future.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Rowat: This—yesterday's government is about tax actions, Mr. Speaker, not actions that are going to support Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's government has been toting and—its socially responsible policies for the past 12 years, and the results speak volumes. Manitoba child poverty rates remain one of the highest in Canada year after year. Food bank use in Manitoba has risen by 56.9 per cent over the past four years. Today Manitoba children represent 46.7 per cent of food bank users.

Stats Canada reports that Manitoba has the highest number of children in foster care. There are 9,730 children in care within Manitoba. This is an alarming 46.7 per cent increase in six years. That's the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government's antipoverty strategy has been a dismal failure. Fact is, after 12 years, we have more children living in poverty today.

Can this minister explain why she continues to brag when she is clearly—clearly—failing Manitoba children and Manitoba families?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the member opposite who's in a new critic portfolio, when she criticizes the number of children in care, many of those children are in care because they are being protected from some of the worst abuse and neglect in this province. And if she thinks that it's a better solution to leave those kids in their families where they're being hurt and abused, she's welcome to that opinion. I do not share that opinion with her.

In terms of the questions that they've asked about children's poverty, you know one of the measures that we've taken, to increase the incomes of parents who have those children in their families. We've increased the minimum wage every year; they have voted against it every year. That minimum wage increase puts money in the pockets of poor families. Maybe it's a new day over there. Maybe now they'll finally come around and support minimum wage increases. I won't hold my breath.

I worked with those poor families when the Leader of the Opposition was in Cabinet. When they cut social assistance rates by 18 per cent, Mr. Speaker, I worked with those families. I know firsthand what those families went through when they had less money in their pockets because of the decisions he was part of, so we'll take no lectures from the members opposite. I've had to deal with poor families.

Food Banks Increased Use by Seniors

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, clearly the NDP policies are not working when half of the people using food banks are Manitoba's children.

The recent report on food bank use in Canada shows some very alarming statistics. More than 63,000 Manitobans are using food banks. This is an increase of nearly 8,000 from only one year ago. No other province has seen this kind of an increase in people using food banks. The report shows a staggering 57 per cent increase over a four-year period in people using food banks here in Manitoba.

Not only are more children using food banks, but the use of food banks by seniors has more than doubled over the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government: Why has this NDP government failed Manitoba seniors?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, we are working towards supporting families, ensuring that families have opportunities within the province.

What we're doing is we're working with the food bank, David Northcott, as well as The Winnipeg Foundation, and we're going through those statistics. We're looking at what are the results of those statistics, what are the actions we can take as a community.

We have a number of food security initiatives which we've implemented. We have community gardens which we've done. We continue to support Manitoba families across the province.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba seniors have no wiggle room. The 'statistics' on food bank use is overwhelming. Manitoba leads all other provinces in terms of the year-over-year increase in food bank use.

More than 63,000 Manitobans are using food banks. These numbers are more than troubling. This should serve as a reality check for this government on how poorly Manitobans are faring. The number of people using food banks is increasing in Manitoba far more than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

The facts remain that use of food banks by seniors has more than doubled over the last two years. Why is this government continuing to ignore the needs of Manitoba seniors?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I'm pleased to say some of the issues that we've done with seniors.

(1) We've increased the tax credits for seniors. That was huge, and, Mr. Speaker, that are—those are measures that you voted against. We improved the home care programs for seniors. Those are measures where people are assisted living in their homes. They're supported. They're—and you know what? The Conservative Party conserve—consistently votes against them.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we're looking at our Aging in Place family strategy, when we're looking at all the supports, whether it's in motion, whether it's activities, whether it's financial supports, we continue to innovate. We continue to move forward and we're one of the best in the countries, and the Conservatives continue to vote against every single one of those measures.

Speedway International Government Knowledge of Operations

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, while these ministers flounder, the facts are 8,000 more citizens in Manitoba are using food banks over the last year. That's not accountability.

And yesterday, with respect to the explosion and fire at Speedway International, the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) said that enforcement and inspection responsibilities lie with the municipality.

Yet in December of '06, the Minister of Conservation issued a licence under The Environment Act for Speedway's facility. That licence clearly outlines the responsibility lies with the Province for the site in question. The minister would have had a site drawing outlining the processing being done at the site, as well as an emergency response plan.

Since the minister had full knowledge of this facility, the processing being done there and the material being stored there, how can the Minister of Conservation say he had no knowledge of what was being done at this facility?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, I thank the member for the question, because obviously there are a number of unanswered questions about what took place, and not just for people who live in the immediate vicinity of Speedway. But, Mr. Speaker, we certainly are all aware that environmental

licences are issued for fuel storage across the province, thousands of them, I understand, and that those environmental licences are indeed public information.

I think what's important when it comes to this matter, whether it's a city official or provincial official, the role of the Fire Commissioner, the role of Conservation, the role of firefighters, that we look always to see how we can do better, and that's why I'm very pleased that the Office of the Fire Commissioner is putting together a detailed analysis, drilling down to determine what are everyone's responsibilities. Is there something we can do better? We certainly are more than happy to work with the City in different ways, if they seek different ways of accessing information, but certainly environmental licences are public information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, obviously the minister tried to off-load onto another jurisdiction when they were responsible. They put out the licence. They asked for that request, and the application for a licence under The Environment Act requires seven hard copies and 22 CDs or electronic copies. These are sent to a wide variety of government departments, so they all had knowledge of this facility and its operations.

How can the minister continue to say he was not aware of the operations at this facility when his department and many others, Mr. Speaker, had full knowledge of this site and the approved licence in 2006?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the member didn't hear my first answer. The environment licences are public, Mr. Speaker.

But, obviously, I understand that there are concerns about compliance by the company with the fire code and the responsibilities that the City of Winnipeg put in place, and we recognize that if that—if those requirements had been complied with, the City is advising that they would have been aware of any fire risk.

But I can assure the members of this House that, in terms of the Conservation Department's responsibilities, focusing, of course, on guarding against pollution and leakage, where there are leakages, where there are immediate risks to the safety of Manitobans, where there may be a fire risk, that information is passed on to the City of Winnipeg in these circumstances.

Housing First Program Government Support

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on September 21st, 2008, Brian Sinclair, one of Winnipeg's 2,000 homeless, was found dead waiting in the emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre even though he patiently waited with dignity for 34 hours.

*(14:10)

Now a research trial of housing first in Manitoba and across Canada has demonstrated that it's a very effective approach to help those who are homeless because of mental health issues.

I ask the government: With the housing-first approach showing such dramatic results, will they confirm today that the NDP will invest \$2.5 million as the first step in implementing housing first as a standard approach in our province to help those who have mental health issues who are homeless?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Housing first is a strategy that we have implemented in the province of Manitoba. Housing first is—first demonstration project at the Bell Hotel, where we have been able to successfully house 42 homeless individuals and see great success within that. We know that the importance of the road to recovery happens when an individual has a roof over their head, a bed to sleep in and the necessary supports that wrap around them. With those supports, we are seeing success. We are seeing individuals that have been on the streets for decades now finding opportunities for recovery as well as looking towards education and employment and a much brighter future.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I beg to correct the minister. The fact is that housing first was done as a research trial. It has not been implemented by this Province, and Jino Distasio, who has been supervising this trial, has shown that it has very dramatic results to improve the lives of those who are homeless and to save dollars in terms of emergency room visits and other areas.

Now it's important to change from a research trial to a strategy which is actually implemented, and I ask the government: Will the government now implement housing first as a standard approach to help all those with mental illness who are homeless?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can assure this House that housing first is alive and well in Manitoba. When we are

looking towards individuals that are struggling with addictions and mental health issues and our first priority is providing them with housing, we're doing that. And as we're doing that we're going beyond that, and we are providing them with the necessary supports, whether they're addiction recovery supports, whether they're mental health supports, whether they need supports short term or long term. We are there providing those supports.

Other initiatives that we have are the portable housing benefit. We're able to increase—provide a \$200 rent increase for individuals so they're able to stay in stable housing. We know the benefits of that. That's why we've committed to building more affordable housing. Fifteen hundred more units in Manitoba has been committed across this province. There's no doubt in my mind that this government supports housing first.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I know the government is embarrassed today because the recent report—in fact, today's report—shows that BC has overtaken Manitoba, and Manitoba now is the sole child capital—poverty capital in Canada. The government should also be ashamed for not mentioning the homeless or the housing-first strategy in the Throne Speech.

I ask today: The minister may be enthusiastic, but will she confirm that the government will actually commit the \$2.5 million that is essential if the people who have been helped so far in the research trial are continue to have a home, or will they become homeless on March 31st when the research trial funding ends?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Homelessness is a priority of this government. We have proven it over the last—since 1999. [*interjection*] I guess they don't want to hear the answer, do they?

It's very important that we work together with all of our partners and address the issue of homelessness. The most important aspect is housing first, not creating barriers for individuals that deserve to have a roof over their head.

Second thing is to continue to build those houses and make sure that there are opportunities for them. We are doing that. We continue to work with At Home/Chez Soi as they develop their programs and see their success. We are very—feel very promised about the success that the individuals involved in the project have felt.

But we also are providing supports for many other Manitobans that have mental health and addiction issues, and we will continue to do that with our housing first models, with our portable housing benefits and with our partnerships with the regional health authorities across this province, providing those necessary supports so they can be successful tenants, as well as opportunities for employment and education so they may have a brighter future.

Skill Build Program Technical Vocational Training Upgrades

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, we know that training skilled workers is necessary for growing Manitoba's economy.

Will the Minister of Education please inform the House about today's announcement to increase skills training for rural and northern students?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): First of all, I'd like to welcome to the—first of all, I'd like to welcome the Manitoba Teachers' Society to the gallery today. Education is the gateway to opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and we are so fortunate here in Manitoba that we have a relationship with our education partners which is the envy of the country. And I want to thank the Manitoba Teachers' Society for all of the work that we have done with them and for their work on the oversight committee.

Today I was pleased to announce a new program called Skill Build. This is a program that will provide opportunities for our young people in rural and northern Manitoba. It's \$200,000 over the next two years so that we can upgrade shops classes, Mr. Speaker, so that we can provide opportunities for young people to go into the trades. We have a skilled labour shortage here in Manitoba. We know those are good jobs for young people and it'll help us build our economy.

Education Property Tax Credit Government Promise to Seniors

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, on September 18th, 2011, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made the following promise to Manitoba seniors: seniors will pay no school taxes on their property taxes. The Premier proceeded to introduce a budget that hurt families, seniors, volunteers and lower income Manitobans.

Will the Premier or any one of the members opposite today admit that they broke yet another promise to Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to take no lectures from members opposite when it comes to supporting seniors in this province, when it comes to designing our tax system to work in favour of seniors and other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, when the former member for Portage la Prairie was in the Cabinet, they actually reduced the education property tax credit. They reduced it. This government consistently has built up that property tax.

And you see the kind of announcements that my colleague the Minister of Education just made, Mr. Speaker. I'll contrast our approach to their approach any day of the week.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, they keep talking about increasing the education tax credit, but technically that's only 5 per cent of exactly what they had promised in the election last September. Seniors were promised \$35 million in education property tax relief, but they have not yet seen it.

Mr. Speaker, is this broken promise what the Premier had in mind when he said that this government would have to create wiggle room in their budget?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to tax credits, whether you're talking about the seniors tax credit, whether you're talking about primary caregivers tax credit, whether you're talking about even the basic personal exemption that the members opposite brought forward yesterday, I'll put our record up any time against theirs. I'll put up the things that we have done and are planning to do up against them any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, we are not the government that clawed back the national tax child benefit money. We're not the government that did that. We're the government that reinstated that on behalf of Manitobans. We're the ones who put money back into the pockets of Manitobans, unlike members opposite who took that money from Manitobans. We're going to continue on that approach. We're going to make sure that Manitobans see those benefits, not face the group of Conservatives from across the way who would take those benefits away.

* (14:20)

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, we need to have a government that increases and starts moving forward. Manitobans, including seniors, deserve the

truth from this NDP government. Rather than easing the tax burden on seniors and making it easier for them to own their homes, this government has instead increased taxes to the tune of \$184 million.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government apologize to Manitobans for yet another broken promise?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, members opposite give us so many opportunities to look at what they would do and what they have done compared to what we've been doing.

Property tax credits, when they were in government, when the former member for Portage la Prairie was in Cabinet, increased year after year, 70 per cent in all. They just said to local property owners and they said to local school divisions, they said to local municipalities: you're on your own, you go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, that's not our approach. Time and time again, example after example, we have stepped up and we have not only reinstated benefits for Manitobans that they took away from Manitobans, but we're working every day to protect services that matter to seniors, like health care and education. We work every day to make sure we build our economy so we have a strong economy and have that benefit all Manitobans, not a few like the ones across the way.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Family Doctor Week

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker—and good health is the—is a key foundation to living a fulfilling life. Due to the paramount importance that health plays in a person's overall quality of life, family physicians must be credited with the role that they play in ensuring that Canadians have access to quality health care.

Unfortunately, however, as of 2010, approximately 180,000 Manitobans, or about 15 per cent of the population, did not have access to a family doctor. Ensuring the Manitoba College of Family Physicians' commitment to ensuring that every Canadian should have his or her own family doctor, it is evident that here in Manitoba there is still some work to be done. Each day physicians work diligently to promote disease prevention and good health, co-ordinate patient care, diagnose and

treat disease and advocate on behalf of their patients, the focal point of family medicine.

For these reasons, it gives me great pleasure today to address this House, acknowledging the fact that Family Doctor Week recently took place from November 12th to 17th across Canada, culminating with the College of Family Physicians of Canada's annual Family Medicine Forum. This year's forum took place in Toronto and acknowledged the outstanding contributions of Canadian family doctors and their commitment to providing the highest quality health care to their patients.

It is my honour to announce that Dr. Frances Berard of Notre Dame de Lourdes, was honoured this year with the Reg L. Perkin Award for being recognized as one of Canada's family physicians of the year. As professionals, teachers, caregivers and advocates, family physicians do a great deal to ensure the health and prosperity of our society, and as such, deserve a great deal of respect for the care they provide. For this, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join with me in thanking our family doctors and in showing continued support for Family Doctor Week in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Apprenticeship Recognition Week

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on something very dear to me: Manitoba Apprenticeship Recognition Week. November 5th to 11th this year marked our first—province's first ever recognition week of apprenticeship distinction. Last spring I had the honour of putting forth the private members' bill that created this week of distinction, the first of its kind in Canada. Its purpose to create awareness of desirable career opportunities and to appreciate the contributions of apprenticeship and certification to our province. In celebration of this week, a host of events took place in the form of public and exciting reward careers related to apprenticeship training.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to commend apprenticeship programs for their numerous benefits to Manitoba. They aid in developing sustainable, highly skilled workforce, an essential aspect of our province's economy and prosperity. This is achieved by delivering comprehensive, quality education to ensure that apprentices are sufficiently trained and technical skilled. Apprentices are—as a result, are equipped to work with economic sectors where their acquired technical skills are urgently required.

Additionally, the opportunity to be an apprentice can greatly assist those of—seeking an employment and for them to earn a noteworthy living.

It's important that we bring attention to the apprenticeship system and to continue contributing of skills to tradespeople, to society, to make sure that young Manitobans, in particular, recognize the notability and significance of careers in the skilled trades.

As a past apprentice, I encourage all Manitobans who are building their careers to seriously consider an apprenticeship program. I, as a journeyman welder by trade, completed an apprenticeship program at the former Keewatin Community College in The Pas.

And, as a result, I know the first-hand benefits of participation in such a program and recommend it as a worthwhile educational and development endeavour.

Continuing collaboration between educational institutions, employers, employees, the government and the public will ensure that members and Manitobans recognize apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs during the first annual Apprenticeship Recognition Week. May we continue to appreciate their many contributions and accomplishments, not only for this week, but all year round.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Kim McConnell

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, an outstanding advocate for Canadian agriculture; a man of integrity, dedication, humility and creativity; a tireless volunteer and a talented leader, mentor and spokesperson for our industry; an inspiring and gifted storyteller. Those are just some of the phrases people have used to describe Kim McConnell.

Recently, Kim was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame, a rare but well-deserved honour.

Kim grew up in Hamiota, graduated from the University of Manitoba and spent his early working years in Manitoba's agribusiness world. Opportunities drew him to Alberta, where he founded his next venture.

Kim is the founder and former chief executive officer of AdFarm, one of the largest and most respected agricultural marketing firms in North

America. Involved with the development of countless successful national and international brands, AdFarm has been recognized as one of Canada's best 50 managed companies, three times, and one of the best places to work in Canada, four times. Kim himself was a finalist for Entrepreneur of the Year, twice, and was recognized as a Canadian Agri-Marketer of the Year in 2011.

Kim's devotion to the ongoing development of agriculture and his insights into modern media are an invaluable resource to the Canadian industry. He was one of the first to recognize that agriculture marketing and communications is a specialized business that must evolve to meet industry and consumer challenges and opportunities. Kim's key passion is to be a catalyst for agriculture, to enhance the perception of agriculture with stakeholders, media and the general public and, in particular, urban consumers.

Kim particularly enjoys being a mentor for the next generation of agricultural leaders. While each of us aspire to give back to our communities, our industries and our country, Kim continues to inspire us with his unwavering commitment to Canadian agriculture. Kim brings his innovative thinking, strategic leadership and boundless energy not only for his work, but also for the countless number of young leaders he mentors and champions.

From farms in rural communities to boardrooms within major corporations, Kim pushes of—all of us to do better, work better together and make a difference for every person, industry, community that relies on agriculture.

I am fortunate to be able to meet with Kim on occasion. Our paths seem to cross at the oddest times. And Kim's always made himself available whenever I might need an impartial and critical sounding board. Our discussions are wide ranging and often send both of us off in new—with new information.

It was breakfast meeting with Kim in his unique offices in Calgary—almost done, Mr. Speaker—that first made me consider seriously running for public office. If you're ever fortunate to get on Kim's email list, you receive a variety of motivational, thought-provoking and sometimes tear-jerking emails that will allow you to look at the world in a unique and different way.

Kim McConnell is a remarkable man with a remarkable talent for connecting people, ideas and

visions, all with the express goal of strengthening Canada's agricultural industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Aboriginal Veterans Day

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, in November we honour all of the veterans who bravely stood, served and sacrificed to ensure Canada's safety.

On November 8th, it is known as the Aboriginal Veterans Day, a day to recognize the First Nation, Metis and Inuit men and women who risked and often lost their lives on the front lines. It is also a day to recognize the Aboriginal people who still serve this country in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The treaties many of us signed say that we do not have to bear arms but we did and we do because we know it matters. Because we know that as the keepers of this land, it is our duty to defend and protect it.

My family has always wholeheartedly supported the important peacekeeping missions of our armed forces. My dad was 20 years old when he landed on the shores of Normandy; my son served in Bosnia with the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; and when I was Chief of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation our community co-founded the Bold Eagle program which combines First Nation culture and traditions with military training.

Aboriginal Veterans Day is a very meaningful day to my family and to the families in my community. It is very meaningful to families across this province. It is the time when we celebrate the commitment that First Nation, Metis and Inuit people made to this country and thank them. Everyone says thank you in a different way: some say thank you through memorial ceremonies; some through speeches; some through personal reflection; and some by sharing stories.

I once asked my father why he went to fight. He said: So that you could have a future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Children in Care Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, since the NDP came to power in 1999 the number of child apprehensions by Child and Family Services

has grown dramatically. The number of children in care has risen by more than 80 per cent to 9,730 from 5,358. According to a recent Manitoba Centre for Health Policy report how our—Manitoba children doing, there are four times as many children in care in Manitoba; 40 per thousand. It's the national average of 9.2 per thousand.

Children in Child and Family Services care have poorer health, education and economic outcomes as shown in research by Manitoba experts. As Ruth Gilbert, Marni Brownell and others demonstrate, there's no evidence the NDP's policies have achieved better results for children in our province.

How can we address issues like poverty, housing and addictions to strengthen families' chances of staying together to prevent the epidemic of child apprehensions and court extensions by Manitoba's Child and Family Services?

First, the NDP must finally raise the shelter allowance for people receiving income assistance. These rates have barely increased in their 13 years in power as rents and inflation have soared. When families must use most of their food money to find shelter, inadequate nutrition puts children at risk of apprehension. The huge increase in Manitoba children using food banks in the past 11 years, now at more than 3,000 per month, shows the desperate need for change.

Second, children can be taken into care because of substandard housing, a fact that affects specifically Manitoba's poor families. Instead of using taxpayers' funds to put children in care, why not direct funds to help bring the home up to standard?

Third, children are taken into care because of addictions. Why not address this? We should recognize that there are families who don't even ask for help because they're afraid of looking inadequate. The Manitoba government must change the child and family services system to make it so that families see that it's there to help families stay together rather than to break them up.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert

(Mr. Gaudreau), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Administrator:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the 40th Legislature.

Debate is open.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Let me begin by saying a special thank-you to the people of Fort Whyte for the honour of serving them here in this Chamber. It's a special place and a special honour for all of us, and I know we all appreciate very much the constituents who have sent us here and entrusted us with these responsibilities. So I wanted to mention that.

There are a number of very important issues addressing the people of Fort Whyte and I'll be raising those here as well, and I wanted the people of that great constituency to know that I'm thinking of them today.

I also wanted to say, if I might, Mr. Speaker, a special thank-you to the volunteers who made my presence here today possible. As we all know, in the political process without volunteer support in our campaigns it wouldn't be possible or at least it would be exceedingly difficult to enter this place.

I want to add my personal thanks to the staff of our party and of our caucus offices and our regional offices for their encouragement, support and assistance as I have entered into the transitional period following my leadership selection, of becoming the leader of our party. And to say to those people that I deeply appreciate—both old and new, I deeply appreciate their help and assistance in every way.

I want to add a special thank-you to my predecessor and former member for Fort Whyte, Hugh McFadyen, and to Jennifer and to their children, for their commitment to the people of, not only Fort Whyte, but the people of this province for a long time, and say that I think we owe them, certainly, an encouraging vote of confidence and support as they move on with new things in their lives.

I'd also like to add a special thank-you to the former head of our party, Jon Scarth, and to the past president of the party, Michael Richards, for their encouragement and support and advice and counsel—well appreciated, well needed.

I also want to say that prior to my election to this place I, of course, was engaged in a little one-man leadership contest for a year, not knowing it was a one-person contest.

An Honourable Member: Did you win?

Mr. Pallister: Yes, that was encouraging. I've heard of situations, Mr. Speaker, where people actually have run against deceased people and lost, and I was encouraged to find that I was the first choice, even though I might have been the last choice on the ballot.

But that being said, I want to thank all of those who engaged in that process. That was an educational, wonderful process there. I attended over 170 meetings all over the province and city of Winnipeg, and the encouragement, the ideas—all of us who enter this place and do work with people intensely, understand the joy, and sometimes the sorrow, of constituency work. But it is an incredibly rewarding part of our work to get to know the people of this province, and I thank those people for their patience, understanding and encouragement over the last number of months.

And going forward, I tell them that I would appreciate that as well.

I want to especially say a thank-you to my colleagues here on this side of the House. Learning to lead, it's been said, is like learning how to play the violin in public—nude. It's a humbling experience and it's not much fun for the people watching at times, or listening. And I very much appreciate and thank my colleagues here for the transitional challenges that they faced with me coming in, for the support they've demonstrated, for their ideas, their encouragement. I deeply appreciate it and I want to say thank you to them.

I'd also like to say a thank-you—a sincere thank-you to our officers here today for their wonderful support and encouragement through this process. Their experience, their non-partisanship—something we should protect, cherish, value and always guard—are appreciated by me. And in particular I want to thank our Clerk for her tremendous efforts on behalf of all of us here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to you. You and I have had some fun in the past, and my old grandfather used to say if two men are always in agreement, it's proof that one of them isn't thinking.

So, Mr. Speaker, you and I are thinking people, and I want to tell you that I have great respect for you and your office as well. And I thank you for your professionalism and assistance to me and to my family as well, in the process of entering this place, or re-entering this place. Thank you very much, Sir.

I am reminded of Lady and Maltese, at this point. Lady was a little mongrel dog I was given when I was a young boy—little mongrel pup, and Maltese was a little grey kitten that my brother was given about the same time. They were, like my brother and I, known to fight occasionally and—like cats and dogs, I guess, and yet, despite that fact and despite being the bane of each other's existence early on, as they grew and matured they tended to give each other a little distance. And, in fact, I can still remember in their last few months together that they actually would curl up together and enjoy the sun together and the warmth of each other's bodies. And I'm not suggesting, Mr. Speaker, here today, that I want to lie down together with you or the members opposite. That's not what I mean.

But what I do suggest is that over time, I think we come to understand, those of us who have been in this place, that there are people here, people with good intentions. Whether we agree or disagree, that is not the point. But the fact is we have jobs to do, important work to do, and we can do that together. And after we leave this place—and I have had the experience of leaving this place, I can vouch for the fact that the relationships you build are the things you keep with you as life goes on.

* (14:40)

I intend today to let you know a little bit more about myself because I intend to get to know a lot more about you, and I think that as we go through life together, those things will become valuable in hindsight, whereas at times we sometimes wonder whether any of us are worth getting to know. I don't doubt that we are worth getting to know, and I intend to let you know a little bit about me today.

I can tell you this, that my experience, which has been somewhat varied, having served on a government side, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is wont to remind me, is an experience that I treasure, but I've also served in opposition in the federal House. I've also served in government in a federal House. I've also served in a tied House here. I've served in a tied House in Ottawa, and I can tell you, having had that experience, that being able to work with your colleagues on the other side of the

House is an important aspect of getting things done for the people you care about in your constituency and elsewhere. And I have been able to do that and I encourage all members to adopt that tone and approach.

John McCallum, not our John McCallum here in Manitoba, but John McCallum who was the former Liberal Cabinet minister, as some of you may know—I was the bane of his existence for a while, I guess. I was the opposition critic and directed many of my questions John's way, but then when we assumed government, I chaired the finance committee, and John served on that finance committee admirably and well. And as we travelled the country together our finance committee got to know each other, and we became less partisan and more functionally effective, and as a matter of fact, we were sitting having a social beverage one evening and—a number of us—and John looked at me and he said, you know, Brian, I didn't like you in opposition but you're very fair now.

Well, you won't like me in opposition either, I assure you, but the fact of the matter is I am very fair and I endeavour to be fair and I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt and I'll continue to do that here. I've learned over the years that that's the best advice that I've gotten and that I can give you today. I remember, and will always remember, within months of coming here for the first time—and I was not, you know, a shrinking violet, as you remember, Mr. Speaker, in terms of my criticisms of the opposition party. At the same time, my father was stricken with cancer, and I will never forget when I returned here to this place, the genuine offers of condolence that I received from not only my colleagues but from members of the NDP. That stays with me to this day, and I appreciated it then and I appreciate it in my memory now. And I tell you that I have great respect for the people who serve as elected representatives in this Chamber.

This is a special place. Very few Manitobans have ever had the privilege of serving in this place—ever—and so each of you is an honoured person, in my estimation, each of you a special person given the opportunity, as you are, to serve the people of this province. I have great respect for people who have the willingness to go on the field, not just sit in the stands and complain or criticize. I see some athletes over there and I have great respect for those who have the courage to do that, to enter the field of play. To leave the ranks, as they say, of the always right and enter the ranks of the always wrong takes great personal courage. But I learned a long time ago

when I was a curler that you never make a mistake on the warm side of the glass, but you don't get to make any shots either. So I'm respectful of the opportunity we have to be here together and I'm respectful of the people who are here.

For centuries people have gathered near here at The Forks, and they have done that for different reasons. They've come to exchange goods. Come to exchange information. Some of them came to stand for what they believed in and promote their ideas. Some of them came to settle, build farms, build businesses. People have come here from all over the world, and they still do, Mr. Speaker, for good reasons, and they came here and they come here to build a better life for themselves and they come here to build a better life for their families and they come here with optimism for the future and for the generations to come.

They came here to aim higher. I believe we can aim higher too.

Je crois que nous pouvons viser plus haut.

Translation

I believe we can aim higher.

English

My mother was a teacher; my father was a farmer—a farmer and a teacher who never stopped learning, never stopped volunteering and never stopped leading, not so much by words but by example, by deed. My brother and sister and I were taught that our Manitoba was a blessed place, a special place where we could focus on our goals, we could build our dreams and we were taught we could make those dreams come true here. And we are, and others are too. We were taught that this province was a place of opportunity, and I believe that very much.

Mes parents nous ont appris que notre Manitoba était un endroit béni où nous pouvions concentrer sur nos buts et nos rêves. Ils nous ont appris que le Manitoba était un endroit offrant des possibilités où on pourrait viser plus haut. Mais est-ce que c'est encore le cas? Aujourd'hui, beaucoup de Manitobains se demandent si le Manitoba est encore toujours le même.

Translation

My parents taught us that Manitoba was a blessed place where we could concentrate on our goals and dreams. They taught us that Manitoba was a place of opportunity where we could aim higher. But is that

still the case? Today, many Manitobans are wondering if Manitoba is still the same.

English

Today, many Manitobans are asking themselves whether Manitoba is that kind of place. Homeowners are insecure in their homes and in their neighbourhoods. Seniors are uncertain of their financial future. Parents, students are worried, teachers, too, about the quality of education. Families are fearful of the sustainability of their health-care system, and all of us tire at being called a have-not province. Manitobans do doubt that this provincial government has the ability or willingness to face these challenges. I share their doubts, but I do not doubt that the citizens of our province have both the ability and the willingness to build a stronger Manitoba.

I've seen what our people can do. I've seen skilled Manitoba teachers change the lives of students for the better. I have seen creative Manitobans stretch our imaginations. I've seen visionary Manitobans create progress. I've seen caring Manitobans strengthen the lives of human beings not only here and around the country, but around the globe. I've seen enthusiastic people build teams, face a problem head-on and replace it with hope. I believe that Manitobans matter. I believe that we can make a difference. I've had the honour of getting to know Manitoba and Manitobans for many years now, Mr. Speaker, as have you, through my experience in sports, in business, in community and public work, and I'm proud to say I have more faith in Manitobans than I've ever had.

J'ai eu l'honneur de découvrir Manitoba et les Manitobains en sport, le commerce, la communauté et la fonction publique. Je suis fier à dire que j'ai encore plus de confiance en les Manitobains de faire de bon travail que jamais avant.

Translation

I've had the honour of discovering Manitoba and Manitobans through sport, business, the community and the civil service. I am proud to say that I'm even more confident than ever before in the ability of Manitobans to do good work.

English

But this is not about my faith in Manitobans. This is about Manitobans' faith in themselves.

Work is something I admire, Mr. Speaker. And Martin Luther King once said: If a man is called to

be a street sweeper he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry.

We in the PC Party believe in work. There is something noble in an honest day's work. There is honour in doing a job well. We believe in public service. In the last provincial election we were chosen to serve as the loyal opposition, and we will embrace those responsibilities with enthusiasm. It is an honour to have those responsibilities. In so doing, we'll earn the trust and respect of Manitobans, and we'll do so with the certain knowledge that we are auditioning and preparing to form the next government. We will work as a team. We will listen to and include Manitobans in the processes that we engage in. We will conduct ourselves as if our children were watching. We will gather together the best ideas. Joined together with Manitobans in facing the challenges of change, we will aim higher.

In 2020, Manitoba will have its 150th birthday. I want to do everything I can, and we want to do everything we can, to ensure that our Province's 150th birthday is a genuine celebration. We want to build a safer Manitoba where law-abiding people can live unafraid in their homes and neighbourhoods. We want to build a more accountable Manitoba where taxes are fair and governments balance the books; a better-managed Manitoba where we can be confident that our social services are effectively focused on the needs of our citizens both now and in the future; and a prosperous Manitoba where opportunities are abundant and families can stay together. To build a Manitoba of hope where the only thing better than our glorious past will be our illustrious future, it won't be easy, but with our experience collectively and the hard work we will engage in we can build that Manitoba.

Ensemble les Manitobains peuvent viser plus haut.

Translation

Together Manitobans can aim higher.

English

A newly elected premier was retreating to his office at the end of his first day and heard a rustling at the door and looked over at the door to see three envelopes sticking underneath it. He immediately got up from his desk, went to the door, opened it, looked down the hall to the left, nothing; to the right he saw a retreating figure and recognized it immediately as the former premier.

Wait, he said, come back. Have a drink. Have a talk. No, just some advice from me. Do what you will with it. So he took the envelopes, walked back into his office and opened the drawer and threw the envelopes in, thinking, why should I take the advice of a vanquished premier?

* (14:50)

Things went on for about a year okay. The honeymoon was lasting a while, but then after about a year, a reporter asked him a question he couldn't answer. And he was frustrated by that, and retreated to his office to find some consolation in a bottle of Scotch. Reaching inside his desk and seeing the envelopes he thought, what harm could it do? Pulled out envelope No. 1, and it said, blame me.

That could work, he thought. That could work.

And so, for the next few months he, at every opportunity, blamed his predecessor. He thought, it's not my fault. The reporters will go for this, and they did. He blamed the previous government. And it lasted for months until finally, one day, a reporter had the temerity to suggest that this was an issue that had arisen since he came to office, and perhaps he should be accountable and answer the question.

And then he retreated to his office for the Scotch and, seeing the second envelope, thought, well, why not? He opened it and read it, and it said, blame the federal government.

So that might work.

He went back the next day to the scrum and explained that that distant and out-of-touch federal government couldn't possibly have the sympathies of the people in his jurisdiction at heart. No, no, no. It was their fault entirely that these problems were accruing in his area. It was not of his own doing.

But after another year or so, a reporter came in and asked him a tough question. He said, you know, I know you think that your predecessor's next thing to the Antichrist—can I say that, Mr. Speaker? Is that all right? The Antichrist? No? Better not? Okay, the next thing to the devil. Anyway, that your predecessor's a failed leader. And I know that you consider the federal government to be distant and aloof and everything, but the fact of the matter is that this problem I'm asking you to address came up since the last election and it isn't federal in nature, and I'm just wondering, could you possibly give me an honest answer to an honest question for a change?

He said, I'll get back to you tomorrow.

And he went up to his office, at a jog this time, and reached for the third envelope, even ahead of the Scotch, and pulled it out and it said, prepare three envelopes.

What we've seen—what I've seen in the last two days in amazing abundance, 16 references yesterday to the '90s, 14 today. I'm adding them up because I enjoy them. I actually enjoy seeing them because it tells me the government is living in the past. It tells me they're self-serving. It tells me they're tired. That's what it tells me.

NDP Throne Speeches are pretty hard to take seriously. I read all the Throne Speeches of this government with great interest and they all have a similar style. I would say it's sort of Foghorn Leghorn meets Fred Flintstone kind of style. It's a let the bells ring out, and the banners fly, feast your eyes on me, it's too good to be true, but we're here kind of a style. This one in particular was largely a photocopy of the previous two, and I think you noticed some vague familiarity with it, Mr. Speaker. It was kind of déjà vu in here on Monday.

That being said, letter one—blame your predecessor—is certainly in vogue with a backward-looking government. After 12 years of power—13, I think, isn't it?; 13—we're still trying that old letter one trick, and the only people who thinks—think it works are the people trying the trick. Everybody else has caught on to it a long time ago.

Letter two—blame the federal government. Well, you read all those Throne Speeches, Mr. Speaker, and you never get any indication that the federal government's ever been part of any of the success of this government. Yet, within weeks of Gary Doer coming to power in this place, within weeks, the federal support formulas were totally renegotiated, revamped and the funds began to flow. The taps opened and the money started to pour in within weeks. What a coincidence. What a coincidence that the Finance ministers, present and past, in this regime, have never learned, ever, how to manage responsibly. They've never learned what a fundamental challenge it is for a business person or person in their own home to manage with less money than they had the year before. It's never happened to them, and they are naive, aloof and unbelievably unconcerned by the reality that faces every single Manitoba small-business person, farmer, homemaker, single mom or senior—every single one. You can't expect to get a raise every single year, but these

folks have always had one, and they've never learned how to manage without one.

And it's obvious, but you know what's especially obvious, when you read through all those speeches, with all those massive increases in revenue when I left this place, 1 in 4 of our dollars, approximately—it used to be higher, but it was reduced. So the Finance Minister, if he looks in his history books, may understand that. He speaks a lot about the past; perhaps he's a student of history. I haven't seen evidence that he is. But the fact of the matter is that it used to be less than 1 in 4 dollars that came in here to work with came from the federal government; now we're getting up to close to 1 in 3.

I'd say the dependency's grown quite a bit over there. I'd say there should be a letter of thanks going to the federal government from this government—a little acknowledgement. Maybe some reality checking going on that says, maybe we should thank the federal Liberals and the federal Conservatives for continuing with all this largesse year after year after year, rather than just pointing a finger and childishy trying to place the blame on them at every opportunity. But, far be it from me to suggest a relationship-building exercise to people who don't care about the relationship.

You know, last Friday, we had a good indication of the nature of this—the level of dissent of this particular government. I listened to the MIT Minister on radio, and I—at the risk of paraphrasing, I want to be accurate in saying that this is what he said in respect of the flood. He said, if 1997 was the flood of the century, well, I don't know what you call this one. Now, when you have a provincial minister sounding like Noah when he came out from underneath the ark and looked at the water and said, whoa, that's a lot of water, you have desperation. If the minister doesn't understand what you call a flood like that, let's give him some suggestions, shall we?

Let's say, for example, the NDP direct massive flows of water to Lake Manitoba out of the Assiniboine basin without having any understanding where the water's going to go after it gets there. I might call that the mismanagement flood. Or, say they have 13 years in power and they don't repair the dikes between, say, Portage la Prairie and Winnipeg, and those improperly serviced dikes can't allow water flow to come in an easterly direction so they throw the water up north. That could be a mismanagement flood.

How about record increases in tax revenue? Year after year after year, and they didn't build a rainy day fund, and they didn't develop an intelligent and foresighted flood prevention strategy, and they aren't even going to meetings with Saskatchewan and North Dakota to discuss developing one now. Maybe you'd call that the short-term thinking flood.

Or maybe you do an after-the-fact, attention-grabbing series of announcements, and your Premier (Mr. Selinger) stands on the very dike that he neglected to repair while acting out an I-feel-your-pain shtick. Maybe you call it the photo-op flood; you call it that.

Or maybe you listen to that same Premier and his Cabinet ministers saying, we promise—this seems to be a theme this week—full and prompt compensation to all affected Manitobans in advance of the last provincial election. That was exactly the promise that was made. And I'll tell you there are people not just in the Lake Manitoba area or the Interlake, but upstream of the Assiniboine and the Souris River basin, that are still waiting for help; southwest Manitoba, where there is so much revenue pouring in to this government, and they can't get a road, they can't get a bridge fixed.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, you can tell I have a little concern about this. So they make all these promises, and then it follows, a year and a half later, with confusion and frustration and contradiction and intimidation and obfuscations—a failure of faculty, a failure of foresight, a failure of fairness. Call it what it is; it's the fiasco flood. And that government should be ashamed and embarrassed about it, and they should issue a provincial-wide apology for the handling of this horrible disaster that's affected so many Manitoba families.

* (15:00)

As I said, Mr. Speaker, Monday's speech was—Throne Speech was eerily reminiscent of last year's, and I sincerely hope for the sake of Manitobans that it isn't Groundhog Day here again because of the fact it is better not be.

Just a few weeks after last October's election victory a budget document was tabled by this government. It was called Focused on What Matters Most. Now, unfortunately—it's a beautiful document—unfortunately, it's what it says that's a concern, I guess, to many Manitobans. But the document itself is fine, except for the typo. There are three words missing here. They should—it should say: Focused on

What Matters Most to yesterday's NDP. It should say that right on the document because, Mr. Speaker, what the NDP revealed in the weeks and months following the release of that document was this: their top three priorities were having a new vote tax so they could operate their political party, introducing a bill so they could become the longest serving provincial government by term since D.L. Campbell in 1953.

These are not the priorities of Manitobans. These are the priorities of yesterday's NDP, but to top it off, the biggest tax increase in a quarter of a century following a denial by an election law-breaking group that they would ever raise taxes—25 years—25 years—the biggest tax increase since Howard Pawley, who at least didn't lie about it, I say to the new member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau)—25 years, the largest tax increase in this province.

So you've got vote tax—[interjection] Well, I'm sorry. If members opposite want to get up and say they did say to the people of Manitoba they were going to raise taxes, I invite them to stand on their feet and say so. [interjection] No, I guess not.

With respect to the Premier, he introduced new taxes on hairstyles, on gas, on home insurance, mortgage and life insurance, and so on—all essential items—most heavily hurting lower and middle income families and individuals who can't avoid these expenditures and have to make them. And the result of this is food bank use that we—my colleagues pointed out today now leads the nation in child users, up 14 per cent this year alone in terms of total use, 57 per cent over the last five years.

Now, the trouble with this is, of course, Mr. Speaker, none of this is focused on what matters most to Manitobans. None of these initiatives focused on what matters most to Manitobans. They focused on what mattered most to that tired self-serving government right there.

We are already the most heavily taxed province in this country, but combine that now with the recently released numbers that show that we are now 10th of all the provinces in average weekly income growth. The fact of those two things together, plus the essential damage being done by the fact that we have the lowest basic personal exemption west of New Brunswick, the tax man—the NDP tax man—bangs on the door here harder and sooner than anywhere else. Add that up and you've got a recipe for hunger, for struggle and the lowest economic growth numbers this year in the country. So I would

encourage the members to get off the self-serving theme and get onto the serving theme.

Now, my dad's—I'm going to give some background to the members here, because they don't know me and right now the NDP members don't like me, but that's fine. I'm going to continue to stand for the things I believe in; I'm not going to stop, and neither did my dad. So I'll tell you about my dad. His name was Bill Pallister. He was one of six children of Harry and Jessie Pallister. They ran together a small mixed farm, 300 acres. They homesteaded it—or my great-grandparents homesteaded it before my grandparents, of course.

My grandmother told me one time that my dad was always a farmer. He was beside my grandpa when he was three years old doing the chores with him. He contracted polio, my dad, when he was 12. He had to drop out of school. He was bedridden for more than five months. He had to learn how to walk again. My grandmother described watching him stumble out in the yard and crawl to the nearest post to lift himself up, but he did again and again and he learned how to walk. He persisted and although he suffered lifelong respiratory and mobility challenges he continued to farm. He volunteered; he served his community until his death to cancer at 66.

My mother's name was Anne Pallister—Anne Poyser. She was one of five Poyser children on a small subsistence homestead in the shadow of the Duck Mountains near Roblin. At the age of 12, my mother lost her mother to pneumonia. And Mom looked after Dad and her brothers and sisters while she pursued her education. Eventually, when her younger sister got old enough to do the—takeover at home, she worked out, she used to say, as a domestic servant and a child-care provider, and eventually moving to Winnipeg here and graduating from Kelvin High School, putting herself through high school. And then after that she attended normal school, they call it, teacher's college of the '40s. She went on to a teaching career of over 40 years, interrupted for a time by the birth of her three children. She obtained her bachelor of arts and master's degrees from the University of Manitoba. She did it because she said that she wanted to set an example to us. Everywhere we went, she was teaching us. Every Sunday drive had a book or a game. She never stopped. Never stopped teaching 'til her death last year.

Through most of her adult life, my mother battled arthritis, the charity of my choice. And,

despite her deteriorating condition and her wheelchair dependency, she never stopped volunteering. I still get seniors coming up to me—she was the senior's birthday phoner for 23 years. I still get seniors coming up to me saying, I sure miss your mom's calls every year. And she never stopped caring.

At my father's 65th birthday, before his assembled friends and family—we didn't know we only had seven months left with him, but he paid tribute my mother, first of all, beautifully, and then he paid tribute to each of three scrawny kids, as he called us, and me, as the oldest, last. And he said, son, I'm especially proud of you, we never gave you a darn thing—as my dad valued independence a lot, Mr. Speaker.

And, in some respects, what he said was true. I didn't ask for much or feel entitled. I didn't have a car when I graduated high school. The joke in our family is, when I graduated high school, I got a watch, and when my sister graduated, she got a car, and when my brother graduated, he got the farm. Which, you know it's—we call that—that's succession planning.

But I worked myself through university working part-time and summer jobs to support myself. I obtained my degrees from Brandon University in arts and education. I found a teaching position in the beautiful little town of Gladstone and I still have great friends there, former students and teachers as well. I became self-sufficient with my teaching job, Mr. Speaker, just as my mother had before me.

By the way, when I went to my mom when I was doing my teacher interviews and I finally got a job, I went to my mother and I asked her for advice. I said, Mom, I got this job in Gladstone, what suggestion can you give me? And she thought for a moment and she said, well, two things son. Avoid partisan politics, you have to teach everyone's children. And I said, what's the second thing? Avoid local watering holes, she said. I'm sorry to report to the House, I let her down on both those counts, Mr. Speaker.

I pursued sports with enthusiasm. The Minister of Education's (Ms. Allan) brother was a good friend of mine and a lovely guy. I made great friends through the sporting community, still have them and hope to make more. I love team sports. I've been fortunate to play on lots of winning teams and some losing ones, of course, too. You learn more when you're losing than you do when you're winning, but I like winning better. I've represented Manitoba more

than 20 times at national and world championships in three different sports.

Now, some of you are aware that a few years back that my wife, Esther, and I considered this job. And I want to share with you that we did give it very serious considerations—very difficult. We had—leaving federal politics at that point in time, with a number of projects on the go, would have been very tough, but it was an agonizing decision for many reasons, not the least of which was the fact that our daughters, who at that time were 14 and 9 years of age, shall we say, had been uprooted repeatedly over the previous few years. And it's tough—this business can be tough on kids and on families as well.

* (15:10)

So, in any case, we were sitting down—because we made the decision to have the girls in school in Ottawa so I could at least see them once in a while. And we were sitting at breakfast one morning, and Esther said to our older daughter, Quinn, who was 14 at the time, she said, you know, dear, 14-year-olds can vote in this process, so if we decide to do this you'll be able to cast your first vote ever for your dad. And my elder daughter looked up at me and said, wouldn't count on it.

So any of you who have an attachment to your families can appreciate the fact that—and I do, that this can be a challenging career for people with families. And certainly we made the decision not to return largely on the basis of that. But I am pleased to report to you that both our daughters are actively supportive of their father's involvement in this career again. And it was a great pleasure during the Fort Whyte by-election to have—for the first time, really, to have our daughters involved in a way with door to door, and so on.

Our younger daughter is still a little bit of a card. Went to a few doors with me and after a while—after about, I don't know, 15, 20 minutes, she looked at me between doors and said, Daddy, it's like you say about that Forrest Gump guy. I said, what do you mean, dear? You just never know what you're going to get. And I know the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) spent many nights working very hard in that riding, and he knows exactly what I mean about you never know what you're going to get at a door. It's a challenge but I'm glad to have those kids involved.

My career in politics might well be characterized by some observers as a series of interesting

decisions, Mr. Speaker. I—in '92, Portage la Prairie was dying. The member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) and I know very well, as we are lifelong friends, that it was a difficult time for our community. We had lost our air force base. We had lost our Campbell's Soup plant. And to a Torontonians, maybe losing that many jobs doesn't sound like much, but in Portage la Prairie, that was over 20 per cent of our workforce gone within a few months, and people were scared. They were afraid of the future, and those two closures shook people to the core. Our—my predecessor of that time, Ed Connery, had chosen to resign, and I had been approached to contest the PC nomination. I'd been a coach and a community volunteer, involved in the chamber of commerce and some charitable organizations. And some people felt that I possessed some of those necessary attributes, I guess, to serve in public office.

But there were other considerations at that time. We had just expanded our little business operation, one that I had started out of my car in 1980. And we had purchased an historic building in Portage la Prairie in which to—renovated it, in which to locate our offices. So that had meant that we were in big debt, Mr. Speaker. We were leveraged. We had added staff. We had created jobs. We had hired people. We had added many clients as well, and we had opened satellite offices, two satellite offices. Most significantly, we'd been blessed with a daughter less than a year before.

So everything about the timing was just wrong, and any outside observer would say that wouldn't be a wise decision. But we decided that we would run—an interesting decision, unless you believe, as we do, that public service is an honourable way to make a difference. We do believe that, and all of us here hope that we have.

I served as a backbencher, later Cabinet minister in the Filmon government, which I know is news to the Finance Minister, and as a member of that government I worked hard on many issues. And I believe that it's important, and I think that, quite frankly, members opposite know, whether they admit it or not, that that particular fiscal environment was in this province the most challenging since the Great Depression. The reality of the fiscal challenges we had to face with the downloading that was occurring in the Martin government's time was very real. We had no choice but to react to that, and react with sensitivity I believe we did, given the circumstances.

Now, why then would I leave this team of people who I enjoyed the company of and who I respected greatly and do today, resign from office, run for a two-person federal party? What sense could that possibly make? Only if you understand the dangers—and I saw them—to our province of a continuing Ottawa monopoly government would you make that decision. But I saw then and I understand very clearly that a perpetual federal government monopoly will not work well for this province. The dynamic has changed. The threat of replacement, as they say, is important, whether it's in sport, business or in politics. The threat of replacement makes one more accountable than they would be in its absence, and the reality is that the federal government of that time was not afraid to be replaced. That's not accountability.

I believe that a reunion of Conservative factions east and west was more than desirable; it was essential, and I dedicated several years of my life, both within and outside of elected office, to the advancement of a dialogue, along with many others, which resulted in the re-establishment of a credible national Conservative Party and an alternative to the Liberal Party. I've had some experience in advancing causes, which have subjected me to criticism over the years, but I had never been booed coast to coast before, and that was a new experience for me, one I'm proud that I was willing to endure.

There are always going to be regional and factional thinkers, too concerned with fighting yesterday's battles to see—than they are—should be, in seeing tomorrow's unfulfilled potential. I learned a long time ago that today's innovative thinking can become tomorrow's common sense. But this only happens when ideas are melded with a willingness to act and, at this point in time, Manitoba needs such ideas and it needs such courageous action by courageous people. I'm willing to be open-minded on issues, listen, and do my research, and to act on good ideas, and I continue to be willing to do that. Our political party has great values and a great tradition, and I'm proud of those.

My life experiences have taught me the values of empathy and hard work and honesty. I come from humble beginnings. I know what it's like to struggle financially to make ends meet. Some people say I'm blue collar, but I guess I'm a little white collar, too. I've worked in the civil service; I've worked as an educator; I've seen great advantages accrue to people because of the efforts of people in those professions,

and I want a fair and safe labour environment for working people.

And I'm private sector. I've—understand how to build a business. I built a business from nothing, a start-up. I bought a business that was losing money for three or four years before I bought it and turned it around. These aren't multinationals, but they're still companies that profit and operate and employ people and provide good service to customers, and I'm proud of that, too. I believe in small business. I've created jobs. I know where jobs come from. You create them. You put capital at risk. That's how you create jobs.

I'm public sector, too. I've been an elected public servant and I believe in the integrity of public service.

I guess what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is I'm—I can't hold down one job, and I don't have one background. I am a mongrel of sorts. I have a diverse background that's reflective of the reality, quite frankly, of modern Manitoba. It's not cradle-to-grave in this province anymore. It's not just people who are born here dying here, that's for sure. Manitoba has incredible diversity—economically and ethnically, as well—and I believe that to be a source of strength for us, and I believe our people are our greatest asset.

But I do think we have a have-not government, not a have-not province—a have-not government that talks at Manitobans but not with them, more about placing blame than taking responsibility. It's a willingness, as a have-not government, to jeopardize our health and education services by confusing increasing spending with increasing value—it's been obvious to me—a have-not government that does not grasp the inseparable link between economic growth and expanding social opportunity, a have-not government more about the achievement of power than the power of achievement.

I understand that the government has great powers of incumbency. I understand that the disparity of opportunities to maintain power between a provincial incumbent government such as this one and the opposition are greater than virtually anywhere else in the western world. I accept the challenge. It's a daunting challenge. I like a daunting challenge. So do the people I'm standing beside today.

There's much work to be done. The work is noble, but the measure of our respect for and commitment to those who built this city and this

province and those who will inherit it from us will be in the doing, Mr. Speaker. I guess what I'm saying is the NDP's the PST party; living in the past, serving themselves and tired.

My old basketball coach used to say, fatigue'll make cowards of us all. And I see some cowardice there, Mr. Speaker, and I've learned that when people get tired in sports, they—and in life—they stop playing with their brain and they start playing with their elbows, and I've seen some of that, too.

And a good example of that would be this—the little diatribe from my good friend from Kildonan, who is—I have tremendous respect for, who understands that you can't be partially pregnant or partially transparent, and that when you have a commitment to be transparent you don't do hearings on part of a mega proposal, the biggest one in the history of our province. You just don't do that, and that member knows that's wrong and that member should do better than that.

*(15:20)

Look what happens, bipole boondoggle. Look what happens when you put the gang that can't shoot straight in charge of making a line from A to B; 500 kilometres of extra line, a billion dollars of wasted capital that could be put to great use around this province in many other ways; 500 kilometres of waste and disrespect for landowners, for ratepayers, for the intelligence of Manitobans. Virtually every expert, past and present, disagrees with this decision, bad idea. Add in interest groups, chambers of commerce, business councils, even people associated—formerly chairs of the UNESCO Heritage bid process—all saying the same thing, and a tin ear over there that disregards that advice.

It's time for the government to get some energy, I think, Mr. Speaker, or get out of the way and let people who have some energy come in, and my resolution today will speak to that. And I encourage the members to support it—on the other side of the House. This government is clearly too tired to fight its own spending problems. It's spending addiction has resulted this year in \$1 billion being gone, \$1 billion being gone to service debt—NDP debt—debt that has doubled since they came into power at a time when revenue flows from outside of this province increased at record pace, still doubled the debt at a time when the revenue flows for Manitobans flowing to this government increased at record levels, at a time when interest rates dropped precipitously to the lowest level in modern Canadian

history, still managed in all that good fortune, awash in capital, awash in new revenue, still managed to double the debt. That's not an admirable accomplishment, to put it mildly. That puts health care at risk; that puts education at risk, and that's a tired government that can't fight that problem effectively.

The NDP is too tired to focus. Where they got this muddy-headed idea of offloading infrastructure responsibilities onto MPI, I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, but tired, just tired, too tired to stand up for Canadian values like respecting the sacrifices of veterans and rejecting the notion that Remembrance Day service opt-outs for students makes sense when it doesn't make sense; too tired to see the sad hilarity of denying that they're downloading when they cut nighttime snow plow shifts on one hand and they promote the concept of having MPI invest in safety initiatives on the other. Since when did plowing Manitoba roads in the winter stop being a safety initiative? It's a necessary function of the department, and we don't need two departments doing that kind of work. What's next? A fleet of MPI snow plows?

I love Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I began—*[interjection]* Yeah, it may happen. I began my conversation with this beautiful province as a boy in the central plains of this province, on the farmlands and the school playing fields, and then I continued it when I went to Westman, the beautiful part of our province, to university. And then I went to Parkland area to teach. And I've explored the northwest regions of the province as I've got in touch with my roots and my mother's people in the—in and around the Duck Mountains in the foothills there. And I've enjoyed learning about the Interlake as a consequence of someone I didn't thank earlier and was remiss in not doing, and that's my wife, Esther, and her family from Arborg. And I was remiss, also, in not thanking all of the spouses who support us. I think that's very important and family members who support us.

As our family's principal form of summer vacation, Mr. Speaker, we would take family drives around the province, and I've continued with that tradition with our own children and it's been a great way to explore the wonders of this beautiful place.

But the city of Winnipeg has a special place for me. My mother's two sisters moved into the city when they got older and they—their—they raised their families in the northeast part of the city in North and East Kildonan. My one aunt was—they were

vegetable farmers. There's no land there to farm any more, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty much been paved over, but in those days we enjoyed the vegetables from that farm.

My uncle was a transit bus driver, and so whenever my aunt wanted myself and my cousins out of her hair, she'd say go with your uncle. And I—it was probably illegal, Mr. Speaker. I guess I shouldn't go on record as saying this, but we got to know the city pretty well riding around on that bus and it was a wonderful time. I can remember when north Winnipeg and north Main itself was a pleasure, a wonderful part of the province to explore, a safe place to walk around.

And I look forward to the day, as I know all members do, when it will be again. It's—I've seen the transitional changes that have occurred in the city; I am hopeful for its future. It is a special place. I've lived at four different addresses so far in the city of Winnipeg: downtown as an MLA on Edmonton, and I've lived in—on Garwood as a young businessman, on Warsaw as a student, and Charleswood.

And I enjoy very much the neighbourhoods of this city. I curled in every rink; I've played ball on every diamond; I've done business in most of the boardrooms—and I still prefer the kitchen tables, myself, to the boardrooms.

But it's a great city and we all know that. There's no way that I'm going to occupy the House with all the fairs, festivals and friendliness this province has to offer today. We all—I hope we all know and have explored this beautiful city and province, but I'll share with you my favourites: I love the jazz festival in the city here, I think it's wonderful; I love Folklorama; I like Bartley Kives' articles in the Free Press, though not always one of his buddies, I can't remember his name.

But Bartley writes about the outdoors in Manitoba. *[interjection]* That's—that could be it—Morley. I like Morley too. *[interjection]* Yes, yes. No, I was meaning another one. Bartley writes about cross-country skiing, which our family enjoys, and I—the Education Minister, actually, probably, if she skis, would know about this trail, which is fairly close to MacGregor, actually, called Bittersweet ski trails, and if any of you are cross-country skiers, you got to check this place out. It's amazing. It's halfway between Bagot, the Bagot turnoff, and Treherne. It's a paradise. You got to go in there and enjoy it. If you like cross-country seeing, it's the place.

Esther and I love hiking. We've explored most of the trails around the province now, and we're continuing to do that. My personal favourite is called the Newfoundland trail at Spruce Wood park. If you like hiking, it's in the Epinette trail system on the left-hand side as you go down Highway 5. Go and explore it. You will love it.

I love to bike and we biked the Trans Canada Trail. I want to thank the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) for helping deliver my buddy, Mike Sullivan, and I back to our—helping us drop off our finish vehicle. And I warn the members for, let's see, La Verendrye and Lac du Bonnet in advance, that they're going to be helping me this coming summer continue as we complete that journey across the province by bike. There's much to explore and much to see in this province. It's a—it's really a paradise of diversity and a crossroads of the world. For the people who come here and the people who live here, this province has a tremendous amount to offer.

I've toured extensively in my life. I've been blessed to have the chance to get to know each province, each of the territories, over 30 countries of the world. And I'll just say this, Mr. Speaker, I've never met better people than I've met in Manitoba. They're warm people; charitable people; giving, caring people; honest people; genuine people. And my goal is to build a political party like those people that can form a government that reflects the values of those people, very unlike the current government, a government not of the government, but a government of the people.

D.L. Campbell was the Premier of Manitoba for a number of years, and I mentioned D.L. earlier in reference to a long term. He had a long career here. In fact, the current member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) is, I believe, only the third member since 1922 to serve in this Chamber, and that says something about the patience of those people in that constituency, that they would endure just those fine three people, but it says more about the quality of the three men who served in that position over so many years.

And D.L. Campbell was a hero in our family. My great-grandfather, John, was given the honour of taking D.L. Campbell around the district of Edwin by horse and buggy in his first campaign in 1922. And my grandmother and grandfather treasured the memory of that, because my grandfather harnessed the horse. And so D.L. Campbell had a special place in our family as a hero, as a servant of the people.

D.L. Campbell had a reputation for knowing and caring about people.

* (15:30)

He once went to a place near the member for Portage la Prairie's (Mr. Wishart) home in—near the village—just outside of the village of Oakland, Manitoba on 227. And the story goes that he went to the door and asked for support. He said, John, how are you? Good to see you. I ask for your support. You have it D.L. I'd like to ask Mary for her support too. Is she in? D.L., she's not, she's down in the village, actually, you know. Well, would you ask her for me, please? I will, D.L. I'm sure she'll support you. And how is William, young William? I believe he's in grade 4 now. Is he still having trouble with his mathematics? My goodness, D.L., that's a good—yes, he's doing well. He's doing better this year, yes. And Maisie? She doing well? She's in grade 2 now, I think, isn't she? Yes, she's good. And how about Daisy? Oh, we lost Daisy, D.L. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. She was a good dog. He knew the pets by name. He knew the people by name. He knew everything about them.

And at his interment at Hillside cemetery in Portage la Prairie, now-deceased Senator Gildas Molgat spoke. He spoke beautifully, and he said, people wondered how D.L. Campbell had such an amazing memory for people. The answer is simple: he loved people.

Well, you won't last long in this business unless you do; we all know that. And you cultivate that love. But in Manitoba, I would submit to you, it's easier to love the people than it is in many jurisdictions of this country. This is the place where the people are the best. I think that Manitobans deserve a government that's less blame-placing and more relationship-building; that's less downloading than it is embracing of accountability; less message-managing than it is about telling the truth; less about spending, more about delivering results; less about taking credit, more about sharing credit; less about preserving the interests of the already powerful, more about uplifting the opportunities for the vulnerable.

I believe that you can learn a lot from the lessons of life. I was invited to learn a lot one day in grade 11. Mr. Speaker, unlike yourself, I wasn't always a good young man in school. And this wasn't a social call I was invited on; I was asked to go down and meet with the principal, and he said to me something I'll always remember. He was an

ex-military guy, and he looked up at me and he said, son, you don't like me right now and I don't mind; I want you to respect me in 10 years. Well, that's a good lesson and that's good leadership. And Manitoba deserves a government like that too; it doesn't just care about popularity today, but cares about respect tomorrow.

Doing the things that are right and necessary when they are right and necessary is never easy. But some governments have the temerity to do those things when they have to be done despite the difficulty, not just throw a bigger deficit on a bigger deficit, year after year after year, and mortgage the future and squander the ability of future generations to live and support themselves and get the rewards of their hard work. A foresighted government that respects the people shows them the respect they deserve by leading with foresight in mind—not exclusively the best interests of today, but the best interest of the children of tomorrow as well. That's the kind of [*inaudible*].

It was almost exactly 20 years ago to this day that I first entered this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and that I had the chance to meet you and some of the colleagues that are still here today. And I will tell you that much has changed for my wife and I in that 20 years. Much has changed, I'm sure, for each of us here as well. In our case, we both lost parents and friends, but we have two healthy daughters and we've made new friends. I've experienced personal health difficulties and I've recovered. I've had some successes and I've had some failures in sports, in business and in politics, but I persevere. I have won on some issues of great importance to me, and to the people I've represented, but I have lost on some too. Or should I say success awaits? But I still believe, in spite of the changes that I've experienced in the last 20 years—and I have changed—we all learn when we grow. My grandmother used to say people are like trees; stop growing, start dying. I'm growing; not in physical stature, but in other, more important, ways. And I can tell you this: I have changed, but in many important ways I have not nor will I.

I still believe in work. I believe in honest working people. I believe the best social program is a job. I believe the best creators of jobs are small businesses. I believe in being straight with people. I believe that the best guide is not a poll but a principle you believe in and hold dear. I believe and I support public education as the best way up for young people, and I believe in teaching as a noble profession. And I believe it that we can develop a

better system here that supports these goals with clarity, with integrity and with discipline. And I believe that that is in our line of sight, and when it is, I will not, nor will my colleagues, be deterred in any way from our goal.

In short, I believe that when you live in a good province, better, if it is possible, means that good is not enough. These are my beliefs. These shape my goals.

We did not know, as I said before, when I first came here 20 years ago, I'd lose my dad within the year. My dad was known as the best man with a seed drill in the RM of Portage la Prairie. This was verified at a stag for my future brother-in-law when all the fellows gathered around and one of them said, Jackson—he's a crop duster—who's the best man with a drill?

Jackson has an angle that everybody else doesn't get on the horizontal. And he said—Jackson said, without hesitation—that's Bill Pallister.

Well, I'll tell you what, that was a proud day—a proud day for my father. Any farmer here, anybody who respects good work, honest work, would say that's something I can understand. Bill Pallister was proud to do a good job. And he did.

So the next morning my brother and I at breakfast said, Dad, how do you do it? Tell us your secret.

He says, well, boys, you just look at the far end of the field, you lock onto a post, you never take your eye off it.

Good metaphor. Yes. Anyway, about 10 months after I came here, I got a call from a nurse friend of mine; she was crying. That wasn't good news. Called my brother. We went into the hospital to see Dad.

We laughed a bit, some of the other, and had our visit and then I got up to leave and Jim got up to leave. And, yes, Dad says, boys there's one other thing. And he passed away six days later, so it's good he got this off his chest. He says there's one other thing, boys. That thing about the drill: I didn't tell you the truth on that—not the whole truth anyway. You can look at that post all you want, but you can vary looking at one thing. You know what you got to do, fellows? You got to look out, way out past. You find something on the horizon. I'm not talking fuzzy things like clouds. I'm talking something stuck up there good, like a big tree, a nice, big, strong tree. Don't use a light. Could be a car. Might move. Stick with the tree.

Now that tree and that post and you, now that's a line. That how you run a drill.

That's how you run life, too. You run life that way. As far as I'm concerned, as far as we're concerned over here, that post is the next provincial election, but the big thing we've got in mind is a better government for the people of this province.

Prepare three envelopes. Thank you very much.

Throne Speech amendment motion moved by Mr. Pallister, seconded by—oh, I can't say that. No? Oh, it's—I was told to read it as written, Mr. Speaker.

Moved by the member for Fort Whyte, myself, seconded by the MLA for Charleswood,

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets—now, tell me I don't have to say the semicolons and the—no—but this House regrets:

- (a) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, the provincial government continues to spend beyond its means to the detriment of future governments; and
- (b) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, the provincial government has doubled the provincial debt; and
- (c) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba remains the child poverty capital of Canada; and
- (d) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba food bank usage is at record high levels, including the highest percentage of children using food banks in Canada; and
- (e) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba's infrastructure deficit is not being addressed and roads and bridges are in disrepair; and
- (f) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, many recent flood victims have still not received adequate compensation for their losses; and

- (g) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, long wait times in emergency rooms and for surgeries continue to put the health of Manitobans at risk; and
- (h) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, many seniors face long wait times for long-term care beds; and
- (i) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba students continue to score at or near the bottom in core subjects such as math, reading and science; and
- (j) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba's universities are still ranked near the bottom compared to their Canadian counterparts; and
- (k) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, there continues to be a critical shortage of affordable housing; and
- (l) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, the provincial government insists on politically interfering with Crown corporations in an attempt to siphon more money from them and from Manitobans; and
- (m) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba remains the violent crime capital of Canada and gangs continue to flourish; and
- (n) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, many Aboriginal Manitobans still live in poverty and their communities lack basic services; and
- (o) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, many farm sectors do not receive adequate support when circumstances beyond their control impact food production; and
- (p) That despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, far too many Manitobans are leaving to live in other provinces.

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

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker: Prior to speaking to the amendment proposed by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister), I wish to seek some clarification from you, sir, if it was your intent on the item (a) you had mentioned in your comments, detriment for future government versus generations that is on the printed document. And I just want to confirm with you that it is indeed the words you had intended as in the printed version. Is that the case?

Mr. Pallister: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Is that agreed by the House that the House will accept the printed version of the amendments as proposed by the Leader of the Official Opposition? *[Agreed]*

It has been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger)–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines–pardon me. Prior to recognize the minister, I want to reference to the House that the amendment is in order. And so that now we'll recognize the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise first and thank the member–the new Leader of the Opposition for his speech. I, indeed, learned–I was able to learn a lot about the member from his comments and his background, and I welcome him again to this Chamber.

And I also want to, as well, thank all of the table officers and all of you who provide for us here in your non-partisan and very efficient fashion. It simply is remarkable what we have in here in terms of a democracy and how fortunate we are, Mr. Speaker, and it's made possible because of the structure and the nature and the commitment of

people like yourselves and the table officers and others that we're able to do this work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Leader of the Opposition's speech, as much as I admired his background and the—some of the comments he indicated, you know, I listened very attentively to his comments from 2:35 p.m. this afternoon until 3:34 this afternoon, and that's the first time, the first time after just approaching an hour in his dissertation, that he said anything positive, that he used the word—that he, yes, used the word foresight, rather than spending an entire hour on hindsight. The very contrary nature to what the member's entire comments were, which was about yesterday, he spent more time on yesterday than Paul McCartney.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting. I mean, I found it interesting. I'm glad the member gave us a travelogue about Manitoba. He is right; it is a beautiful place, full of wonderful people, and I agree totally.

But, Mr. Speaker, that speech was bereft of ideas, is bereft of hope, it was bereft of any comments about the future. Manitobans, by their nature, are an optimistic group of people. That's why they've re-elected this government over and over and over again. Because we provide hope for the future. We talk about the issues that affect Manitobans. We talk about the things that matter.

Mr. Speaker, it's very easy to be a Tory and put up a balanced budget legislation and then say no and slam the door on everybody. That's an easy decision. They made it over and over and over again. It's much harder to manage the budget. It's much harder to look at how you're taking your financing and how you help people, how you provide programs. That's much more difficult. It's easy to be a Tory and cut and slash. It's easy to lay off 2,000 nurses. It's easy to raise and fire teachers. It's easy for them to do that with bad—but it's much harder to expand, to build, to look to the future.

And let's take an example. Let's talk about the commitment for 75,000 new jobs in our budget. The member opposite said, and I'm—I believe I'm collect in quoting this, that a job is the way to go forward. Then, Mr. Speaker, he then spends all of his time breaking down all of the commitments that we've made and attacking the budget, when the budget is aimed towards the future. It's aimed towards Manitobans. It's aimed towards programs like Skill Build that was announced today. It's a commitment to take skills in rural northern Manitoba, the very

people the member purported to talk about and provide them with shop spaces, to provide with the opportunities—to provide them with bridging of their skills into the workforce.

But, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are so fixated on the past that they forget to look towards the future. And if the members opposite want to know what the secret is to getting elected in this province, it's not that difficult. It's trusting Manitobans, building for the future, and living up to your commitments.

And the member opposite, I'm afraid, is leading a group that is very narrow in focus and forgets the basics. Skill Build builds on the growing need for skilled workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite forget that we have record levels of employment in this province. We have record levels of immigration in this province. We have record growth in this province. We have more doctors, we have more nurses, we have more teachers, we have more people at work in this province than any era ever before in our history, and that through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Now, the member opposite spent some time defending his position in the former Filmon government. Now I don't want to go into hindsight. We all know the story. We know the story about the cuts, the slashes. We know the road chosen by Tories. We know that—and where is the difference, Mr. Speaker? Where is the difference in the new, now-third Leader of the Opposition? Where is the hope? Where is the difference?

I dare say, Mr. Speaker, I heard more buoyancy, more hope in previous speeches by the former Leader of the Opposition. We heard an hour of, you know, some interesting personal information. I found it very interesting, some aw-shucks moments about the three letters. I heard that before several times, but, you know, one of the letters the member might want to write to himself is aim higher, aim for the future, aim for Manitobans building.

And whether it's windmills and wind farms in rural Manitoba, whether it's alternative fuels, whether it's building our hydro system for the future to be able to export power and to keep our power rates the lowest in North America, that's where the focus ought to be. The focus ought to be in building. It ought to be in jobs. It ought to be in hope.

* (15:50)

Let me illustrate this, Mr. Speaker, by an example. We've only been in the Chamber for two days, but the theme is fairly prevalent amongst members opposite. It's cut spending. It's cut spending, which I admit is a difficult task and we're engaged in it to do—the best of our ability. But when it's only a one-legged horse it collapses pretty quickly. That's what happened in the 1990s to the previous government. They only one knew refrain. They only had one trick. It was a one-trick pony. It was cut and slash and layoff and take apart.

You know, if given the choice between \$400 and free cancer drugs, Mr. Speaker, a hundred times out of a hundred we would put the cancer drugs to the patients—a hundred times out of a hundred. And whether it's hire more nurses and doctors or provide \$100 to someone, we would hire more nurses and doctors a hundred times out of a hundred. And whether it's advance the minimum wage or do cuts and slashes to health care, a hundred times out of a hundred we would advance the minimum wage to help Manitobans.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition's speech was somewhat between what I heard Mitt Romney say during the American presidential elections and a little bit of Abe Lincoln thrown in, Mr. Speaker, that I saw on the weekend, which is a tremendous movie, a little bit in between the aw shucks and the I can build a dream because I can run companies. I just love it when people come in here and say, I'm going to operate government just like a business. Well, you know, I've operated a business. Members opposite think they have this virtue of all the ones who operate farms, the only ones who operate businesses and, you know, they have this built in, well, we can't have deficit. You know, I thought it was very interesting that during the course of his speech the Leader of the Opposition said, well, when we started our small business we went into debt, we had a mortgage. He didn't quite say a mortgage, he said we were in debt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during the cycle of businesses and during the business cycle there are times when you borrow, there are times when you put money away, but you have to recognize that it's cyclical. For 10 years this government balanced the budget and improved health care and improved education and improved roads and improved infrastructure. Now, since 2008 when we were facing the worst slowdown since the Great Depression we're still hiring nurses and doctors. We're still fixing roads. We're still building infrastructure. But we're

doing it in a prudent fashion. In a fashion that Manitobans recognize. In a fashion that builds for the future. In a fashion that recognizes children and people on the street.

The member opposite mentioned north Main Street, Mr. Speaker. I grew up in the North End. I knew north Main Street. I know north Main Street. When we came into office in '99 that core area of the city of Winnipeg was literally in flames. We had to put in place an arson task force to deal with the arsons. Right now, go down some of those same streets and people own most houses. People are going to university and community colleges in those communities. It's not a hundred per cent and it's not as pretty as it could be, but rather than giving up, rather than throwing your hands in the air member opposite have done, rather than blaming people, we're working with those communities. We're meeting with those communities.

Mr. Speaker, it's—it really is a question of keeping on the track and keeping your eye on the goal, aiming to make Manitoba a better place, and that's what happened the last few years.

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

That's why Rolls-Royce is here; that's why Pratt & Whitney's here; that's why GE is here; that's why Boeing is here; that's why StandardAero's here; that's why companies are coming here, Mr. Speaker. That's why they come through regularly and they meet with us, because they know this is a place where you could put down roots. You could grow on an affordable fashion, in a fashion where you have the lowest utility rates in Canada, where we've pledged to have the lowest utility rates bundled with heat, and with the insurance rate that we put in legislation, because we believe in the future. And we believe that our Crown corporations can be used for the benefit of all Manitobans, and let's think about things like telephones and hydro.

Hydro today, we have the lowest electricity rates in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Telephones—I don't think we can say that. What's the difference? Well, it's a little

notion of selling it off—selling it off to the private sector and taking the money, slipping into the budget in order to what? Why was the money put into the budget? It was to cure the deficit—it was to cure the deficit, a one-trick pony. Sell off your assets, sell it off, use that to deal with the deficit and try to get through an election. That doesn't work.

Manitobans have seen through that, and Manitobans know that this government is reflective of all Manitobans, no matter where you come from: the north, the south, the east, the west, rural, urban, north-south. We've been—we represent the men and women of this province and we represent the ideals of this province: hard work, values, lending a helping hand—lending a helping hand in a co-operative fashion. Not in a fashion of well, shucks, so maybe we'll give you something if you can't fend for yourself, but in a fashion that, as they say when they—when you raise some ships, they all raise up and whatever the metaphor is, that's applicable to the actions we take.

And I really regret—I was looking for some notion of the future, some foresight from the Leader of the Opposition, some new idea—a new idea, Mr. Speaker. One new idea. We didn't have it. We had the same old, same old: taxing, deficit, taxing, deficit. There was nothing else. There was talk about the poor; there was talk about those that didn't have much. But the solution seemed to be same old, same old, which is fire nurses and doctors, get rid of civil servants, fire and get rid of Crown corporations and balance the budget at all costs.

Well, there is a cost to balancing the budget. There is a cost to laying off 2,000 nurses, cutting education funding, cutting the number of doctors training at the University of Manitoba. Imagine, they cut down the number of doctor positions. And I'll say it and I said it before and I'll say it again, if given the choice between paying for cancer drugs and given a choice between the alternative offered by members opposite—what, \$400, Mr. Speaker—we'll always take providing the cancer drugs to those who need it. And I think most Manitobans would agree with that.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to hydro, we welcome the debate on hydro. In fact, there's going to be a very good examination of hydro and needs for alternative studies going to be going on with Conawapa and with—or with Keeyask, and I invite members to make presentations. I'd like to hear what their option is, other than there is no such thing as omissions—cut, stop hydro growth just for today. You

know, that's the same refrain—I mentioned it today, I think, in my response to a question.

We heard the same thing when we built Limestone, Mr. Speaker. I went back and I checked the newspapers. You could virtually just remove the name and replace it with the new Leader of the Opposition as to the comments they made about Limestone then and what they're saying about Conawapa and Keeyask right now. Just scratch out the name and put in a new name—the Leader of the Opposition, you could just punch it right in there. It's the same thing. And what happened years later?

* (16:00)

It came in on target, on budget and it's made six—over \$6 billion for the people of Manitoba. And members opposite are doing this, saying the same refrain: short-term rhetoric for long-term losses; short-term rhetoric for long-term losses. That's the refrain. That's the message of members opposite. Not one new idea. Not one look except the mention to foresight at 3:34, an hour and number of minutes after the Leader of the Opposition's comment. He mentioned the word foresight.

Mr. Speaker, today the members also criticized the capital budget for Manitoba Hydro which is—we're projecting to be, say, \$19 billion over the next 10 years. And I reminded members opposite that next door in Saskatchewan the capital budget is \$15 billion, and that is not for renewable. The hydro we're building today will last a hundred years. It will pay for itself over and over again, and members opposite want to stop that. I can't—it's incomprehensible that they want to stop growth at a time when the world position, as announced by the International Energy Agency just last week, indicated renewable power to soar by 2035. I'm quoting from *The Globe and Mail*, Tuesday, November 13th. Indeed, they mentioned that hydroelectric power, in particular, will double. Hydroelectric power will double, and members opposite want to shut off the taps. They want to turn it off just like they turned off the doctors that were being trained in medicine years ago, just like they turned off the teacher training, just like they stopped the training for X-ray technicians, just like they turned off the training for all of the professions.

The problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is it takes years, indeed, decades to catch up from the very poor, nearsighted I've got to cut it today and I don't give a darn about tomorrow attitude of members opposite. You can't just turn the tap back on in terms

of hydro. There is a lot of pre-planning, a lot of pre-building and you can't just turn off the tap and switch it back on.

Now, sure, natural gas prices are probably the lowest than they've been in all time, but they're actually below the cost of production. But do you think they'll stay like that? In the last five years natural gas prices have fluctuated by 600 per cent–600 per cent—and all that time Manitoba Hydro has kept the lights on and kept the rates the lowest. And members opposite would jeopardize that security from both a keeping the lights on and a price basis. Their position's always been go to market rates and we seen what happens with the telephone system when that has happened.

So I invite members opposite to carefully, I think, review some of their priorities. I look forward to the debates in the weeks and the months to come, Mr. Speaker, but I suggest to members opposite that their actions ought to match their rhetoric, and their track record in this area isn't that good. And I looked in vain for a hope, a flicker of futuristic thinking or planning, and I didn't see it. I didn't hear it in the Leader of Opposition's comments. In fact, I believe they put out a press release, again, attacking Hydro, wanting to stop it in its tracks as if—just like they stopped training doctors in their tracks, just like they cut the number of positions for doctors. They went down to 70 and it took us a long time to get back in the position where we're now net more doctors year after year after year. But you can't train a doctor in a day or a year. You can't build energy sufficiency in a year. It takes years. It takes decades. In hydro we're thinking 10 and 20 years out, not small-time, incremental just today kind of thinking. You've got to think about the future and that—what was missing from the member for St. Paul's comments today and the Leader of the Opposition's comments—it's that inability to think about the future of Manitoba. It's that rigid reactionaryism that just wants to maintain the status quo, that rigidity that we see from members opposite day in and day out.

The member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), who's been here for some time, Mr. Speaker, it's not helpful, and I guess all I can say is, I actually wish you well. I wish you continue your—I wish you continue the way you've been going for the past 13 years because it hasn't got a lot of traction. Nor does it have a lot of attraction to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the comments—again, I appreciated the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. I

learned more about him and his family and I appreciated that. I learnt a little bit there, but when it comes to managing government, when it comes to dealing with difficult issues, when it comes to a meaningful debate about options for Manitobans, I heard nothing. I heard no alternatives. I heard no hope.

All I heard was the usual, and the usual doesn't cut it. It doesn't cut it in these times when you have to deal with difficult problems; when you have to deal with all governments. When you have to be non-partisan in dealing with the issues that face this federation. The issues that are facing this federation, Mr. Speaker, collectively affect all of us, whether we're New Democrats, Conservatives, Liberals or whatever, and we've got to be able to work together. And that's been part of, I think, the strength of this government, if I could be so bold, is that we've been able to work with everyone to try to build bridges and try to improve the situation across the country. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) right now is meeting with other premiers about the vision for energy strategy across the country that, regardless of political stripe, is being worked on.

I would've hoped, for members opposite, that I would've heard some advice or some non-partisan ability, some non-partisan suggestion to moving the energy dialogue forward on a national basis, to working with other parties and other governments, but I didn't hear that. I heard chirping from the other side about money that came from the federal government, but when it comes to actually ideas or moving forward, I heard very little. In fact, I heard nothing, Mr. Speaker, about how to move forward, and I think that's a lost opportunity for this province.

So, as we go forward, Mr. Speaker, looking at the Throne Speech that's before us, I think it makes for comparison. It makes for very good comparison. If you look at the pages of the Throne Speech, it talks about hope. It talks about, you know, it talks about dealing with the government by reducing the size of the public service, consolidating government offices, adopting best practices to reduce procurement costs, real actions to deal with some of the spending issues. And, at the same time, improving health care through programs that were announced just yesterday by the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), in terms of the cancer centres and the cancer sites outside of Winnipeg.

Cancer affects all of us, Mr. Speaker. It affects all of us, wherever we are. And getting services out

to rural and northern Manitoba is important, and that's in this Throne Speech. And that's in this budget, and that's what comes from this government. Increasing more residencies for family doctors, funding front-line positions, that is what Manitobans have asked for. That's in this Throne Speech. The CancerCare hub opened in Morden-Winkler last year, the transformation of rural chemotherapy.

Job opportunities—providing for 75,000 more workers in the labour force by 2020 may be the most important thing that's done. Mr. Speaker, training people to fill those shortages, to fill those gaps, to allow people, if they want to, to retire. To take in their ranks and have succession planning, that's important, not to cut it off at the knees, which is what members opposite—policies would do.

A Skills Summit that will focus on themes, our university and colleges have seen levels of enrolment, levels of funding, programs unprecedented, Mr. Speaker. Why is that? That's known as an investment, an investment in people, an investment in the future, an investment that business, small business in particular, can take advantage of. At the federal-provincial level, SMEs are the most important area of activity, be it research and development or be it training, and at the federal-provincial-interprovincial-interterritorial level, we understand that. And part of that is an investment in education. You don't cut doctors and think you can turn off the tap and overnight it'll come back on. That is very ill-guided.

* (16:10)

So it's not only hope and opportunities, Mr. Speaker, but its excellent in education—excellence in education. And upgrading rural high school shop classrooms to apprenticeship standards, I cannot enunciate strong enough how important that is to people outside of Winnipeg. Think of those families and those homes and those people that'll have the opportunity of their children to get the same kind of opportunity for apprenticeship in their communities as they could in a big, large urban centre. You can't value or calculate that.

Members opposite would put that in jeopardy with their ill-conceived notions of cut and hack and slash.

Mr. Speaker, 4 billion over 10 years on infrastructure—looking at the 80 bridges damaged by the flood and replacing them is a top priority; I go on and on.

It's hard to believe that members opposite could not support this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. It's a Throne Speech full of hope. It's a Throne Speech dealing with reality. It's a Throne Speech, I think, that will be supported by all Manitobans.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I urge members opposite to rethink their position. They have another chance. They don't have to follow the old-fashioned, the old Tory ways of cut and slash. There is a way of hope, a way of moving forward to maximize the talents and the energies of Manitobans, and I'd hope they'd look at that and move forward with us to build a better, a safer, a more vibrant Manitoba, a safer community, stronger families. And I would hope that they spend some time on the Throne Speech, and I could only urge them to reread it and talk about some of the significant hope and change that's contained in that Throne Speech, and urge members to perhaps reconsider their rigid—their rigidity and their old ways of doing things and join with us in building a bigger and a better and a finer Manitoba.

And, with that, Mr. Speaker, I—that's—I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. This is a great place, probably the greatest place in the world. But if you look at it with tinted glasses or through the rear-view mirror as members opposite are want to do, then you don't get the right impression. Better to look at Manitoba with the idea of the future, the future of the north, the future of rural Manitoba, the future of the city, the future of hope. And that's what inspires Manitobans and that's what's important to Manitobans, and I urge members opposite to rethink their position.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I'm actually delighted to be able to follow the member for—from Kildonan. I've certainly missed the opportunities of hearing his erratic comments and tirades, and we see he's still in fine form with being able to do that, including his over-the-top partisan comments which he seems to be able to add quite easily into all of his speeches. So it's interesting to hear his comments today.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

However, I don't think it's going to be any surprise to him that there is no way we are going to support a Throne Speech that did not deal with the child poverty in Manitoba, that did not deal with the food bank usage in Manitoba, that did not even

address the crime problems in Manitoba, leaving Manitoba the violent crime capital of Canada where gangs are flourishing. How can he expect us to support a Throne Speech where they leave out those critical components of what is happening in this province? How can we support a Throne Speech where we see many seniors still facing long wait times for long-term care beds? Those numbers are appalling in this province and this government is actually making it worse instead of better, despite of their rhetoric. How can we support a Throne Speech where this government is still allowing long waits in emergency rooms and where surgeries continue to be a long time for people to access and where wait-lists to get in to see a specialist are still not being adequately addressed?

How can that member realistically expect that we are going to support a Throne Speech that missed out on some of these absolutely critical things that are happening in this province right now? Not to mention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the debt and deficit problems, which I am going to get into in a moment.

I would like to also point out to the member that just finished making his comments too, he talked about taxpayer money, but he seems to forget that when he was talking about taxpayers' money, that it's his government that is putting taxpayer money at risk. You know, he was ridiculing our leader for talking about, you know, going into debt and putting his, you know, resources at risk. Well, that was his own personal money, and yet this minister goes off on his little tantrum, you know, talking about, well, see, you went into debt, but this minister seems to forget that what he's dealing with his taxpayers' money; it's not their money. They're supposed to be good stewards of the money, and that is not what is happening by this NDP government.

We are now seeing a reawakening of the old NDP and some of the legacies that old NDP governments have left this province, and that's what we're starting to see again. The NDP have tried to position themselves as the new NDP. Unfortunately, now we've seen them take a sharp left turn in this last year, and I am going to make more comments about that. But, certainly, we are not going to support a government and their Throne Speech and their financial mismanagement of this province by supporting what they're doing.

And as much as the minister probably would love us all to hold hands and sing Kumbaya, that's

not going to happen because that's not our job. Our job is to shine a light on the mistakes of this government, to hold this government accountable and to show where they can do better. That's our job and we fully intend to do it.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kildonan also talked about the opportunities that this Throne Speech presented. And I think he really missed talking about the lost opportunities of the last 13 years of this government. I don't think we would see Manitoba in such dire straits, whether it's in child poverty, in family services, in any of the justice areas, financial issues—any of those areas. I don't think we would see Manitoba mired in such problems if this government had indeed taken some opportunities and worked with them.

Those were lost opportunities, and it's the last 13 years where we've seen lost opportunities by this NDP government. They've had 13 years to address a lot of issues, and what do we see this government—and, you know, our leader put it very, very eloquently today, that we've got a government that must be tired because the only thing they can do is mire themselves in the past. That is not leadership that is inspiring to anybody in this province. It is a tired government, and as our leader pointed out, they're mentioning 13 or 14 times just within question periods, the Filmon government. Well, you know, and as our leader said, it's time for them to grow up. That's childish behaviour, and it is not what this province needs or deserves, on a go-forward basis, to make this province reach all of its potential.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to second the amendments put forward in the Throne Speech, and I'm very pleased to follow the inspiring comments also put forward by our leader in his speech today.

* (16:20)

I would like to say, too, that I feel very privileged as a member of this Legislature. I do take this role very seriously, and I am indeed indebted to the people of my constituency that put a lot of faith in me to represent them here in this Legislature, and it's nothing I take lightly. I very much admire the tenacity and the community spirit of Charleswood, and I like how Charleswood gets together to help other people when other people need help. Whether it's through our churches, our organizations, our businesses, we've got some fabulous community minded people in Charleswood, and I feel very inspired by them all the time. It really is a good

community to be part of. It's a great, spirited community. Not only do they help people when people need it, they also get together to celebrate and to look at what we can do to make our community better.

I'm very honoured to be involved right now as Charleswood is planning its 100th anniversary next year, and it's been fascinating working with the community volunteers as we are looking at the past hundred years of Charleswood and looking at the pictures when Charleswood had—and I'm told, millions of bison roaming through our area, where there were mink farms, where a lot of the people in our community helped to farm. We had a lot of farmland and, you know, a lot of great spirit through all of those years as Charleswood evolved.

It's a very different Charleswood today than it was over the last hundred years. It indeed has grown. And looking back over all of the pictures, whether it's of buildings or of people or of clothes they wore or of the activities in the community, it really makes me very proud to be part of that community that has, I think, as a community, worked hard to get us to where we are today, and when the community came together last—just this past summer, to start their deliberations on what to do for a hundred years of celebration, it started with eight people on the committee and then it went up to about 18 people and now we're probably in the vicinity of 30 people and growing in terms of the people that want to get together to help celebrate that community.

All of these people are hard-working community people. They work hard. Our seniors are very engaged. Our seniors have certainly paved the way for all of us and certainly deserve our respect for what they've done, respect at many levels including programs for seniors, looking at taxation levels for seniors, looking at health care for seniors, and I think we certainly owe them a lot.

So I'm really actually excited to work with this group of people as we're moving forward to start the many celebrations we're going to have next year as Charleswood becomes a hundred years old. We certainly are looking at the success, too, of Transcona's celebrations of their hundred years, too, and seeing how a community can really come together to enjoy their history.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to welcome back the table officers and the pages. It's always a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of people in this building.

I felt very honoured to recently stand in for our leader as I went to a long-term banquet and was able to bring forward our thanks to all of the people that worked in the building. And I have to say I didn't know there were that many. It's not a big number but sometimes we don't see everybody in this building, but it is a legislative family in this building that works very hard to make things come together and to make government in Manitoba and opposition in Manitoba work really well. So I want to say again to all of the people that work in offices in this building, and for the people of Manitoba, just to thank them for their long service, and some have been here, indeed, a long time and just to thank them. You know, we all appreciate what they do and maybe we don't see them often enough to say thank you, but we certainly do appreciate everything that they all do.

And I feel very privileged also to work with the caucus that I am working with. I look forward to working with our new leader. I want to also say that we've got great legislative staff and constituency assistants, and we look forward to doing the best that we can in this very privileged job that we have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now get into some of the comments I want to make about the Throne Speech, but maybe before I do that, I just want to make a comment about how disappointed I was during Remembrance Day services to hear the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Selinger) take a position—I think it may be the only position in Canada by a premier—to say that students don't have to attend services to remember the people that died fighting for our liberties and fighting for people to have religious freedom. And yet the Premier used religious freedom as the reason why students didn't have to pay particular attention and recognize the thousands of people that have gone to war and died for some very basic, basic—good way to live in this country.

And, on Remembrance Day, I spoke to a number of veterans who were actually quite appalled at the position that was taken, that felt very offended. I happen to be the daughter of a veteran. My uncle died in the war and I never got to know him. I have his King George medal at home in my home, but it was an uncle I never got to know at all.

My dad never talked about the war very much. He was in the air force. And to me, I have always grown up very respectful of veterans and what Remembrance Day stands for. So I can understand the comments of the veterans that have started to

pour out about the position this government took and this premier took on that issue of students not having to attend a service to remember those who gave their lives for our freedoms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very disappointed in the Throne Speech, but I have to say it was very predictable. We saw what was happening just before the Throne Speech where the government was out feeding the media some of the highlights that they wanted to put out there and trying to deflect from their failures. So it was so obvious, you know, what they were trying to do.

And then we hear the Throne Speech, and as I've already mentioned, there are glaring holes where this government did not address priorities of this province. And I have to say that the NDP have never really been a visionary government. I believe that they do just what it takes to just get by. To them—and it's becoming more and more about politics every year that they're in government. I think they're forgetting that they are there serving people, serving the public. We are public servants, and I think this government has forgotten their place in all of this.

When they start talking about the money as if it's their money, they seem to forget that they're the stewards of it. And I really think that the longer they're in there—and people do say that any government that's in too long does become arrogant, and certainly I think we're seeing some of that.

I would urge this government that it is time to aim higher. It is time to start to do the right things for people. Instead what we saw in the Throne Speech is a lot of self-congratulations. It was a cut-and-paste Throne Speech, as has been mentioned by our leader and by a lot of people that have made comment on this. The government really didn't put forward a vision. There were some glaring holes. There was a lot of patting on the back for things that they did. It just really shows a sign of a government that has become tired. It did not present a blueprint for the future at all, and what we are continuing to hear in the Throne Speech and in question period is 13 years of excuses, of broken promises and of failure. And it's very disappointing.

This government has had 13 years to deal with a lot of these issues. That's why it's interesting to hear the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) talk about some of the things he was talking about today, because he's certainly had 13 years to fix some of these problems. You know, it's something where

there has been a lot of missed opportunity by this government.

They have also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, taken us to a point—and I don't know if anybody has reached the point of wanting to call what's happening in Manitoba a fiscal cliff, but they've certainly created a financial position in this province that is something that is going to mortgage the future of the children of this province. When you have a government that has been so cavalier about their spending, when they have taken their own priorities rather than the priorities of Manitoba and mismanaged spending to the point that we have now seen our province being taken back into a deficit position—in 1999 there was no deficit. Manitobans worked really hard in those times, especially when the Martin Liberals at the time unilaterally made the decision to take—it was almost a billion dollars; it was probably about 800-and-some million dollars over a four-year period out of Manitoba's coffers. That's what the Filmon government had to deal with on top of the mess that Howard Pawley left them from the '80s.

*(16:30)

If this government wants to go back, we can go back to what Howard Pawley did and the debt that he created for this province. That's what the Filmon government had to contend with: a big debt mess and then what the Martin Liberals did to this province. And this government has squandered a lot of really good opportunities because they received the most equalization that we've seen in decades from the federal government. They are taking more money than almost any province—actually, it's Manitoba and Prince Edward Island are the two most reliant provinces in this whole country on federal transfer payments. They have made no attempt to stand on their own two feet. They're quite happy to have Manitoba being viewed as a welfare province.

And other provinces are starting to talk about it. They're not happy to see Manitoba take all this largesse and spend it on their pet projects while they're trying to struggle balancing their budgets, providing good quality programs, and instead this government takes all of that money and is able to take it and spend it on things that are pet issues for them. People are becoming offended by that, and instead of being good stewards of that money, they just keep their hand out for more. In fact, some members of this government have said, well, they're entitled to as much of that as they can get; that's their entitlement.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a wrong way to look at finances in this province. They have doubled the debt in 12 years. They've brought back a deficit that we never had, that Manitobans worked really hard to get out of by the late '90s. What have they done? Didn't take them long, but, again, nobody should be surprised. We've stood in this House year after year, warning what was going to happen. In fact, several times they laughed when we said: You can't keep doing this. This is not going to be good for Manitoba. And there was laughter coming from some members of the NDP who thought it was quite funny when they got these warnings that, at some point, something will have to change. You're going to hit a wall. Chickens come home to roost. And that's when they laughed.

Well, we've now got probably the highest debt in Manitoba's history. It is mortgaging the future of the youth in this province. And now we're hearing, after the last election, after the NDP promised no new taxes, where they broke that promise and brought in a hundred and eighty-four million dollars in new taxes, nine new taxes, now we're hearing from this government that they are not going to make any commitment today that they won't raise taxes again. They aren't doing all that they need to be doing to look at how to better manage their financial house. And the only way, then, that they're going to be able to move beyond where they are right now is they are going to be in a position of having to raise taxes.

And it was troubling today when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) would not indicate that he would not raise taxes, and he had many opportunities to answer that question and he didn't. So I imagine what we're seeing in the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a greater tax load for Manitobans. On top of paying the highest income tax west of Québec, we are a province, no matter what the rhetoric and spin coming from this government is, we are not that financially, you know, comfortable as taxpayers in this province. Not even close.

And so when they are handling money the way they are, increasing the debt, increasing the deficit, breaking their promise to balance the budget by 2014—they won that election in large part because they promised Manitobans to balance the budget by 2014.

My party realized that this government was really looking at things with rose-coloured glasses. But also I wouldn't be surprised if this government also knew how badly off they were financially but

were prepared to say anything to win that election. And if they didn't know how bad things were financially, then they're incompetent, and that's really where it ends up. They either knew and misled the public, or they knew—or didn't know and they're incompetent. This government has taken Manitoba down the road where Howard Pawley took this province. And what we're going to see by the time they're finished this term, Manitobans are probably going to be worse off than what they were like after the '80s when Howard Pawley did what he did to this province.

If there is a change in interest rates and interest rates rise, we're already paying a billion dollars a year in interest payments. Imagine what that could buy, the potholes it could fix, the number of MRIs it could provide in the province, the number of children that it could help, the poverty it could deal with. But, no, we have a government that has been so wild in their spending, so unfettered in their spending that they just kept borrowing more, spending more, bringing out the credit card. And now we've got a province, still a have-not province, although this government doesn't seem to let that bother them very much. There's no pride in that for them. They're just quite happy to have their hand out taking money from everybody else in Canada, taxpayers from other provinces funding this province. There's no pride in that government for what the potential of this province could be.

So they're going to continue down this road. They've broken—like promises that won them the election and our party, when we said it's going to be very difficult for the NDP to balance their budget by 2014, this party, the NDP still went out and said, no, we're going to do it. Two months ago the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province said we're on track, we're going to do it, nothing much has changed over the last year. What changed, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government would then turn around and on the day of the Throne Speech tell everybody we're no longer going to balance the budget?

They won the election on that and now they're turning the backs—their backs on the people that put them there because of that promise. Shame on them. And if they misled Manitobans, they owe an apology. If they're that incompetent, they don't deserve to be in government. And so do we think tax increases are coming? Yes, we actually do think that this government is going to do it again, and it's probably going to be sneaky backdoor taxes again.

And I imagine we're going to see some creativity again by this government in how they're going to try to weasel money out of hard-working taxpayers in this province.

And the other thing I would like to point out, and this speaks to their high spending, they have spent more than budgeted 11 times in 12 years. Well, of course, you're going to have a deficit when you are spending way more money than what you're taking in. And I can't imagine what some of their own household finances must be like if that's how they also carry on in their own homes. But when you spend more than budgeted 11 times in 12 years, of course, we're going to see a deficit, of course, we're going to see a debt, and it is going to continue to grow.

* (16:40)

And so I think Manitobans really are on the point of seeing more taxes going to be foisted on them. I don't think Manitobans are going to be very happy about it. Manitobans were livid when this government tried to get MPI involved in paying for some of their infrastructure bills. That's what a government is supposed to do, not MPI. They're not pothole fillers. This government has a job with infrastructure, and this government didn't do their job. Now they're looking for whatever little places they can go to try to increase their coffers. But the public is very, very upset that they would touch MPI, and I'm sure they certainly heard a lot about that themselves.

So, after the last Throne Speech, this government in the budget they've raised nine taxes and user fees. They've taken 300 million more out of the pockets of Manitobans. Three hundred million more, and I don't think they're going to stop there.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, when this government talks about balance and doing what is good for families, that is really just empty rhetoric. These—this NDP government is certainly doing their best to make it very, very hard for Manitobans to try to enjoy the full potential of this province, and then to not even address the basic personal exemption when we're almost the lowest in the country is shameful.

You know, we wonder why we have poverty as it is. We wonder why food bank usage is as it is, and it is no wonder, Mr. Speaker, when we see what this government is doing and taxing people that make just over \$8,000 and they don't see a problem with

that. They are, you know, and as our leader has put it, they've got their boots on the back of Manitoba's working poor, and this government turns around and taxes the working poor and doesn't want to help them out of that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we've got a tired government. They behave like a tired government. Their spin shows that they are a tired government. They aren't aiming high enough in the best interest of the people of this province, and I don't think they should be at all surprised that we are not going to support a Throne Speech that was as pitiful as that one was and doesn't even address some of the basic fundamental needs of this province, and they turn their back on that. So, no, we will speak in favour of our amendments but certainly not in favour of that Throne Speech, and ask the NDP government to aim higher. Thank you.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to once again rise in the House in response to the Throne Speech. I'd have to say I'm not at all tired, almost never actually, and I guess people in my world would say, please, God, let her get tired, but it doesn't usually happen, I admit it. So maybe a little bit during that last speech but just a titch.

A newly elected MLA last year, I vividly remember my first week here at the Manitoba Legislature, wandering these majestic hallways of marble, taking wrong turns, getting lost, not asking for directions. It might have been all those pictures of men that are on the walls rubbing off on me. I don't know, and now, Mr. Speaker, one year later my awe for this beautiful building has not lessened one bit, and I am no longer usually lost. Maybe once in a while on the third floor, but the place was built—*[interjection]*—yes, to be impressive. A symbol of substance. A building not for the present delight nor use alone but, oh, such as our descendants will thank us for, as one writer wrote many years ago. And it's also very good for one's health if you walked all the stairs up to the third floor frequently, and my year can be marked by the steps I've taken.

I've walked through my constituency because there is no more powerful way to connect than talking to people face to face on their streets, in their homes where they live, hearing their stories and their struggles and returning to the Leg. to share those ideas and concerns.

I've raised my daughter in Burrows and my constituency has been my home for over 20 years and I know it intimately. And I've discovered,

Mr. Speaker, that we have many beautiful backyards, gardens and mostly friendly pets in Burrows. During the summer I was so impressed by a particular home at 6 Abraham Bay, where the owner, Linda Lee [*phonetic*], had obviously put in many hours of loving work.

I'd like to thank, Mr. Speaker, all those people in Burrows who put in that effort to make it beautiful and to inspire pride in our community. Contrary to stereotypes, Burrows is full of warm, welcoming family homes and people who care about their neighbourhoods.

Both the privilege, Mr. Speaker, and the profound responsibility of now serving the people of Burrows has deepened my relationship with the place. It has character and I am pleased to say, as I walk through Burrows, I see the harmony of community and government, a government that has listened and connected and truly hears the voices of the people today, improving the quality of life tomorrow.

Having lived in Burrows for 20 years, Mr. Speaker, I can see around me the differences that this government has made, a government that's committed to keeping life affordable for all Manitobans and a government that cares deeply about protecting core services and front-line workers.

And, Mr. Speaker, what truly brings what government does to life, in my area, I think, are the amazing non-profits and volunteer organizations that exist in our communities. Organizations like NorWest and Keewatin/Inkster neighbourhood resource centre, a place that dynamically connects with our seniors in practical services like snow shovelling and car rides and daily phone calls.

Our seniors face many varied issues and I'm proud that this government is a leader in age-friendly initiatives and has looked at both the physical concerns of the aging, such as the Falls Prevention Strategy, but the financial, too, and has consistently continued to cut the maximum education property tax credit, putting more money in their pockets. And I'm also grateful that we're a government that looks to the future and plans ahead with 200 new personal care home beds in the works.

I'm also very excited, Mr. Speaker, by the influx of families moving back into the North End. And, as children's education is a major priority for our government, I've travelled from school to school in Burrows and I'm so impressed by the principals and

the teachers and the parent councils, and the level of community support that is given by our schools. I read books to kids during I Love to Read Month; attended Remembrance Day services; flipped pancakes in gyms, although we've discovered that is not my best skill—I'm pretty good at serving tables but, yes, they should keep me away from the pancakes; attending heritage days; Diwali celebrations; award ceremonies; Folklorama. Burrows is a diverse and exciting place to be.

And yesterday, I got to be out with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and Sheldon Kennedy at Andrew Mynarski School, Respect in the School program was being honoured. And I think it's so indicative of the kind of government that we are because we're not only thinking of the big huge, you know, billion-dollar things that we have to do, we do all those things as well, but also the little things, the smaller things like those kinds of programs like Respect in School.

I met a Burrows author en route one day, and she's written several books for children and trying to reach out to young about the issues she finds important, and one of those that she's written about is fighting bullying. No child should ever have to go to school with the fear in their stomachs of what it's going to be like if somebody's making fun of them or harassing them. And this Burrows author and this government both passionately believe if we connect with children early, they will have immeasurable intellectual benefits as they grow.

And that is why we're committed to keeping our K to 3 classroom sizes low, so we can reach children early and give them every advantage. I was very happy to be able to deliver a cheque not long ago to the Seven Oaks School Division superintendent to assist with reaching that goal and I'm proud to say that we are well on our way.

* (16:50)

Our government feels so strongly, Mr. Speaker, about a healthy start for children, that we certainly don't wait until they're born. We're working to ensure a healthy start for baby by providing prenatal assistance through the Manitoba Prenatal Benefit to help ensure that mom could be a healthy, well-fed mother passing those advantages on to her baby. And that is just one of the many ways that our government shows its commitment to improving the future of all Manitobans by improving the present for children.

Research, Mr. Speaker, has been very clear that experience-based brain development in the early years affects learning, behaviour and health throughout the life course. There's a strong case for focusing on the early years to break the cycle linking early adversity with negative outcomes. Child maltreatment and its associated outcomes can be reduced if specifically targeted intensive and sustained services are deployed, and our government is committed to those things.

Manitoba is, I believe, the only province in Canada to have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. I think I'm right. Am I right?

An Honourable Member: Hear, hear.

Ms. Wight: Okay. Its creation alone, I think, aside from the groundbreaking work it does, speaks to how important this government sees children. And I hope that, for the sake of all Canadian children, other provinces may one day catch up with that, because these initiatives, I believe, Mr. Speaker, cross all political boundaries. And I think we can all agree that Manitoba can only benefit from assisting children in our communities to reach their full potential.

Everyone, Mr. Speaker, deserves to be safe in their community. And during this past year our Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief) held forums all over Manitoba to listen to what people believe we should do to improve the safety of our neighbourhoods and to create a crime prevention strategy. And one thing that came out of that was the sports opportunity fund, which is another way our government continues to expand recreation opportunities so our youth have positive outlets. Having spent 16 years working with youth involved in crime, these programs are close to my heart.

Justice is also involved in creating creative solutions with things like the enhancement of partnerships to safer communities. But my favourite is the sale and property seized under Manitoba's Criminal Property Forfeiture Act. And I was able to attend that announcement, where the money taken out of the hands of criminals is put into the hands of both the police and victims of crime. You got to love it. These types of things all contribute to having a safe, strong community for my constituents and make me confident to be out in my constituency.

I am also very excited about the launch of an intensive crime reduction strategy to reduce violent

crime that's going to be starting in William Whyte neighbourhood.

Working with our youth is so important to a strong community, and in Burrows we have a program called Wayfinders, where I am pleased to say the Premier (Mr. Selinger) toured this summer. Wayfinders is located in our Elwick community in Watson Street area, and it's part of—the LIFT program has now moved in there, and we owe a debt to those people and to their many volunteers and mentors, including mentors from businesses. I was very excited, Mr. Speaker, to attend their first graduation this year of students who all exemplified the title Bright Futures, which is the banner under which Wayfinders operates. And I am proud that our government strives to overcome social economic barriers that may hold back our youth from the education they deserve.

At Wayfinders, part of the Bright Futures funding, volunteers work after school to help young people gain credits, receive tutoring, explore career options. Meeting the Premier yet again at the Gilbert Park Youth Co-op, where young people designed and implemented their own small business, we were further impressed by how these practical initiatives work. A government focused on what really matters to Manitobans.

And a trip over to Sisler High School, voted one of the top high schools in Canada, and then over to speak with young people as part of the Maples Collegiate in heritage days, has made my faith in young people of my constituency grow stronger and stronger.

So I invite all of you to walk with me through Burrows some time and experience the vibrancy and vigour of the many cultures that call the area home. The experience and the input of our immigrants is integral to our province's successes, and that's why a new program called Recognition Counts! was designed to help skilled newcomers remove barriers to getting Canadian certification. And I'm proud to be part of a government that listens and responds to the concerns of its citizens.

Recognition Counts! is a two-year pilot program that provides accessible low-interest loans to assist skilled immigrants to Manitoba with qualification recognition, upgrading and/or training needed for employment in the field for which they have education and experience obtained outside of Canada. The program serves individuals in regulated and non-regulated professions and trades and is

funded by the government of both Canada and Manitoba.

I'm also proud to say that we are a government strongly supportive of exciting business ventures, both large and small, in our province, and our Manitoba economy is steady and succeeding. I was recently in a delegation with some engineers who were very excited about the many developments going on in Manitoba and spoke about how Manitoba had clearly hung out an open-for-business sign. And so we're going to need the skilled labour force that's going to make us successful. Hence our target of adding 75,000 more workers to our labour force by 2020, and a skill summit coming this year will strategize how best to meet that goal.

And I'm also very excited about the expansion of Red River College: a new skilled trades and technology centre. And it is my hope that we will also start to see women really entering into the trades as well and taking advantage of the opportunities in that area.

Our innovative apprenticeship programs continue to improve, and this Throne Speech spoke to make it even easier for students to start an apprenticeship while in high school.

CentrePort Canada is an incredibly visionary work by the government which will help Manitoba, as we stated in the Throne Speech, capitalize on our economic, transportation and geographic advantages and seize new opportunities offered by the global economy. I'm very excited that we are a government that is so visionary, that we are looking not only next year or the year after that, but 20, 30, 50 years into the future, because that's what CentrePort does.

As I've said, Burrows is home for me and I'm proud to raise my daughter in a province that protects universal health care, promotes healthy choices and is expanding home care. We do have the most comprehensive home care program in the country, I believe, already, but I know that the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) is not going to rest there, so you can expect even more improvements to keep coming.

Manitoba women have the best access to radiation following lumpectomies and access the best lowest wait times for screenings and resolution outcomes after diagnosis.

Manitoba gives cancer drugs free to all patients, and as I knocked on doors this summer, how important that really is struck home, Mr. Speaker, as people with tears in their eyes asked me if I would be good enough to pass their thanks on to the Minister of Health. Having that burden and stress gone as they or their loved ones fight to recover is truly valuable. And with new patient safety quality rules coming to—into the fore, I can't imagine a better place to be living.

Of course, part of that, I have to admit, is because of football. My daughter and I rarely miss a game. And even this year, heartbreaking as it was, we were there. November is domestic violence prevention month, and a new strategy developed with province-wide public consultation involves men speaking out, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud that the Blue Bombers are part of that campaign.

One of my colleagues, the MLA for Fort Garry, attended another event that was geared to seeing men of our community step up and speak out on this issue. And I don't think we can stress how important that is if we ever expect to see change in this area. So, as the men stand up, that change, I believe, will come. It's a time the focus shifted to why the violence is being committed.

Our government has made Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live, work and raise a family. Manitobans enjoy the lowest combined rate for electricity, heating, auto insurance, and I'm particularly glad about the Autopac, because now that the snow is falling or at least fell—maybe it's going to go away, I don't know—I'm going to walk a little bit less.

And our government is also—was really innovative in the energy efficiency plan: Power Smart: a Pay As You Save Financing Program. And I know a lot of work, Mr. Speaker, went into coming up with that plan and it's just—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Burrows will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 21, 2012

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