

**First Session - Fortieth Legislature**

**of the**

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES**

**and**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Fortieth Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin	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
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
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MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	PC
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
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PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
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SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
	Kirkfield Park	
	St. Norbert	

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 25, 2011

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

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

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PETITIONS

##### Newborn Universal Hearing Screening Program

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

And this is—these are the reasons why I am presenting this petition:

More than three in 1,000 newborns are born with educationally significant hearing loss, but Manitoba's current hearing screening program does not allow for every child to be screened.

Without early detection, children are more likely to develop poor speech and language skills and also encounter social and emotional difficulties, which lead to poor academic performance.

Early diagnosis of hearing loss in newborns can make a considerable difference in a child's development because newborns can be provided with effective programs and support that foster developmental success.

While most other developed countries and many Canadian provinces have a newborn screening program, Manitoba is lagging behind. There are only a handful of screening programs in the province while all other newborns can only be tested if they have a risk factor—have risk factors of hearing loss or if parents specifically request a test.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors to consider implementing a universal hearing screening program accessible to parents of all newborns in Manitoba.

This petition is signed by D. Richardson, D. Mysleiki, C. St. Arnauld and many, many other Manitobans.

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

##### Mount Agassiz Ski Area

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services to area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenues that help pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in the local and provincial economies.

To request that the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help

develop a plan for a viable, multi-season recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

This petition is signed by L. Debevaker, K. Hufley, J. Sigardson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

### Coulter Bridge

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

And these are the reasons—this is the background to this petition as is follows:

During the flood—record flood of 2011, the increased volume of water flowing through the Souris River caused the Coulter bridge on 251—Highway 251 to buckle and become unstable in late June.

The Coulter bridge is used by agricultural producers, local businesses and area residents. It is especially important to the region's multi-million dollar oil industry.

Motorists are now forced to use a lengthy detour on a gravel road not meant for heavy vehicle traffic. The increased presence of industrial vehicles on this gravel road has created considerable safety concerns, especially for school buses. The detour also results in increased costs and lost time for motorists.

The provincial government has indicated it has no plans to establish a temporary bridge and construction of a new bridge is expected to take several years.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the serious safety concerns and adverse socio-economic impact caused by the loss of the Coulter bridge and to consider making it an urgent priority to restore traffic across the Souris River either by a temporary or a permanent bridge.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by S. Kernaghan, R. Davies, L. Forsyth and many, many other Manitobans.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the attention of members to the public gallery where we have 28 grade 11 students from the Springs Christian Academy under the direction of Mr. Brad

Dowler. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the honourable First Minister.

On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you here to your Manitoba Legislature.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Economic Forecast Government Expenditure Plans

**Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition):** This morning the Bank of Canada downgraded economic growth projections for both 2011 and 2012. We just note, from the Speech from the Throne and the pre-election and election spending announcements, that this Premier and government have promised a lot of new spending.

Our question is simple, Mr. Speaker: Where does the Premier plan to get the money?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** It was just a few short weeks ago that the Leader of the Opposition was promising far more spending than the government is currently offering today, and so he may—he might wish to answer his own question.

I—we are aware of the federal forecasts and the forecast for growth in the economy globally. What we have here in Manitoba is we have a plan to grow our economy, including building hydro, and when we grow our economy through our own initiatives, we will have the resources to fund things like health care and education and opportunities for young people.

\* (13:40)

**Mr. McFadyen:** Well, the Premier needs to get his attack line sorted out. Today he's saying that we are this party of spending, and the election campaign he said we were going to cut. He can't decide from one day to the next—from one day to next which phony attack he's going to use, but, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: The Bank of Canada is saying the economy is not going to grow at the rate originally projected. This Premier already forecasted an increase of \$203 million in spending. He's added to that a further increase of \$413 million in new annual spending through the election campaign at the same time as he says he's only going to increase spending by 2 per cent. His numbers don't add up.

I'll ask him again: Where's he going to get the money?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker it bears remembering that it was true that on June 17th of '010 they did try to cut a half a billion dollars out of the budget, and it's also true within 14 months of that they completely reversed themselves and wanted to run deficits for up to eight years. That was the policy of the member opposite.

There were announcements this morning on the future growth of the economy. There was also an announcement from Standard & Poor's which reaffirmed Manitoba's credit rating as AA stable in Manitoba. And among the comments they made is Manitoba is a well-diversified economy with a lengthy history of solid performances. We plan to keep those solid performances going. We plan to educate more young people, give them job opportunities.

Just this morning, I was at Westwood Collegiate to announce the Manitoba Mentors Program. The first 500 mentorship opportunities are available to young people in Manitoba. They will know what businesses are doing in Manitoba. They will see the career possibilities, and we will grow the Manitoba economy with our younger generation.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, I would think now that he's done campaigning he should be ready to be candid with Manitobans about the position of the government and the Province in terms of its financial position, and the financial concerns are very significant.

The Bank of Canada has now downgraded economic growth forecasts for 2011 and 2012 as of this morning. The reality is that the Premier has already made promises to increase spending by \$413 million annually on the budget. He has increased spending by over 5 per cent a year over the past number of years, and yet he says that he's going to balance the operating budget inside of three years.

With a spending pattern that he is on, Mr. Speaker, and with federal transfers at all-time highs, debt at an all-time high, the Manitobans need to know: Where is the money coming from? Is it going to come through cuts to programs in the future or increases in taxes? Why not come clean today?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, it was just yesterday that the member opposite was misleading the Legislature with respect to Manitoba Hydro, when they said very clearly in the memo that he refused to table, that they would have the in-service dates protected.

Now the Standard & Poor's has said the following: The Province has healthy liquidity levels owing to a large pool of sinking funds. The Province's financial management is strong in transparency and disclosure. Debt management and related policies are prudent and risk-averse, and the Province's political and management culture is small "c" conservative and supported by a capable and experienced administration.

Mr. Speaker, why can't the member opposite just acknowledge what the international bond rating agencies are acknowledging? We have a good plan for the economy. We will manage it well as we go forward.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

All of the things that he's saying today, Mr. Speaker, are the same things that he said about Crocus just before it collapsed. These are all the same rating agencies that said the same things about Enron just before it collapsed.

And the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that he's getting record levels of transfers from the federal government, more than \$4 billion a year. The national economy forecasts have been downgraded. He's increasing spending by more than 5 per cent a year. He's already committed to an additional \$413 million in new spending at the same time as he increased the debt of Manitoba last year by a billion dollars.

Those numbers are real, Mr. Speaker. They're on a trajectory toward financial challenges down the road. It's not sustainable to increase debt and rely on the federal government forever.

I want to ask the Premier: Where is his plan to ensure Manitobans that this is a sustainable financial plan and that he will not increase taxes on the families of Manitoba?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, our debt as a portion of the economy is less than when the members opposite were in office. It was 33 per cent under them; it's 24 per cent under us. We have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund of over \$500 million and, most importantly, we have a go-forward plan to grow the economy.

The member opposite wanted to stall Manitoba Hydro. He wanted to mothball it. We're going to build it. We're going to build it in an environmentally sustainable way.

We're going to work with our small and medium-sized businesses. We said that we would reduce and eliminate taxes on the first half a million dollars of income for small businesses. We're the only political party that committed to that. We'll follow through on that as we move forward and the Manitoba economy prospers just like it has in the last decade.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Mr. Speaker, the only government that's mothballing anything, according to their internal memos, is this NDP government. That's the memo that was released yesterday to mothball major projects at Manitoba Hydro.

And again, what goes on internally within the government is one thing; what he tells the public of Manitoba is the exact opposite. And that's what people are getting to know about this NDP leader.

And it's time for him to recognize the fact that he has increased the debt by a billion dollars last year. He's increasing spending by over 5 per cent a year, Mr. Speaker, and he's going on making further expenditure commitments that add up to over \$400 million a year at a time when the Bank of Canada is warning governments that they need to be prudent in terms of their spending.

I want to ask this Premier, who has a history of raising taxes: Which taxes are going up on Manitoba families to meet his balanced budget target?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we have reduced taxes every single year we have been in office, and the member opposite knows that.

The property tax credit in the spring budget went up another \$50, \$700, over \$1,000 for all seniors. We made that commitment. We followed through on it, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest tax rate for small business in the country: zero taxes for small business in the country, the lowest in the country. The corporate tax rate went from 17 down to 12 per cent. Remember the capital tax? Zero in Manitoba. It used to be over 10 per cent when members opposite were in office. We've—the education support levy eliminated in Manitoba.

Our record on keeping Manitoba affordable and competitive on taxes far exceeds anything accomplished when the member opposite was offering policy advice to the former government.

**Mr. McFadyen:** Well, and again, Mr. Speaker, the campaign is over, and it might be a good time for the

Premier to be candid with Manitobans about setting expectations at a level that are actually attainable over the coming few years, that Manitobans would expect him to be candid, to not sugar-coat the reality of the fiscal position that the government has today and will have going forward.

He has entered into agreements and made spending commitments that are very significant in terms of increases in spending. He's promised an added \$413 million in added operating expenditures per year. In the past, he expanded the base of the PST. The land transfer tax payable today is higher than it's ever been. He introduced a milk tax, Mr. Speaker, in the budget just last year.

I want to ask the Premier if he can guarantee to the people of Manitoba no tax increases on any tax or fee or other charge controlled by the provincial government over the coming years in order to ensure that Manitoba families are protected against his reckless overspending, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we have said we will keep Manitoba one of the most affordable places in the country to live, and we will do that.

One of the election commitments we made is we said that home heating, electricity and auto insurance rates as a bundle will be the lowest in the country over the next four years. That is part of the Manitoba affordability advantage that we will deliver on for Manitobans. We said we will do it. We will follow up and do it. That's the kind of commitment we've made.

\* (13:50)

And even other provinces to the west of us that rank the provinces on the cost of living, they rank Manitoba as No. 1, in the province of Saskatchewan. They've done that for the last three years, they've ranked us No. 1. We've always said we'll stay in the top three. We appreciate the government of Saskatchewan ranking us No. 1.

Maybe the member could get up and acknowledge reality. When other provinces can do it, when Standard & Poor's can do it, when they can acknowledge just how diversified and steady the Manitoba economy is, perhaps the member opposite could stop trashing the Manitoba economy and accept that it has performed above the Canadian average.

### **Gun Control Need for Integrated Weapons Unit**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House offer our congratulations to the federal Conservative government for tabling today legislation to eliminate the long-gun registry. This legislation was born under the Liberals and nurtured by the NDP and it not only wasted billions of dollars, it made criminals out of duck hunters and farmers. We know that the way to reduce gun crime is to go after those who are using guns in the commission of crime and also the illegal weapons, not law-abiding citizens.

Will this Minister of Justice look toward the future in creating an integrated weapons unit that will go after those who are actively using guns in the commission of a crime, like gang members and others who are trading illegal weapons, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I'm glad to hear about the long-gun registry. As the member opposite knows, our government has always opposed the long-gun registry, and, of course, by direction to our Crown attorneys, there has never been a charge laid. In fact, not one cent of public money has ever been spent on the long-gun registry in the province of Manitoba.

In terms of protecting our citizens, of course, the member opposite again has to acknowledge that he stood in his place year after year after year as we've added more resources for police in the city of Winnipeg and across the province of Manitoba, he stood in his place. He's voted against more resources for specialized Crown units to make sure that individuals who used guns in the commission of crime get the appropriate penalties.

He and his Conservative opponents who pretend to be tough on crime vote against each and every one of those improvements, and again we'll see in budget time in the spring, Mr. Speaker, when this government brings in more investments, more good ideas to take on criminals, we'll see how the member for Steinbach and each of the Conservative member votes when they have that chance once again.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg is the violent crime capital of Canada. We did not support that and we'll never support that, unlike members of the NDP. Clearly, the federal Conservative government gets it, but this NDP government doesn't get it.

I'm asking the Minister of Justice whether or not he'll look towards creating a provincial integrated weapons unit to ensure that those who are using guns in the commission of crimes and trading illegal weapons have an enforcement unit on the street in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba to go after them and to look at using prosecution policies to ensure that the most—the strongest—the strongest sentences are always recommended for those who use guns in the commission of a crime, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Swan:** Well, the member again wants to speak about the federal government. Quite frankly, we're very pleased the federal government has listened to the NDP government here in Manitoba time and time again as we provide advice on the way the laws in Ottawa can be changed to give people more confidence in the justice system and more protection on our streets. And, of course, thanks to my predecessors and also my own department, of course, thanks to the NDP government in Manitoba, they've listened to eliminate the two-for-one remand credit which wasn't giving people confidence in our system. I'm glad they listened to Manitoba on cracking down on gun crimes, including and making it harder for people who use guns in committing crimes to get bail. We think that's a good thing.

And again, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to crime and safety, this should not be a partisan issue. I really am not concerned which flavour of government is in Ottawa. We're going to keep pushing for laws to make sure that the—that people in Manitoba have confidence in this system and also laws that provide safety for the people of Manitoba. Whichever party may be in power in Ottawa, New Democrats here in Manitoba will stand up for stronger laws.

### **Communication Systems Rural Manitoba Emergency Coverage**

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** Mr. Speaker, in early October, the RMs of Stuartburn, Piney, La Broquerie and Reynolds were hit by wildfires. Thanks to the hard work of more than 160 firefighters and provincial water bombers, the situation was controlled.

The fires revealed serious shortcomings in the communications system. The FleetNet radio system became overloaded. Land lines were temporarily down when power went out. The lack of cellphone coverage made it difficult to co-ordinate firefighting efforts and to tell people to evacuate.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible outline this government's strategy to tackle the serious communication challenges in southeastern Manitoba?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** I want to welcome the member to the House. I certainly appreciate, as a new member, he will forgive me if I do say there was a time when we could actually directly influence the provision of cellphone service. We did at one time publicly own the phone company.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that, even though it's now privately owned, I share the concern. In fact, I thought one of the best examples, in addition to what we saw in the southeast, was when during the flood I could not reach the reeve of the RM of Portage, who lives about five kilometres outside of Portage, by cellphone because there's inadequate cellphone coverage in that area.

So coming out of this experience this year, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be meeting with our cellphone providers and urging to improve service both in southeast Manitoba, in and around Portage and elsewhere in the province.

**Mr. Smook:** Mr. Speaker, we're very fortunate nobody was hurt in these fires. In cases like this, it is essential that emergency officials, local residents and others in harm's way can access communication system like cellphones.

On October the 10th, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) met with the RM of Stuartburn council and indicated he would appoint someone to act as a liaison between government and council on this important matter.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible assure stakeholders in southeastern Manitoba there will be an action plan so that communication problems we saw during this month's wildfires won't be repeated?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier, I think, spoke for all of us in saying that, first of all, we were dealing with a very difficult situation. I, by the way, took the time to go out there myself. I saw the impact of the fires, and I come from an area of the province where we know what forest fires are about.

What's very clear out of any emergency situation is what you do is you review what happened. There's some exceptional circumstances

in southeast Manitoba. The member's pointed to one of the key problems, which is communication, and I want to stress again, while we may not be in the position of being able to directly provide cellphone service like we once did, Mr. Speaker, as EMO Minister, and as the Premier indicated, we'll be working with municipalities, with people in that area and the private sector to improve communications in the future.

### **Lake Manitoba Flooding Environmental Impact**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, given the size of the flood-related disaster on Lake Manitoba, people will be impacted for some time to come.

However, we've heard very little about the flood's environmental impact. Delta Marsh, which is a World Heritage marsh, has been irrevocably changed. Several species of plants found only on Lake Manitoba ridge are in danger of being greatly reduced or eliminated. Also, the piping plover, an endangered species found almost exclusively on Lake Manitoba sand beaches, have been severely impacted.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government's plan to help restore Lake Manitoba environment to as close to normal as possible?

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Mr. Speaker, we have long been working with the scientific community, both within Manitoba and beyond, around the water issues in Manitoba.

We have a wetland restoration policy and we are working, in fact, with Gordon Goldsborough, who, of course, runs the Delta station. He has been monitoring the Delta Marsh since long before this spring's event and continues to monitor them, and we continue to work with him because we want to restore not only that wetland, Mr. Speaker, but other wetlands throughout the province of Manitoba.

**Mr. Wishart:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has several times referred to the Assiniboine River flood as the largest natural disaster Manitoba has ever seen.

The receding waters on Lake Manitoba are revealing considerable debris, including broken glass, propane tanks, building material and people's personal possessions. There is also rotting vegetation, dying trees, saline patches and black



slime along the shoreline. The cleanup will likely take years.

Mr. Speaker, given these significant impacts, can the minister provide a clear timeline for addressing the environmental effects of the flood? What is the plan to deal with this issue?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures):** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, members opposite should understand one thing: When it comes to dealing with floods in Manitoba, there are various ministers. In fact, everyone in this government is part of our flood response working with Manitobans.

And I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that we have done a number of things in around Lake Manitoba, and I want to put on the record that we're having tremendous success right now in the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin construction, a diversion channel, just an incredible effort, incredible mobilization by our contractors, by various different communities.

But as we move very much into flood recovery stage—recognizing, of course, we're still fighting the flood—one of the key areas we're going to be doing is working with the municipalities and with individual homeowners in and around Lake Manitoba and other affected areas in terms of the cleanup.

I want to stress, though, that we're still dealing with the flood situation on Lake Manitoba. I know the member knows that, and at this same point that we're dealing with this, we're planning ahead for recovery. It's going to be a difficult, challenging process and a difficult time here in Manitoba, but by working together we've made significant inroads in dealing with the flood.

### **Lake Manitoba Flooding Government Property Buyouts**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Some of the landowners and other property owners around Lake Manitoba say they've hit their limit when it comes to the flooding. They are stressed out, burned out and now they simply want to get out with some dignity. Because of the intentional flooding around the lake, they are also being told the value of their property has declined. Earlier this year, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and others indicated that buyouts were an option.

Will the Premier indicate whether buyouts are still an option, and if so, will they be consistent with fair market values prior to the 2011 flooding?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** The area in which we've had some significant contact with producers in terms of buyouts is, of course, around the Shoal lakes area where we have been meeting with producers. We have been talking about the value of their land. We are hooking people up with assessors that could look at the market value of the land that we're dealing with, and we're, I think, Mr. Speaker, moving very quickly to make sure that those producers who are negatively impacted by the ever-increasing diameter of the Shoal lakes will be treated fairly.

**Mr. Briese:** Mr. Speaker, deadlines are fast approaching for programs related to the Lake Manitoba flooding; however, only about 20 per cent of the flooded properties have actually emerged from the flood waters. It will, in all likelihood, take three to five years to rehabilitate these properties to their pre-flood condition. The people around Lake Manitoba were flooded to protect others. They did not cause the flood. They deserve some clear direction from this government about what the future holds.

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP government commit today to covering the ongoing costs of rehabilitating the cropland, ranches and other properties that were damaged by this man-made flooding of Lake Manitoba, or will this uncertainty continue?

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, there's a few things that are very certain. One, we announced a building and recovery program. That was clear when the Premier and I announced that back in May. We made it clear we weren't going to just walk away from the ongoing needs of farmers in terms of recovery of their land.

The other thing that is very certain is that we're working very hard to make sure that that channel is completed on time and as quickly as we can so that we minimize the amount of time it takes for farmers to recuperate and recover their land.

So, as the minister has said earlier, we are still working to fight this flood, and we're working to make it so that the recovery is all that much easier to endure as well. We think that's in the best interests of Manitoba producers.

### Health-Care Services Procedure Wait Times

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the wait times for MRI scans are now 13 weeks, which is more than double what they were, at five weeks, in 2007. Wait times for ultrasound scans average 10 weeks, double what they were, five weeks, in 2009. Wait times for hip replacements are now 19 to 39 weeks depending on where you are in Manitoba, up from 12 weeks in 2000. Wait times for knee replacements are 20 to 52 weeks now, up from 15 weeks in 2000.

The longer this government is in power, the longer the wait times for many procedures. The government has done so poorly, in fact, that it is putting the very future of public medicare at risk.

I ask the Premier: Why has this government been so incompetent, and when is he going to manage things and bring in the major changes that are needed to improve?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite because he will recall that he was a member of the federal Cabinet when they cut money for health care by over 30 per cent in the province of Manitoba as well as every other jurisdiction in Canada, and, combined with the decade we had in the '90s, we've been in a major program of recovery.

Wait times—the wait times agreement negotiated with the federal government, Manitoba has the lowest wait times for cancer care treatment. It has among the lowest times for cardiac treatment, and in this election we committed to more MRIs. When we first came into office, there were less than 10,000 MRIs done in the entire province in a year. Last year, there were about 59,000 MRIs done in Manitoba, and we have committed to a new MRI in west Winnipeg, a new MRI in Selkirk and a new MRI, the second one only in the history of the province, in Dauphin, Manitoba, which complements the first one which was ever done in Brandon, Manitoba.

We have many very focused investments which will continue to make health care even better in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the wait times for MRIs have gone up and up because this government's management has gone down and down. At the same time as the Premier is failing to improve the wait times for MRIs and other areas, his government has

increased overall expenditures from \$2.3 billion up to more than \$5 billion, notably on the backs of a lot of extra money from Liberal governments in the Ottawa. In fact, I would notice that the poor management under this government has given us now more than 300 managers in the WRHA and more than 100 directors.

I ask the Premier: Why is it that so much money is being spent, so many managers and directors are being hired, and yet the wait times still continue to go up?

**Mr. Selinger:** And I thank the member again for the question. As you know there is a national standard for the amount of money spent on administration, corporate administration, in the province. The last reported amount was about 2.91 per cent. There's another report coming out today. I believe we'll even be able to do better than that on the amount of money that has been reduced for administration as the total proportion of the spending for the corporate costs.

But I remind the member again, we've made very significant improvements in the number of MRIs that are done in Manitoba. For every one MRI done in 1998-99 we're doing six now. That's a six times increase in the access to MRIs, and we're the only political party in this election that committed to adding more MRI technology in the province of Manitoba.

As I said earlier, we'll have the second one outside of Winnipeg for the first time in history in the community of Dauphin where we saw when we were in that community some specialized people there that use MRI technology, radio—people that specialize in radiology. They were thrilled by having that opportunity there, and they made a commitment to live and work in Manitoba and provide those services there.

Those are the kinds of investments that make a difference and we—

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, of course it doesn't add up when this government spends and spends and the wait times just get longer and longer. I've here a list of approximately five and a half thousand people in the WRHA earning more than \$50,000 a year. It's an extensive list. It's no wonder that it's a little difficult sometimes to get things done when you have to have agreement of more than 300 managers.

I mean, just imagine this, the WRHA has to have a concert hall to get all their managers together to make a decision. It's no wonder by the time you get a decision conditions have changed and you have to have a new decision all over again.

The fact is that I would ask the Premier why he adopted in the first place the Conservative regional health authority model, which is clearly not working for him or for Manitoba as wait times are getting longer and longer and longer.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, not only do we have an MRI in Brandon and another one planned for Dauphin, but we also have one in the Boundary Trails hospital, which was a hospital promised by the member-leaders of the opposition. Never built. We built it in our first term in office, and we've put an MRI out there as well.

\*(14:10)

The CIHI, the Canadian Institute of Health Information, ranks Manitoba's health-care administrative costs for corporate costs as the second lowest in the country—second lowest in the country—at around 2.9 per cent. There'll be further information I—coming out as early as today which we believe will show that the health-care costs, as a total proportion of spending, the corporate costs will be even lower than they were the last time they were reported.

So we're continuing to invest money in front-line health care. More than 2,000 nurses will be hired in the next four years, more than 250 more doctors to add to the 500 doctors we've added already and the 3,000 nurses we've added already. We've put more people on the front lines in health care than ever in the history of the province over the last decade, and we will continue to ensure there are people on the front lines in the health care serving all Manitobans, including family physicians.

#### **Youth Programs Government Initiatives**

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, we know that supporting young people with positive activities and programs help to make for brighter futures and healthier communities. That's why our government is committed to investing in innovative and effective programming for youth across the province.

Can the Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors update the House on today's exciting

announcement on programs for young people in Manitoba?

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors):** I was pleased to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) on a very, very positive announcement at Westwood Collegiate here today. We talked about the Work2it program, which is a program that provides good support for people, youth who are facing multiple personal barriers to training and employment.

We also announced the new Making a Difference grant, and what that does is provide small grants to schools, to development and implement social justice and community development projects for their schools and in their communities. And we also talked about the expansion of the new Manitoba Mentorship Program. That's a three-year project to make sure that people, young people have a connection to their community and others.

It's—that goes with the other host of programs: The Green Team; the WASAC programs; the YMCA; the Boys and Girls Club, which is actually focusing on keeping twenty to twenty-five thousand kids busy, focused and supported in our community. That's what we believe in government. We support that, and I hope that sometime the members opposite may support a positive building-bridges future for all people.

#### **Newborn Hearing Screening Programs Government Support**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, hearing loss is one of the most congenital disorders affecting more than three in every 1,000 newborns, but about half of those affected have no obvious risk factors.

Seventeen-year-old Hannah Brown is a product of parents who had to search out for the resources for their child with a hearing loss. Hannah has shared her personal story and opinions with many of us in this Chamber. She has said, and I quote: I want babies to be screened when they are born so that none of their potential is wasted. The earlier you are diagnosed, the sooner you can start to learn how to listen, hear and speak, which leads to better language development at an earlier age.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) please explain to the House why, to date, there has been no province-wide universal

newborn hearing screening programs for babies born in this province?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** I thank the member for the question.

As we have discussed in this House before, we know that we are working on developing universal newborn hearing screening here in Manitoba. We know that programs are already established in the Brandon, Assiniboine, North Eastman and Burntwood regional health authorities. And, of course, as I've stated earlier, it is our intent to roll out this particular screening across Manitoba so that, indeed, as the individual the member has referenced desires and hopes, that we have this kind of screening for all newborn babies here in Manitoba.

We know that there was no universal hearing screening program when we began our journey in office. We are working towards a target of this program across Manitoba. We're committed to do that in addition to adding other services for children that are living with hearing difficulties here in Manitoba.

**Mrs. Rowat:** In May of this year, the Canadian Paediatric Society published a position paper in pediatric and child health. The author, Dr. Patel, said, and I quote: The ability to accurately detect hearing loss in newborns and to re-establish hearing is one of the major advances in pediatrics in the last 20 years. End quote.

A comprehensive and linked system of screening, diagnosis and intervention is needed. Manitoba is lagging behind, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba has rehabilitation programs currently in place for babies and children once detected, but no province-wide universal hearing screening. With universal newborn hearing screening, the rehabilitation programs will be more effective.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau) help Manitoba become a leader in this area and create a provincial-wide, universal newborn hearing screening program in Manitoba?

**Ms. Oswald:** I will remind the member that it was indeed this government that funded the launch of the I HEAR program in Brandon as a pilot, and the program is indeed establishing a universal newborn hearing program, one program, one RHA, at a time.

We are taking this approach in a balanced way as we add other screening programs outside of hearing to our complement of services. And with a tandem mass spectrometry, a piece of equipment that's in place in Manitoba, we're now doing many more screenings for individual babies than Manitoba has ever done before.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to alert the House that it was a decision of our government to fund cochlear implant surgery here in Manitoba for the first time and it was just this month that that very surgery was performed.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Actually, other provinces were already refusing to do implants within our—with Manitobans. So I think the—Madam Minister should be very aware of what the challenges were and we still have at least a two-year waiting list for individuals to get the implants.

On April 28th, 2011 the Minister of Health said, and I quote: We know very well that when this kind of situation can be detected early, that interventions can be put into play there—they—that are the best interests of the child.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from Hannah Brown, a young Manitoban with hearing loss. We have read position papers by the Canadian Paediatric Society calling on provinces to implement a province-wide universal hearing screening program. And we have statements made in this House by the Minister of Health confirming the need for early intervention as being in the best interests of the child.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government wanting to delay a child's social and academic development by not implementing a province-wide universal hearing screening program? What are we waiting for?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said twice before and I would reiterate, we are indeed rolling out a universal screening program one RHA at a time in addition to adding, for the first time in Manitoba's history, cochlear implant surgery.

In addition, as I mentioned, when we look across the complement of screening available for newborn babies, Manitoba is now in possession of tandem mass spectrometry which provides province-wide screening for Manitoba newborns for an additional 44 disorders that Manitoba has never screened for before. So, in addition to moving across the province

with universal newborn hearing screening, we're doing those screenings on an additional 44 disorders.

We're doing surgery for children and adults that we've never done before concerning cochlear implants. We're building our health-care system by providing specialists and nurses and doctors, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite were deciding that they wanted to balance the books on the back of Manitoba's children. That's not our way.

### **Cattle Industry Producer Concerns**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Yesterday, federal Minister Gerry Ritz, released a report of the Federal Market Access Team showing that Canadian beef exports to Russia have increased by 328 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we wonder why the NDP government continues to hamper Manitoba producers' access to these markets. The federal government has failed miserably at two attempts to secure a federally inspected beef plant in Manitoba. They've taxed the Manitoba beef producers for five years. They've had nothing to show for the millions of dollars they've spent except a pile of broken cement on a vacant lot. The industry wants a cattle tax ended but the government refuses to listen to them.

Mr. Speaker, when can the Manitoba producers expect this NDP government to end a cattle tax and to finally deliver the often promised slaughter plant?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, ever since the month of May, our friends across the way have looked actively for ways that they could side with their federal cousins in Ottawa instead of standing up for the Manitoba producers.

\*(14:20)

And here they go again, Mr. Speaker. Once again, whether it's the Wheat Board, where they totally turtled—they totally put their heads in the sand for the last months—whether it's—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. It is very difficult, as Speaker, to hear the answer that I'm sure the member wants to hear. If there was a breach of the rule, you'd want me to rule on that, so I ask for your

co-operation of all honourable members in making sure that the Speaker can hear the comments that are being made.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, to continue.

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Speaker, whether it's the Wheat Board and your absolute failure to stand up for Manitoba farmers, whether it was this—that \$10 million—\$10 million—that the federal government callously pulled out of the cattle industry here a few months ago and put into the hog industry, you've turtled again across the way. Again, you didn't stand up for Manitoba farmers. Now, they're totally letting the federal government off the hook on a mustering fee that would help cattle producers around the Riding Mountain National Park. Time—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### **13th Field Battery 140th Anniversary**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate the 13th Field Battery of the 26th Field Artillery Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery on celebrating their 140th anniversary. The weekend-long celebration began on Friday, October 14th, 2011, at the Portage armouries and concluded Sunday, October 16th.

The 13th Field Battery was founded on October 13th, 1871, soon after the Red River Rebellion and the Fenian raids. The battery was present at the signing of Treaty 4, and later took part in the 1885 Red River Rebellion, the First World War, the Second World War and the conflict in Afghanistan. Over half of those soldiers currently serving in the 13th Field Battery have completed tours in Afghanistan, and many will deploy in the near future.

The formal mess was held the evening of Saturday, October 15th, 2011, brought together soldiers who manned the guns in wars past and present, and those who attended were given the opportunity to share stories and talk about what changed, and more importantly, what hasn't. Sergeant Mark Wilson, the event's main organizer, deserves particular congratulations for his ensuring a well-attended anniversary weekend.

On behalf of all Manitobans, I wish to honour the 13th Field Battery on this momentous occasion

for their steadfast service to our province and country during the last 140 years. I would also like to solemnly acknowledge those members of the 13th Field Battery who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Clarence Edward Smith**

**Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas):** Mr. Speaker, on October 24, 2011, a northern community lost a valuable community leader, and I rise today to pay him tribute. Clarence Edward Smith passed away at home with his family by his side, after serving as the mayor of Cross Lake for the past 15 years. He worked diligently to support and strengthen the community he loved, and he will be sorely missed.

Clarence was born on October 26th, 1929, in Island Lake, Manitoba, and as a young man he worked in Ilford on the tractor train and as a firefighter. He married Lillian Bell on January 17, 1951. Together they raised nine children and were married for 60 years.

The same year he married Lillian, Clarence joined the Hudson Bay Company in Oxford House. He was soon transferred to Sandy Bay–Sandy Lake, Ontario, where they lived and worked before returning to Oxford House in 1959. In 1967 he and his family moved to Cross Lake where they settled. Clarence continued to work for the Hudson Bay Company, which later became Northern Stores, until his retirement in 1994.

Clarence was a strong, able voice in the area, and he was asked to become a councillor for the Cross Lake Community Council in 1971. He acted in this capacity for a number of years before becoming mayor in 1997. Clarence served as mayor until his passing on October 25, 2011, working tirelessly and unconditionally for the progressive community.

Clarence was family and community oriented, and he fit well in Cross Lake, which has always been a place where different people come together to exchange ideas. He was instrumental in bringing about the community's incorporation under The Northern Affairs Act, and in the signing of the community settlement as well. Incorporation is an important final stage in self-government development. Cross Lake now has a greater level of autonomy that will enable local residents to continue to improve the quality of life in the community.

Clarence also played an important role in the local cadet program, and was probably most proud of the new administration and fire building he helped establish. He was dedicated to the betterment of the community and the people of Cross Lake. Clarence was a visionary, always looking several generations ahead when making decisions. He wanted to be sure that decisions made today would have a positive impact on children not yet born.

I ask that everyone here join me in remembering this hard-working and generous individual, a respected community leader, and family man.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **James Downey**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise to recognize Mr. James Downey for receiving the Honorary Air Marshall Award from the Manitoba Provincial Committee of the Air Cadet League of Canada.

Lieutenant General, retired, Alan MacKenzie presented the award to Mr. Downey at the league's annual awards ceremony on October 15th, 2011. This award is given, quote: In recognition of exceptional personal achievement by an individual whose accomplishments allowed him to serve as a positive role model for the youth of Manitoba. End quote.

Mr. Downey, a former air cadet himself, served as MLA for Arthur-Virden from 1977 to 1999 and was a Cabinet minister in the governments of Sterling Lyon and Gary Filmon where he also served as deputy premier. He joins an esteemed group of recipients that includes General Walt Natynczyk, Fred Penner and Al Simons.

The Air Cadet League of Canada is a civilian volunteer, non-profit organization partnered with Canadian Forces. Together they fund, support, and oversee the activities of the Royal Canadian Air Cadet program. There are currently 1,300 teenagers enrolled in the program with eight squadrons in Winnipeg and 16 in rural Manitoba. During the school year air cadets participate in a variety of educational and athletic activities and may be chosen to attend summer camps for survival, leadership, aerospace, and glider or private pilot training.

The International Air Cadet Exchange program has also allowed air cadets from Manitoba to visit Australia, Belgium, France, Hong Kong, Israel, the

United Kingdom and the United States. In addition to the Honorary Air Marshall Award, approximately \$30,000 in scholarships and bursaries were awarded to these deserving cadets.

On behalf of my constituents in Arthur-Virden and all Manitobans, I would once again like to offer my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Downey, and applaud the Air Cadet League of Manitoba for cultivating excellence in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Flin Flon and Creighton Green Project**

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Flin Flon has some of the most majestic, awe-inspiring, natural beauty in all of Manitoba. Whether you enjoy hiking, canoeing, or bird-watching, or simply taking in spectacular vistas, outdoor living in the north is truly something to marvel at.

It is with this in mind that I rise today to acknowledge the fantastic program currently being offered through the unique partnership of Flin Flon and Creighton, Saskatchewan, Green Project. This project is very dear to my heart, as I had the privilege of working with the project's co-coordinator, Heather Acres, during its inception. Dr. Dave Price has since come on as a co-coordinator and is a very important part of the furthering of the project.

The Green Project takes its inspiration from a similar initiative in Sudbury, Ontario, which was led by Dr. Keith Winterhalder. Begun in 1999, this community-wide undertaking is aimed at accelerating the restoration of the forests and the towns of Flin Flon and Creighton to their original northern beauty which had been affected by early clear cutting. The cross-border nature of this project demonstrates the importance of co-collaboration when protecting the natural assets.

This inspired enterprise is made up of a stellar coalition which includes the cities of Flin Flon and Creighton, local businesses and concerned citizens. The project also received support from HudBay Mining & Smelting, the Flin Flon and Creighton school division, Manitoba Conservation, Manitoba Hydro, the City of Flin Flon, McKeen's Trucking, and many others. The bulk of the volunteers are students in kindergarten through grade 12 from Flin Flon and Creighton school divisions.

The Green Project continues to work towards the goal of accelerating the restoration of the forests in

Flin Flon and Creighton to their original northern beauty.

\* (14:30)

This year, over 850 volunteers took part in the spreading of crushed limestone on the soil of barren areas to stimulate the growth of plants and trees—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please, order. Is there leave for the member to conclude his remarks?

**Some Honourable Members:** Leave.

**Mr. Speaker:** Leave. Please continue.

**Mr. Pettersen:** Mr. Speaker, 822 were students.

The calcium magnesium and carbonate in the limestone aids in improving soil condition. The effort of so many volunteers on a yearly basis has led to over 50 hectares of formerly barren land being treated with crushed limestone since 2000. The improvements to the vegetation areas treated have been staggering.

Congratulations to all those involved in the Green Project to their dedication to restoring Flin Flon's natural beauty.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Helena Fleger**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Helena Fleger of Franklin, Manitoba, for her achievements in, and contributions to, the international film community.

Ms. Fleger graduated from Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute in 2004, and after interning with Springs Television in Winnipeg in 2005, moved to Vancouver to become further involved with cinema. She has worked on several Hollywood films, including *The A-Team* and *Daydream Nation*, and her experiences have given her a keen insight into the ups and downs of the film world.

She recently made the front cover of *The Neepawa Press*, where she was told of her work on her very first shoot in British Columbia, a harrowing experience wherein the director, producer and main star were all attacked by wasps.

The excitement of being on set and being a part of the production crew are the main part of what so interests Ms. Fleger in her career in the film business. From that first experience, she says, she knew she was going to love it all.

We are very proud to have such an accomplished young person as ambassador for our community in her business travels. But I am also pleased to share with members that Helena has recently returned home, and has worked on several locally shot movies as well. Her time spent as a production assistant on films like *Cashing In*, *Keep Your Head Up*, *Kid* and *Beethoven Saves Christmas*, which were staged in Winnipeg's Corydon Village and Stonewall, has given her the necessary experience and chops to learn what being a great producer is all about.

Additionally, she has written 10 screenplays, her latest, with a close friend, and hopes to make the move to writing and directing next. It is my pleasure to acknowledge this strong and successful young woman with such a bright future in the House today. With such an impressive array of experience behind her already, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this girl might possibly join the likes of cinema greats and have her star carved on Hollywood Boulevard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### THRONE SPEECH (Third Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers),

THAT the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at the First Session of the Fortieth Legislature of Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley, who has 22 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Yes, Throne Speech from Wolseley, chapter 2. I believe where I left off, Mr. Speaker, I had managed to thank, very much, members of my family and my campaign team and many other individuals, and I also commend a number of the local agencies that I have been proud to work with over the past eight years and thank everyone who was involved in my very successful re-election bid.

My next comments, Mr. Speaker, are more focused on just being an MLA and the type of work that I have the privilege to do. I'm sure if you were to canvass the House and ask each of us for a description of our job you would get 57 different descriptions, but—and then that can be a healthy thing because our province is very diverse.

To my mind, the three basic parts to our work are casework where we meet individually with our constituents when they have a concern or something we can help them with. We need to network with our local agencies in our constituencies, and we need to do our very best to make a difference in this phenomenal historic building that we get to work in, both in terms of the laws that we pass and the budget priorities of the government of the day.

I'm very lucky, Mr. Speaker, in that my professional background and my personal passions, for a couple of decades now, coincide very nicely with the concerns that I hear most often on the doorstep and over email and on the phone and while I'm walking to and from work or just out in the neighbourhood coming from my constituents. People in Wolseley are proud of the work that our government has done to reduce poverty. They are proud of the work that we've done to help clean up the planet. They are proud of the work we've done to protect and expand public services. And they want to see more successful progress in all three of those areas from us over the next four years, and it will be both my challenge and my obligation and my privilege to bring their voices to this Chamber.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that when our government's Throne Speech talks about the importance of further improvements to health care and more educational opportunities, when our Throne Speech entrenches Manitoba's affordability advantages and works towards safer communities in all parts of our province, or when it proudly promises to protect our environment and keep Manitoba Hydro a public asset that all of us own and benefit from, our Throne Speech is speaking to the very core of the hopes and dreams of Wolseley constituents.

Indeed, I think it's pretty obvious to see that in just the last few days we're already very hard at work implementing that very progressive and well thought out agenda. Last week, we had a very important enhancement to Manitoba Hydro's award-winning energy efficiency program. When we came to office, of course, we were the second worst province in the entire country for energy efficiency,



and now other provinces are proud to be tied with us at the top of the list. Yesterday, we had an exceptionally significant health-care announcement of \$120 million for new diagnostic equipment, on health care. And then today's announcement: We're bringing in more programs and opportunities for young people to be successfully employed. So just in the last few days, Mr. Speaker, you can see the environment is going to be better off because of our government, young people are going to have more opportunities, and the health care and education system that all of us depend on is going to be strengthened.

It's remarkable the power that government has, and I am exceptionally proud of the work that we do. I think it's also safe to say that, in the very positive, if albeit tragic, final words of our former federal Speaker—our former federal leader, rather—hope, love and optimism is quite clearly alive in Manitoba and in Wolesey, and I have to believe that Jack would be very proud of our work.

Now, guiding our work here in this building over the next four years are several people that I've had the privilege to work with as a deputy chair of our Chamber and who also deserve thanks for their services, both past, present and future. I am referring, of course, to the Clerks and all of the table officers here at the Legislature. It's great to be back and see all of you and to welcome your new colleague to the Chamber.

I also want to give a shout-out to the new pages and the interns. They're lined up for quite an adventure in this building, and the most exciting part is that none of us really know what's going to happen from one day to the next, but you will be here as a part of it and we're very happy to have your presence here as well.

I certainly want to thank and acknowledge all of the returning MLAs and veterans from all sides of the House, and a special acknowledgement to the new MLAs. It really does seem like not very long ago that I was one of those, but it has been a number of years somehow. But on the opposition benches, a special welcome to the honourable members from Brandon West and La Verendrye, Lac du Bonnet, Morden-Winkler and Portage la Prairie. I'm sure your constituents will be pleased with the representation that you bring to the Chamber over the coming years.

And a special welcome to some wonderful people that have joined our caucus, and I am really

having a lot of fun getting to learn about their accomplishments already and what they hope to bring forward. I'm referring, of course, to the honourable members from Burrows, Flin Flon, Fort Garry-Riverview—who's no slouch of a hockey player, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, as a teammate of mine—from Point Douglas, from St. Norbert—officially as of yesterday, bravo—and St. James, Swan River, Tyndall Park. And I think technically a special welcome back is owed to the—are you a new MLA from Elmwood? You look very familiar, but you're here. Congratulations on your return to the Chamber.

This is, in fact, Mr. Speaker—and not many people realize this—this is, in fact, the third time in a row where our caucus, on our side, has had a turnover of at least 20 per cent. I think that's very healthy for the new life of our government. I think it speaks very well to our party and our ability to renew ourselves as we work for Manitobans in the years ahead. We've already heard some outstanding speeches from a number of these new MLAs; St. James, Swan River and Burrows have all been very, very well represented. And I really look forward to hearing the new comments from the other new members. The class of 2011 clearly brings a lot to our caucus, and we're thrilled to have all of you here.

\* (14:40)

I also want to extend a special congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, as the only person in this Chamber who has won two elections in as many weeks, both as an MLA and now as our referee in the Chamber. I've enjoyed our opportunities in the past as seatmates in the Chamber and the conversations we've had. And sorry to lose you from our caucus, but I know that regardless of which of the three exceptional people put their name forward for the Speaker's role, we would have been very, very well served with a lot of integrity and I have absolute confidence that you will do a fine job in the Speaker's chair.

I also wanted to point out to the Chamber as a whole that—and to you, in particular, Mr. Speaker—that as a new Speaker in the Chamber—and something I didn't realize, but that was in the Throne Speech, this past election elected more new MLAs in total to the Chamber than we have seen in well over a decade. Perhaps there is an opportunity to test the waters on how we conduct ourselves as MLAs in this Chamber and, specifically, of course, I'm speaking about the issue of decorum in the Chamber during question period and elsewhere. I raise this in the full

acknowledgement and, *mea culpa*, that I am a heckler. I have been told that I'm actually very good at it, and I recognize the role that heckling plays in the process of government and in the work that we do down here.

I remember, when I was a child, I read a book by my hockey hero, Bobby Orr, and I would proudly wear his No. 4 at any opportunity. But in his book, he pointed out there's actually three different ways to get the puck in the game of hockey: there's bodychecking; there's stick checking; and there's mouth checking, and, you know, all three of those are legitimate. And all that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm also relatively certain I'm not the only MLA who has spoken with members of the general public—sometimes my own constituents—after they have observed the circus that is question period, and I've heard in no uncertain terms what they think of our behaviour, and it's not very pretty.

And I have to ask myself, and I'll put the question out there on the public record, that in an era where, as I understand it, all political parties and all elected officials at different levels of government in our country are concerned about a reduced level of political engagement from the public, certainly reflected sometimes in voter participation, other times just in the number of folks who seem to even remotely understand what it is that we do here in the Chamber, that with that background we are not putting our best foot forward on those rare occasions when groups of people come here to observe our work in the Chamber or also watch our performances during question period through the media.

And perhaps I'm bringing this perspective forward because I've had the privilege, over the last—the previous term, of being a deputy chair of the Chamber, and I know that it is no easy task to chair any committee. I recognize people and members opposite chair committees as well—Public Accounts most notably. At times I have been asked to sit in the Speaker's chair and oversee for a brief time when other members weren't available to play the role of the Speaker in the Chamber. It's not an easy task at times and it's certainly a very important one. And I have observed in that capacity not one, but, in fact, dozens of occasions where members of different political parties have managed to work together in an honourable way and in a respectful way to get really good things done, both for the overall functioning of this Chamber and for the betterment of the public as a whole.

So it would be nice to think that that could someday become the norm rather than the exception to how things operate here. I recognize that might not be possible in the current climate, but, Mr. Speaker, I say, personally, that if you ever wanted to talk to the various House leaders and test the waters on this question you would certainly have my respect for trying at the very least, and you would certainly have no small amount of moral support from the constituents of Wolseley and perhaps more broadly as well.

My closing comments, though, are going to be, to make this very clear, until the rules of the Chamber change, I will be, shall we say, a very active participant in this Chamber. I will perhaps not be asked a single question in any question period for the next four years, but members opposite are going to hear my voice and they are going to see me supporting the amazing people that are in my government that I'm so proud to be a part of. Head shots, Mr. Speaker, in hockey or in football, only started to be reduced when the rules changed. And my job is to defend our government, with the fantastic work that we are doing, to support my colleagues.

And in the past election, Mr. Speaker, I actually became even more impressed and even more enthralled with the people that I have the pleasure of serving with, my fellow backbenchers, the Cabinet ministers, who have gone out and worked so hard on behalf of their constituents for so long. You could see that respect instantly on the doorstep, and you knew that people were going to be voting with their own community interest and their own self-interest in mind when they cast their ballot for our party.

And I will be a very staunch supporter of our government's agenda over the next little while. We support ourselves as a team inside this building. We work together as a team outside of this building. And it was an historical night on October 4th, of course, when our party recorded the largest majority in Manitoba's history, no small accomplishment.

And I will close off, Mr. Speaker, with my personal thanks, and on behalf of the constituents of Wolseley, I want to thank our Premier (Mr. Selinger). He inherited a situation that had no small number of challenges to start with. And after he became our Premier, he only had to deal with the largest economic downturn in North American history since the Second World War and the second flood of the century, so-called, in less than 20 years.

He has managed to steer this province through both of those challenges. The challenges will continue, and I have every confidence that he is going to be there to lead us in meeting them head on.

I have been proud to know our Premier for many years, dating back before either of us were elected. I'm honoured to consider him a friend as well as my boss. And it is his work ethic, it is his intelligence and the trust that he has earned from Manitoba that I was particularly impressed with on October the 4th. He has every right to be exceptionally proud of what he did.

And as much as I have enjoyed wearing the No. 4 in various sporting events and hockey teams I have played for, I have to confess, Mr. Speaker, that as of October 4th, my new favourite number is 37.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in response to the Throne Speech.

As a new MLA, I am privileged to have the opportunity to represent the people of the constituency of Portage la Prairie. I would also like to congratulate my fellow MLAs on their election to this House.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers and supporters who helped me during the recent campaign. And I'd like to thank my family, who supported me wholeheartedly during the recent campaign. As you all know, it is a process that is very challenging for a family.

It's impossible also not to recognize the thousands of volunteers who worked tirelessly to fight the flood this last year, often shoulder to shoulder with our military. A particular thanks needs to go to our military, without whom this disaster would have been far worse. Events like this bring out the best in a community, but they also tend to burn them out if they continue as long as this one has.

It's impossible not to touch on the impact of this year's flooding in the Portage constituency, as we were front and centre and, in fact, are still suffering the impacts of the flood in Lake Manitoba and has many displaced families who currently still out of their homes and feel like refugees in their own communities.

Problems had become evident late last fall when Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, formally PFRA,

who annually publish a soil moisture map for western Canada, which showed extreme risks of flooding, both for the Canada Souris basin and large areas of the Assiniboine basin, particularly the Qu'Appelle. By Christmas, we knew that this region had above-average snowfall. Local municipal officials, seeing a concern, asked repeated questions about the state of the lower Assiniboine dikes, and finally action was taken in emergency basis in March.

Local snow melt—snow melt, rather, in the area was near perfect and local drainage was long gone before the Assiniboine rose. In fact, many acres were actually already planted. Flows on the Assiniboine River rose as water came from the west and the Portage Diversion was opened to the maximum flows of 23,000, exceeding its fail-safe capacity.

\*(14:50)

Assiniboine levels rose further, and steps were taken to increase the capacity of the diversion in excess of 30,000 cubic feet per second, stressing the diversion banks, drop structure and bridges further. This led to a second round—or to the—sorry, the first round of evacuations. In fact, there are many stories from the flooding, but a couple I would like to share with you.

I actually live just outside of the flood impact area on the Portage Diversion, and have land in it. And we would go over every day to look at the drop structure on the Portage Diversion, which is located eight kilometres north of Portage. And when I'm going over one morning, we noticed there was a difference in appearance, and it was the water running over the sides of the diversion bank, and many crews frantically doing whatever they could to shore that up. And they did—they were successful that day, and a few other days besides, but it is not widely known how close we came to absolute disaster on a number of days.

In particular, I went back to that site afterwards with GPS after the flood was over, just to take a measure of how high that was above field level, and slightly over 18 feet above field level at that point. Had that broken or breached at that point, no one really knows how far that water would have gone.

Another story that relates to this, and actually to the work that the military did on the Assiniboine River dikes which was greatly appreciated, I—part of the community club and actually the military used the community club as one of their base of

operations. So I was there to help open it and get set up for them when they first moved in with their scouting crew. And they came back from their first trip down the dike and basically said, we'll never make it. It was in that bad a condition. They had been thrown together in the wintertime. I actually saw the work happening in some cases and there was snow used as backfill. So that—clearly that's not going to stand particular stress, but with the hard work of the military and use of some new technologies, in particular a lot of use of geotech fabric to cover the banks to give it some protection, they were able to keep it in place. But there were many occasions when there was desperate measures taken, seeing hundreds of soldiers running down the dike to help sandbag and seeing them walk across this geotech, which actually reacted like you were walking on a trampoline. It was that fluid underneath.

So we were certainly lucky that day and many others. The Assiniboine levels rose further, and plans were made for the infamous Hoop and Holler cut to protect further areas. By this time we were all getting really good at building sandbag dikes.

Then Lake Manitoba levels began to rise, spilling inland, leading to further diking and further evacuation. This one has no end. We did not manage to finish the job at sandbagging resort communities. It lasted, literally, for weeks. They would take—every Thursday or Friday they would take 700 and—75,000 to 100,000 sandbags out to Delta, and over the course of the weekend they would disappear. But that was not enough. It was not finished by completion, but actually by exhaustion. As it stands today, people at Delta area are still evacuated, the prospect for return are next June at best, with fall storms and the spring ice breakups still substantial risks.

Many things need to be learned from this series of events. Some things were done right; some things were not. Our call for a public inquiry into handling it is not overdone in light of the huge public cost both in dollars and in human suffering. Solutions need to be found, more than just promises of compensation, but real long-term projects to prevent repetition, so that more Manitobans can sleep in their homes at night feeling safe.

I will not go into the problems with compensation at this point; there are going to be a lot. But it is necessary to mention one of the more frequent causes of dissatisfaction. It's not the

physical or the financial damage. It's the lack of appreciation. Many people have had their lives disrupted in a major way to prevent further disasters downstream, both east of Portage along the river—*[interjection]* Sorry, and the—including the west side of Winnipeg. No one feels recognized for their sacrifices, either officially or unofficially. A heartfelt apology would go a long way towards making compensation more palatable.

It is not widely understood, that nature of the lower Assiniboine River. It is a perched river system, higher than a surrounding land, and it is surrounded by a number of small tributaries that actually run parallel to the river, and actually created by the river. These include the LaSalle River, the Mill and the Elm creeks, Long Lake and Sturgeon Creek. And what actually happens in that case, wherever it breaches on the river, it will run away from the river, and eventually finds its way back into one of these streams and follows it to whatever conclusion it would come.

Had it broken, certain places near Portage—certainly Portage would have suffered a great deal of damage. Further along we see communities like Oakville and St. Eustache or Elie, which would have suffered it, and the closer you get to Winnipeg, then it would spill into Long Lake, and then eventually into the Sturgeon Creek. And it is not appreciated, I think, by many people in Winnipeg where that water would have gone, and how much damage would have been—would have occurred within the city of Winnipeg had we not been as fortunate as we were.

One of the reasons I chose to go into politics is a driving concern on how we handle land and water use in this province. We leave policies in place that encourage farmers to drain unnecessarily, things like education tax on farmland, and provide few incentives to retain or even restore wetlands.

In my previous role as president of Keystone Ag Producers, we had worked with a number of organizations from the provincial government to farm groups through wildlife groups to develop a consensus position and a program. We even able to run a pilot project here in Manitoba in the RM of Blanshard, known as the Alternate Land Use Services or ALUS project, and it demonstrated a very positive outcome both in its impact and its uptake to producers. Independent evaluations were very positive on this. In fact, other provinces, including the province of Prince Edward Island, have adopted this approach, and, currently, Ontario,

Saskatchewan and Alberta have pilot projects under evaluation. Yet nothing more has been achieved here in Manitoba. This has been a great disappointment to me, and it also become a great motivator.

It reminds me of a Margaret Mead quote: Never doubt that a small group of dedicated people can make a difference. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has. I have faith that the value of this approach will become evident. It is certainly—would have made a difference in both quantity and quality of water this past year, had it been in effect.

The Throne Speech contains very little in new initiatives for rural areas. This is short-sighted, particularly in light of the significant damage to rural infrastructure in many areas due to this year's excess moisture. During the election campaign, promises were made to help farmers and rural residents deal with nutrient management issues. This has been promised before, yet the Throne Speech was silent on this.

Bipole, given the strong opposition by farm community and increasing cost of the west-side route, I hope the government will take a hard look both at the need for such a project and the logic of running it at the most expensive route possible.

Real leadership doesn't just avoid the problem by doing it in someone else's backyard. Real leadership finds new and innovative solutions.

In conclusion, I would like to say I'm proud and also humbled by the opportunity to represent such a great constituency as Portage la Prairie. I pledge to do my best to represent their interests to the best of my ability in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you and my fellow members on both sides of the House for being present for my first speech. Congratulations to all new and returning members. I'm looking forward to working with everyone here and continuing to build a future for Manitobans, particularly people from Flin Flon constituency.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank all the friends, volunteers and family who worked so hard on my campaign, spending countless hours knocking on doors and calling people. It would have been an impossible job without their support and encouragement. I know that everyone in this room understands what I'm talking about. I'd like to thank my agent, Blaine Winters, Ken Mansell, the

president of the local NDP, and my campaign managers, Bill Bage and Jen Smith, and a special thank-you to my brother-in-law, Brent Lethbridge.

I especially want to recognize my best friend, who is my wife, editor and clothing police all in one. We've done a lot of interesting things together, and I'm so happy that she's here today, Mr. Speaker. We've been on many adventures together, including birth of our three daughters, Hilary, Michelle and Mari-Anne, two of which were home births. I'm thankful to be part of a government that promotes midwifery and I'm so happy to have been on these journeys with my wife, Judy.

As long as I can remember, I've wanted to run for MLA to represent the constituency where I grew up, so October 4th was a very exciting night for my family and me. I know that I've got big shoes to fill. Men that I hold in high esteem have done this job, like Tom Barrow, Jerry Storie and, of course, Gerard Jennissen. Because of Gerard, in Cranberry Portage, we had 100 signs for 300 houses. Each man that came before me had his own way of doing things, and I'll be no different. I've got my own ideas.

\* (15:00)

Flin Flon is the second-largest constituency in Manitoba. It spreads north from Flin Flon to Nunavut and east to Nelson House near Thompson, the area of some of the highest per capita incomes in the province as well as some of the lowest. The needs and concerns of my constituents are going to be my driving force.

I'm blessed to have some great people in my constituency to work with, like Flin Flon mayor, George Fontaine; Mayor Clarence Fisher from Snow Lake; Mayor Geraldine Cockerill from Leaf Rapids; Mayor Sean Maher from Lynn Lake; Chief Arlen Dumas from Pukatawagan; Chief Jerry Primrose from Nelson House; Chief Jack Dysart from South Indian Lake; Chief Jimmy Thorassie from Tadoule; Chief Roy Bighetty from Brochet; and Chief Joe Dantouze from Lac Brochet.

I've been a teacher for 33 years. In that period of time, I taught grades 4 through 12. There were a lot of benefits to teaching such a wide range of students. When they're younger, they're still enthusiastic about school. If you work hard at it, you can give them a love for reading and history. If you're someone else, you can teach them the love of math.

In my last 10 years, I worked at an alternative high school called Many Faces. Initially, I proceeded to a place that catered to students who weren't interested in putting in the time and effort. After all, how many chances do teenagers and young adults need in life? How many? Well, it takes as many as they can have. Over the years, I've learned that the answer to the question is: a lot. We want to ensure that young people reach their full potential and have the opportunity to be contributing to society.

Our government is making it mandatory for students to stay in school until they're 18. We are also encouraging alternative schools like Many Faces, which help young mothers that are trying to finish their education while raising a family and others who've gotten off the track or have not been able to fit into the regular high schools for a wide variety of reasons. We're also limiting class size for kindergarten to grade 3, which is essential to improving the learning environment.

There are few jobs out there that we can—have a lifelong impact on people's lives. Teaching is one of them. I salute all teachers in Manitoba, the ones I've worked with and those I've never met. It's one of the hardest jobs, but also one of the most important and rewarding.

Good roads, hydroelectricity, clean drinking water, access to wholesome food and job opportunities are important to all Manitobans. This government, under the leadership of the Premier (Mr. Selinger), has committed to continue improving the roads, providing education and apprenticeship opportunities for northerners and finding creative solutions to help bridge the gap between rural and urban communities.

Many southerners won't understand the appeal of life in the north, but my—may use my hometown of Flin Flon as an example. Let me enlighten you. Flin Flon and the surrounding area has much more going for it than just hockey, but first I'm going to talk about hockey. There's something very close to magic about sitting in the same rink that you played in all your life, next to the guys from your team, surrounded by the parents and grandparents who cheered you on. The pride we take in our Flin Flon Bombers may someday be matched by the pride Manitoba takes in its Jets. I hope so. We're proud of our team and proud of the support offered to them by our community.

When we're not playing hockey, we're singing about it. The Flin Flon Community Choir may be the only one in history that would allow me to sing a couple lines in a musical. I was playing an officer aboard the *Titanic* in the musical of the same name. History will back me up when I say that it wasn't my singing that sank the ship. I have to commend our impressive community choir for the lavish productions they perform under the guidance of Mark and Crystal Kolt. The choir is a big blessing in our community and everyone is welcome to join.

The arts play a huge part in our life in the north. World-renowned artists and sculptors like Irwin Head freely share their time and talent, instructing other artists as well as students in the community. I was blessed to have him come to Many Faces and teach my students. But everyone with an interest has access to very affordable art classes of all kinds.

Culture Days in Flin Flon, which exemplify the spirit of the north, the events have been filled to capacity and two years in a row we've had a whole bunch of people enthusiastically dancing down Main Street. I say enthusiastically because the jury from *Dancing with the Stars* hasn't sent out any invitations. As far as I know, not to me.

These are examples of the little things that make life in the north worth living. We look out for each other. Neighbours check on neighbours, and if you forget your money when you go to the drive-in, you'll probably get in anyway. I believe the—we as the government look out for all Manitobans. I know that we have a lot left to do in my constituency, but I feel confident that this government gives Flin Flon the best opportunity to move forward.

You may have heard of the TV jingle "Come back, come back to Jamaica." Well, that's what we've been saying about the north. Whether you've lived here for years or you've never visited before, life in the north offers a lot of amazing experiences. There's the fishing, hiking, cross-country skiing, curling, canoeing, skidoing and all aspects of outdoor life that are better lived when you're just five minutes away from the lakes and trails that make it all possible. If you meet someone who says that they didn't enjoy life there, rest assured that they never took the time to step outside. You can join in all wonderful activities or become part of many service clubs that help make life easier and more fun for everyone in the community. Our northern

reunions alone are worth bragging about and people talk about them for years after.

A well-kept secret in the north is the beautiful beachfront properties in communities like Cranberry Portage. Snow Lake also has a quiet appeal. These communities, as well as Flin Flon, are a wonderful place for our seniors to retire. It's affordable living where you're always among friends. Snow Lake also is home to Lalor mine, one of the largest infrastructure projects in Manitoba. They're going to need a lot of new housing and infrastructure projects which will lead to even more employment.

We have many other exciting and vibrant communities in the constituency of Flin Flon, including Brochet, Lac Brochet, Tadoule Lake, South Indian Lake and Sherridon. We invite you all to come and experience the wonders of the north. Our jobs up north are mainly concerned with mining, hydro, logging and commercial fishing. Mr. Speaker, I want people to realize we're not frontier communities anymore. We're here to stay and we have a long-range plan.

For example, mining is the biggest employer in our constituency. So encouraging exploration and offering incentive in that area is vital to our survival. Mining is one of the many reasons why the north is a big piece of the economic picture provincially. I look forward to being a part of a government that encourages more exploration in Flin Flon. Mining opportunities offer stability for towns like Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake as well as First Nation reserves.

The mining academy in Flin Flon offers exciting programs to a northern Manitoba community. I am proud that this project has received significant support from our government, UCN and HudBay Minerals. In talking with the COO and senior VP of HudBay, I said, you have very good geologists. He said, no, we have the best in the world. These are the people who will be helping out with the mining academy. This facility offers excellent training and potential employment for students not just from the north, but from all of—over Manitoba, the rest of Canada and the world. The future looks bright for the University College of the North in Flin Flon.

For those of you who have travelled out of the country, you already know that Canada is truly one of the best places in the world to live. My wife and I had the opportunity to backpack around the world

when we were younger. We realize that, as Canadians, we take a lot of things for granted, like bountiful resources, a seemingly endless fresh water supply and plentiful food that is only as far away as the grocery store.

Unfortunately, this is not true for all my constituency. I've paddled many times up the Churchill River to Pukatawagan. I've taken my basketball teams on several occasions up to Puk, and the reason I did this was to show Flin Flon students the many aspects of life in a First Nations community. They were impressed by the friendliness of the people and the wonderful hospitality. I'm looking forward to working with Chief Dumas and the community leaders in issues like housing, recreational facilities and access to affordable, healthy food.

There are no easy answers. Having better roads is one solution to the problems of isolation that some communities in the north face. This government has been working on building better roads in Manitoba, something I look forward to being a part of. One of the largest concerns of my constituents is health care. It's a concern not just to those in Flin Flon, but a concern of many in our community and region, one that has some challenges recently. I was pleased to see in the Throne Speech that this government has promised Flin Flonners upgrades to our emergency room. I am pleased to see this government continue to work for the better health care closer to home for northerners and to continue to make investments to move our health-care system forward.

\* (15:10)

The provision of health care in the north comes with its own challenges and opportunities. It is hard on families when patients have to be sent away from their own communities. When my mother broke her hip at Christmastime, she received excellent care at Boundary Trails hospital, near Morden and Winkler, but it was hard leaving my family at that time. When my daughter was in pain and needed a CAT scan, it was tough riding to The Pas in an ambulance. These are issues I look forward to working on over the next few years.

I'm grateful to my constituents for giving me this opportunity. I'm determined to work hard for them, to represent their best interests and to carry out the work to the best of my ability. I'm excited about being part of the team. It's a great one. I'm proud to have the Premier (Mr. Selinger) as my leader. I've

been so impressed with his commitment to the province and his integrity as party leader. He sets a high standard for the rest of us to follow. This job as MLA, to me, is one of the most interesting jobs in the world. Does this make me the most interesting man? Just ask my wife. Thank you.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** I am proud to be here today as the newly elected member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba representing the constituency of La Verendrye. I wish to congratulate my fellow new and returning members to the First Session of the Fortieth Legislature of Manitoba. I look forward to working with the legislative staff, including our new Speaker, the Clerk, the table officers, the pages, the Hansard staff, and everyone else who's responsible for the smooth operation of the House.

I would also like to acknowledge all the candidates who ran, including those who were not successful. They and their teams all put a lot of hard work into their campaigns and their efforts should be recognized. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the people who were so crucial to my successful campaign: the voters of the recently redrawn La Verendrye constituency; my wife Gwen and our four sons, Christopher, Justin, Tyson, and Brandon for their support over the last 16 months; my campaign team; campaign manager, Bill Osachuk, and his wife, Darlene; my brother, Larry, and Jason Wryha for their fundraising abilities; my brother, Brian; my sister, Wendy, and her husband, Michael; Peter and Donna Osadchuk; Eldon and Phillis Hood; Mark Kostyniuk and his wife, Lori; Mark and Marilyn Ruta; Patricia Hollingshead; Ron and Denise Vielfaure; Jay Masterson and his wife, Patti; Amos Wiebe; everyone else who helped and supported my campaign in so many different ways.

For those of you who do not know me, I will take some time to introduce myself. I was raised in Vita, and still live in Vita which is located in the southern portion of the La Verendrye constituency. I come from a family with strong business and political background. I've always been a community minded person who enjoys working with people. I believe my experience as a school trustee, coach, volunteer firefighter, and my involvement with many service clubs and volunteer organizations will help me as I represent the La Verendrye constituency.

I've been married to my wife, Gwen, for more than 35 years. We have four sons: Christopher, a corrections officer with the Province of Manitoba;

Justin, a firefighter with the City of Winnipeg; Tyson, a police officer with the City of Winnipeg; Brandon, a student. Brandon is the only one left at home.

The constituency of La Verendrye covers a large and diverse geographic area. La Verendrye has more than 80 communities. Some of these are bedroom communities for people who make the daily commute to work in Winnipeg. Grunthal and La Broquerie are the largest towns in the riding. The riding is also a multi-season playground for Manitobans and visitors to our province alike. It is the home to very popular recreation areas such as the Whiteshell and Moose Lake Provincial parks. A lot of golfers also make the trip to the La Verendrye constituency to try their luck at great golf courses like Buffalo Point and others. The tourism sector employs many residents of my riding.

Major east-west and north-south transportation routes, including highways and rail lines, pass through the constituency. As such, high volumes of freight pass through the riding every year.

Agriculture is a very—very important to my constituency. In addition to crop production, there are many dairy operations in my riding. In addition, there are a number of chicken and turkey operations. The constituency is also home to several Hutterite colonies, including Pineland, Ridgeland, Springfield, Whiteshell and Heartland. They are involved in both primary agriculture as well as manufacturing, such as cabinetmaking, and are contributors to our local and provincial economies. In addition, La Verendrye is also the home to the Parmalat cheese factory, which provides employment for many people from Grunthal and the surrounding area.

Another important economic sector in my riding is the peat moss industry, which employs many people. In fact, the largest percentage of the peat moss being harvested in Manitoba comes from the La Verendrye constituency. The NDP government recently made some legislative changes that impact this sector. I would strongly encourage them to work closely with the peat moss industry stakeholders to ensure the continued success of the industry.

Other key economic drivers in the La Verendrye constituency include logging, hydro generation, small business and manufacturing, as well as La Verendrye's water bottling plants are recognized worldwide for their high quality products.



The Speech from the Throne touches on areas such as health care, expanding job education and training opportunities, making our communities safer, protecting the environment. As I noted earlier, the state of agriculture and the need for rural development initiatives are both important issues in the La Verendrye constituency. Unfortunately, however, the words agriculture and rural development were missing from the Speech from the Throne. I hope in the weeks and months ahead the government will focus some positive attention on growing the agriculture sector and creating a climate where businesses and industries want to set up shop in rural Manitoba.

The state of health care in rural Manitoba was an issue I heard about frequently during the election campaign. Some of you may be surprised to learn that there is only one hospital in the La Verendrye riding, and it is situated in Vita at the far south end of the constituency. Having timely local access to hospitals and ambulance services is very important to my constituents. I will bring—I will be bringing these matters to the attention of the Health Minister in the months ahead.

Another issue that was top of mind during the campaign is the pressing need for more seniors housing. I was pleased to see earlier this year the development related to the Le Chalet de La Broquerie. The community of La Broquerie has been deeply committed to this important seniors housing project, and I commend them for their efforts. There's also need to complete the East Borderland Community Housing project in Sprague. The sod-turning for that project happened the same time as the project in La Broquerie, so people are anxious to see this needed project completed.

In the last 12 months of campaigning, a critical issue that has been raised in all parts of La Verendrye is the lack of cellphone and high-speed Internet service. This makes it difficult to attract new business or to convince people to move here, putting us at a disadvantage to other parts of the province. As well, students need to use the Internet more and more in school to do research. If you look at a map of cellphone coverage for Manitoba, you will find a big white area where La Verendrye is, but yet there is cellphone services all the way to Thompson on Highway 6 and to Flin Flon on Highway 10.

Can you picture someone a week before Christmas waiting in line to pay for their purchases but can't call home to tell their wife they're running

late? Imagine the store's Internet is down and they're using the old dial-up system. That certainly makes it challenging to do business in a timely fashion.

Picture yourself and your family with no cellphones or high-speed Internet. In today's global economy, that was once a luxury a few years ago is now a necessity. Affordable cellphones and high-speed Internet service are a way of life in urban centres. Not only do you have a choice of services, but you also have a choice of providers; that's not the case in rural Manitoba.

\* (15:20)

Perhaps the most important reason to get cellphone coverage is for public safety. In the La Verendrye constituency we have shift workers that travel during all hours of the day or night, in all kinds of weather, on all kinds of road conditions, with no way to contact anyone in case of an emergency. We have an area on Highway 12 south of Steinbach, all the way to the American border, over 100 kilometres where there's no cellphone service. All kinds of freight and dangerous goods travel that stretch. We have the community of Whitemouth with a personal care home, a school, and a tower within a half a kilometre from town, but yet no cellphone service.

On the weekend of October 7th and 8th and 9th, 2011, we had four major fires burning in the RM of Stuartburn. The high winds made it extremely difficult to fight these fires. The fire that originated in the Caliento swamp moved north and east, affecting the rural municipalities of Piney, La Broquerie, and Reynolds. Over 160 firefighters from 27 municipal fire departments came from far and wide to fight the fires that spread through the municipalities.

Because of these fires, several communities had to be evacuated with little notice at late hours after midnight. I talked to several of the evacuees, and one of the concerns they had was no cell service. They couldn't contact their families to let them know they were safe, and some were concerned about running out of gas. Even the firefighters that came from areas that had cell coverage could not believe the poor coverage we had in the La Verendrye riding.

We are extremely lucky that there was no loss of life, injuries, or major property loss as a result of these major fires. I look forward to working with this government and with stakeholders to determine ways

to address the serious shortcoming in cell coverage. Protecting public safety must be a priority.

Fires are only one of the natural disasters that touch the La Verendrye constituency from time to time. Flooding can also pose serious challenges and it is very important the flood protection systems are properly maintained.

I believe one area that needs improvement in the Gardenton Floodway—we had a serious scenario where a temporary dike was set up to augment the floodfighting resources but later taken down. I will continue to advocate the needs—the needed improvements to the Gardenton Floodway and other flood protection systems as needed.

In closing, I would again like to thank all those who supported me in my journey to become—becoming the member of the Legislative Assembly for La Verendrye. It is an honour to serve my constituents and my fellow Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my congratulations to you on your election as Speaker. Certainly, we were very fortunate to have three very good candidates put their names forward, and I think it's important to note, by the way, that you are the second directly elected Speaker. And I know and I can say this—and I'm not trying to seek any favours in your new role—but as someone that's known you for many years and certainly considers you a friend, I think you have friendship—you have support from all members of the House. So I wanted to put on the record our congratulations to you.

I also want to say that I want to welcome all the returning members and new members to the House. I've made it a point, and I know I can't always directly hear the speeches, but I do want to commend those who have spoken thus far and I look forward to the contributions of new members. I think one of the great things about this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, is the degree to which you get a sense of the tremendous diversity of this province, the people from many backgrounds that come to this Legislature. And it's particular, I think, important to acknowledge the newly elected members who bring with them, you know, some new ideas, perhaps, certainly a significant amount of enthusiasm. Certainly, I know a number of them have talked

about filling rather large shoes in their predecessors. But, again, that's part of Manitoba; that's part of what this Legislature's all about.

And I also know one other thing, Mr. Speaker, and that is that none of us would be here without the support of our constituents. And I want to put on the public record how much I appreciate the support of the people of the Thompson constituency. I've sought that support as a New Democratic in election after an election. I want to say, by the way, because I know that there are various different election results, my first election I was elected by 72 votes. But whether you win by 72 votes or you get 72 per cent of the vote, I can tell you one thing, there is no greater honour than to have the honour to come into this Legislature and represent the residents of your communities, your constituents, and I want to thank the people of the Thompson constituency.

I also want to—by the way, I want to indicate that it was a challenge, this election, for me. There's always new elements when you seek election. And it was the first time I was able to seek election representing the community of Oxford House and the Bunibonabee Cree Nation. I lost Nelson House, the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in the redistribution that took place. But I do know, by the way, and I actually had the opportunity to visit with the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), who is now representing that community, that he will do an excellent job in representing that community. I made many friends over the years. I know I won't be the MLA for that community officially, but I want to indicate that I look forward to working with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, the Nelson House community, and I know they'll be very well represented by the member from Flin Flon.

I also particularly enjoy going to Oxford House, because it has a rather unique element for me. Obviously, I have a family connection with my daughter representing it federally. I had a lot of explaining to do when I went around campaigning, that I was running, yes, but it didn't mean Niki wasn't running, because she actually stayed where she was. But it also got rather confusing, too, because my brother is a doctor, and he has been the doctor in that community, actually in South Indian Lake, as well, for more than 20 years.

So, when I was visiting, there was some confusion. I remember one elder—actually, I went to visit her, and she started talking to me—complained about how her arm was hurting her, and then I

realized she was mistaking me for my brother. And whether I, Mr. Speaker, am described as the father of my daughter or the brother of my brother, I can tell you one thing, I am very honoured to represent that community in the Legislature.

And I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad to be back here with 36, as of yesterday—I think tomorrow probably 37—New Democrat MLAs. I actually had someone ask me the first day of the Legislature, afterwards, why it looked like I was having such a good time here. Now, you know, I like to think that I'm always having a good time here. I realize there are some better days and there are some, you know, worse days, but what did strike me about it, by the way, is who would have predicted, even a few months ago, that you would have seen the New Democratic Party government re-elected with an increased majority? And I say that with a tremendous amount of humility, because I found it rather humbling on election night. You know, I was in my community in Thompson, watching the election results come in and, you know, certainly Thompson, we were declared elected very, you know, very early, and I certainly think that, you know, that that speaks to the support we have. And I do want to say, by the way, the Conservatives actually ran a real campaign for the first time in several elections, and had a credible candidate. There was a Liberal candidate as well, former MLA, actually, for the area.

So, you know, obviously, I watched that, but as I watched the election results come in, and I watched those maps—one thing about those maps—well, first of all, I know we have a bit of an advantage in the New Democratic Party because northern Manitoba takes up a rather large geographic area on this map, but as I watched the results coming, I thought it was quite remarkable. And who would have thought, not only that we'd be elected to a fourth majority government but, you know, what really struck me, by the way, and what is the essence of this party and this government, is that we have representatives from all areas of this province.

Now, I want to give away a few secrets here, and I'm always wary of this. Members opposite, maybe they'll be taking notes, maybe they'll look at it next time, but, you know, I just want to say, by the way, that I can start by saying is that you have to spend some time representing all areas. I'm very proud of the work we've done representing all parts of Manitoba. I've certainly had that opportunity directly as Minister responsible for Infrastructure and

Transportation. We're building roads, building infrastructure throughout the province. I certainly had that opportunity personally, and many of us were involved in the flood fight this year, and we worked with Manitobans throughout the province.

\* (15:30)

You know, but what's interesting is—here's something, and I'm watching if they're going to be keeping notes—but, you know, if you want to get support in an area, what you do is you actually start by paying some attention to it. You actually might want to try and visit it.

And I want to put on the record that once again the Conservative Party—the Leader of the Conservative Party didn't visit northern Manitoba once in the campaign. Actually, I did quote—I was quoted in the *Free Press*, by the way, that there's been more sightings of Elvis in northern Manitoba than the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). You know, Mr. Speaker, I actually want to put on the record I think there's been more sightings of the sasquatch than the Leader of the Opposition in northern Manitoba. But, you know, I do respect the member, but, you know, if you don't bother to even show up to visit in a campaign, you're not going to go too far.

And I do want to, by the way, say that the Liberal leader also didn't visit the—northern Manitoba during the election. Mr. Speaker, I know he was probably rather busy with some dynamics in the Liberal Party, but he did bother to visit northern Manitoba before the election. And I know I've been critical in the past of the Liberal leader, but I want to put on the record, even though he did not come up during the election, he came up in between it.

And, you know, I think it's probably one of the reasons the Conservatives really haven't had much of a presence in northern Manitoba going back now 30 years. Now, you know, promising to take money out of the north in terms of highways doesn't help. Opposing, you know, things like the UCN, establishing UCN and the UCN campus, it doesn't help. But I can tell you one thing—and I don't see too many members opposite taking notes, so I'm probably okay here, I'm not giving away anything—but, you know, the bottom line is you have to represent all areas of the province.

Now, what I got to tell you is, well, too, by the way, is I was never so proud as to campaign with

some of my colleagues in this election, because, you know, I wasn't taking anything for granted in Thompson. I visited thousands of homes. I visited every community.

But, you know, I had the opportunity to visit with the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), for example. And I know members opposite, they were just chomping at the bit going into that election, and I heard all the confident, you know, sort of, you know, say goodbye to the member for the Interlake. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, I don't know of an MLA that has worked with a constituency that's been through more of a challenging time. And I tell you, I was really happy on election night to watch the election results to see the member for Interlake re-elected with a very significant majority.

You know, I also had the opportunity to visit with the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux)—I'm getting used to that, Dawson Trail. And, you know, I don't think there was an MLA, outside of perhaps the member for the Interlake, where members opposite didn't put anything and everything in in terms of resources. And I was there to make a highway announcement. Actually, it did come as a surprise to me that after the member for Dawson Trail was highways minister that there was any highway left to be fixed in the constituency. But we did, we made a very significant announcement. And I have to tell you again, what it shows, Mr. Speaker, is if you want to see why we're a four-term majority government, you look at constituencies like Dawson Trail where you got one of the best constituency MLAs in the province re-elected once again.

Now, I did spend some time in other areas, visiting in the new constituency of Kewatinook with my colleague the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson).

But I was persuaded, actually, also to go to a very interesting riding. I actually was persuaded by my wife, who spent a lot of time working in that riding, and it was a very interesting scenario. It was a new riding, and, of course, with no incumbent, having some history in the New Democratic Party, some history in the Liberal Party. But I got to—I have to tell you, it was one of the most dynamic races I've seen, and I want to put on the record how proud I am—and I watched this on election night as incumbent—to see the new member for Tyndall Park

(Mr. Marcelino), you know, who's going to be a tremendous addition to this House.

And if you look at not just those ridings, you look at all of the ridings and our team, I think there's another reason why we've been re-elected. And again, I don't know if members are taking notes of this, but I think when Manitobans see the New Democratic Party, they see the diversity of this province reflected in our caucus. I talked about the geography. Well, it's certainly there in terms of gender, and I'm very proud again that this party is a leader in terms of women MLAs, women in Cabinet, women in position of power, and I think that's what Manitobans expect in the year 2011.

But what I also see is the tremendous ethnocultural diversity, and that's again a growing part of this province. You know, I notice members opposite have been reflecting on that as well: the growing immigration in communities like Morden and Winkler and in Steinbach, my own community of Thompson, where we have renewed immigration again, and, of course, here in the city of Winnipeg. And this is a province where there's a hundred languages spoken, where we have very significant ethnocultural communities, many of which now are seeing the next step, which has been the election of people from those communities to this Legislature. And I'm very proud that the party of diversity in this province once again, as shown in the last election, is the NDP.

Now, I do want to make another—a number of other suggestions, by the way, and I notice again members opposite aren't exactly taking notes when I'm doing this, so I'm in good shape. I have to tell you that, you know, members opposite, I think if they had one flaw in a lot of their arguments that I ran—when I ran into people, whether it was in the city of Winnipeg or rural areas or the rest of the province. You know, really the doom and gloom, you know, a lot of the negative, negative, negative statements that we were hearing from them, it just didn't fit the reality. I was talking to people in the business community, I was talking to working people, to people in the farm sector, and, you know, a lot of people were telling me, saying, you know, yes, things are growing again in this province.

And I, you know, of course, I would throw in a few of the stats, but I didn't have to tell people about the fact that we had the highest population growth in 40 years, that we were the only province that didn't go into recession, that we were a province that's

growing all throughout this great province of ours. Some of the tremendous things happening here in the city of Winnipeg, some of the tremendous developments in rural Manitoba, some of the developments in terms of mining—Lalor Lake mine in, you know, in Snow Lake, the second best zinc deposit in the world. And what I found as we went around the province is that people were saying that we were running the economy well by working with the business community. My goodness, we even have the Jets back, is what I was hearing from people, and that showed in the response we received.

But it wasn't just in terms of that sense that things were going, you know, fairly well in terms of the economy. You know, and I know members opposite referenced issues like health care. One thing I talked about everywhere I went, people were saying that they've seen the difference. And they do remember, by the way, they do remember what happened in the 1990s. But it wasn't just what happened in the 1990s, and I suppose in the election we did like to remind people. I mean, we thought that was an important aspect of it. But I heard a lot of comments about the fact that we've been building on our health-care system. And I look—by the way, it's not just here in our main hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg. We've done significant work to build up our health-care system throughout the province, and I heard that from people, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what I also heard about, by the way. I heard about education, and, you know, I heard this particularly from students about how we've kept education affordable in this province. We are one of the most affordable places in the country to have a post-secondary education. I talked to teachers, and they remember the days, Mr. Speaker—I don't have to remind them about the 1990s. I had them reminding me about what it was like 15 years ago when the Conservatives were in office. What a difference to have a government that's committed to education, that's committed to working with teachers, not against teachers. And I heard that from a lot of people.

You know, I've got to mention about infrastructure. I think I mentioned it a few times already. But I got a real kick about going around this province talking about infrastructure. And I have to say to members opposite, and I hope new members will perhaps go on a somewhat different path, but in case they're not aware of this, when we came into government in 1999, the effective capital budget—this is the department of highways, okay—this was with a

government that had a lot of rural members, okay, that paid a lot of lip service to rural issues, it was \$85 million. Do you know what it is this year, Mr. Speaker? I want to indicate, by the way, that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) in his former life was a key part of this with Vision 2020. This year, it's \$363 million. And I know the member—the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) liked to try and get this in to divide one part of the province against the other, but there's not a single part of the province where we're not spending more on highways than was spent in 1999—north, south, east, west, rural, urban, northern.

\* (15:40)

Now, I could go on with a number of other factors in this election, but what I do want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, is one of the things that I think also spoke to why we're here as a government is what I heard from a lot of people, as well. You know, I heard a lot of people—actually, I had people ask me at the door to explain what the Leader of the Opposition meant by saying he was going to balance the budget in 2018. It was kind of an interesting experience. I had people that I would not classify as diehard NDP voters who were saying to me, you know, did I read that correctly? Was it a misprint? And I have to tell you, one of the other reasons we're here, Mr. Speaker, and I think the member—I've watched the Leader of the Opposition's comments since the election—it's because they know that when you talk about good government you also have to do the responsible thing. We have a five-year plan. We're on track on that five-year plan to balance the budget by 2014. To suggest that we would go another four years, seven years of deficits was irresponsible. And I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, because as I said, everywhere I went in this province I found people who were traditional Conservative voters who voted NDP because they understood that we get what it comes to in terms of the budget.

But we don't just balance the books, Mr. Speaker. The other thing I heard was that we care about the people of this province. And I want to say, as we've seen this growth, one of the underlying themes I heard from a lot of people is we're going to deal with the human side of it. You know, as we've seen growth, we've seen challenges in terms of housing and affordable housing. And we have done a lot to build a housing strategy, but we understood that we had to commit to do more, and that's what we did in the election.

I heard from a lot of people, as well, about the need to deal with public safety issues. And you know what? And the members opposite, they ran their ads, they ran some rather inflammatory stuff. I can tell you what I heard from people when I went door to door is, you know what, they want to deal with crime, but they also want to deal with the causes of crime. And that's one of the reasons we're here Mr. Speaker, it's we deal with both ends.

So if it looked like I was enjoying myself on Throne Speech day, I was. I've always said, Mr. Speaker, there's a certain element of the Manitoba Legislature that almost parallels our schools. We have a rather similar calendar. The only difference is, here, if you have the support of your constituents you don't graduate after a certain number of years; you stay here fighting for your constituents. But you know what, it felt like the first day of school. And, quite frankly, I know I've been fortunate to be elected in a number of elections. I can tell you, I was just as excited with the opening of this Legislature as I was when I was first elected.

And what I want to say is—I really want to say that it was one of the most exciting elections I've been through personally, locally, in my area, because there wasn't a community in my area, in my region, where we weren't doing something big. And you notice how we talked about that during the election, and we talked about it on election night, and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is talking about it again. You know, time and time again, we are—there's something big happening in our province. And whether it's the UCN campus that we've dreamed of for so many years that's being built right in the heart of Thompson right now, whether it's the expansion of the all-weather road network, which is going to connect 22 communities that in the year 2011 don't have the all-weather road network—admire it—or whether it's any of the work we're doing throughout rural Manitoba. You know, developing the economy, improving our infrastructure and, yes, fighting the flood together. You know, one thing you may have noticed, by the way, we parked our politics at the door when it came to the floods, and we fought with Manitobans throughout the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's something big happening in this province. You know, and I want to say I'm so proud to be back representing the people of Thompson. I'm so proud of my party, the New Democratic Party, and I want to just restate again what I've said many, many times. I want to great quote that great Manitoban—because if you think

you've seen a lot from us the last three terms, 12 years with a renewed mandate and four years ahead—to quote that great Manitoban, Randy Bachman, “You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet.”

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Lac du Bonnet has the floor.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your new position.

I would also like to congratulate all the other 54 MLAs on their victories in their ridings. It was a very difficult road to this new adventure, but it definitely was worth the effort.

I must acknowledge my fellow nominees for the Progressive Conservative LDB nomination, Mr. Greg Crognali and Mr. Melvin Rattai, as well as Ms. Charlett Millen for the Liberal Party, Ms. Elana Spence from the NDP party, and Mr. Dan Green from the Green Party. Even though it's less stressful getting in by acclamation, it's no fun. You five challenged me through each step in the process, and for that I thank you.

To start things off, I would like to thank all of the Lac du Bonnet constituents, because without their support and votes I would not be here today giving this speech.

Thanks to my incredible campaign team for guiding, supporting and keeping me motivated when at times it seemed like a century to election day:

Mr. Bob Grant, who was my phys. ed. teacher when I was in high school, my assistant principal when I started teaching at Edward Schreyer School in Beausejour, and finally now my campaign manager who kept everyone on track, including myself. If there was ever any job that needed doing or slack to be picked up, he did it. He put the Energizer Bunny to shame.

Mrs. Nancy Grant, who took a pile of phone calls for Bob and also helped out during coffee parties and on election day, I thank you. She must be the queen of stress management.

Mrs. Brenda Sevrinsen, my co-worker and my friend, who started out as the person who nominated me at the nomination meeting to my co-campaign manager for the election, even though she holds a full-time job as a resource teacher at Edward Schreyer School. She did a fantastic job balancing both, and I know at times she must have been ready to tap out, but she never showed it. I thank her and

her husband, Andy, for their support, not only throughout the campaign but within the past few years as well.

My official agent, Phil Stairs, and his wife, Treasure, are here with us today up in the gallery, who continues to remind me that the two people who go to jail if things are not followed correctly in the eyes of Elections Manitoba are him and I. Talk about attention to detail, but not only keeping track of the money, he would lend a hand with anything that the team would need. We, of course, are not done working on the election, and for this undertaking I cannot thank him enough. Thank you, Phil.

Claudia Dumoulin, my volunteer co-ordinator and my phone call expert. She undoubtedly made more phone calls to constituents, I feel, than any one person in the province. I think she has the letters "MTS" tattooed to the inside of her ear.

My two fantastic office managers, Leanne Urbanski, who is now my constituency assistant, and Lynn Fosty. Countless hours spent organizing lists, making phone calls, co-ordinating people and putting out little fires so that I didn't get burned. In my constituency office, I have two pictures titled *Teamwork* and *Determination*. I love working with people who strongly believe in these concepts, and the two of you and the team mirrored them every day.

Area co-ordinators Elaine, Lynn, Lynn Fosty Ken, Claudia, Brenda for organizing the groups in Powerview-Pine Falls, Pinawa, Lac du Bonnet and Beausejour.

Mr. Gerrard Lenoux [*phonetic*], my sign chair, making frames for signs, installing signs, fixing signs, setting up signs, fixing signs, delivering signs and, of course, fixing signs. He also—I didn't mention that one. He also co-ordinated the crews to help put the signs up and take them down around the constituency. Those individuals I would also like to name: Robert, Randy, Gil, Art, Guy, Tick, Bob, Dave and Bill.

Door-knocker teams Johnny, Sharon, Aggie, Mary, Jocelyn, Mom, Gil, Art, Jeff, Lynn, Gail, Randy, Greg, Bob and Ken.

My E-day chair, Phil Van Bergen. So I called Phil. You said you'd like to help out with the campaign. What about E-day chair? Phil said, what does that entail, or he asked. I responded, I don't

know, but I'll get Bob to call you tomorrow. Three E-day training sessions with the volunteers and the rest was history. Thanks for the help, much appreciated.

Fundraising co-chairs Dave Hebert and Collin Erickson, many hours brainstorming and putting up with my micromanaging. I thank the both of you for your hard work and your friendships.

And 23 Kennedy: Jonathon [*phonetic*], Sheila, Doug, Diane [*phonetic*] and Ruth. They must not have call display, because from the middle of March until the beginning of May, I had them on speed dial. Thanks to all of you for your guidance.

PC headquarters campaign team: Don, Marni, Greg, John Lyon and Devan and the rest of the team, thank you for all of your hard work as well.

Don Halbert, president of the Lac du Bonnet PC Association, I look forward to working closely with you and the rest of the association.

\* (15:50)

To my advisers: again, Bob Grant; former MLA Ken MacMaster, who also was an area co-ordinator, put up signs and helped me with door knocking; former Lac du Bonnet MLA Darren Praznik, who was not far away when I needed to chat, even though he lives in Ontario, would usually return my call within the hour; and, of course, Mr. Gerald Hawranik who, if I may take a message from the member from Burrows, I have mighty big shoes to fill. Thank you, as well as being able to have those phone call-telephone conversations with me from two provinces to the west. Good luck in your new occupation and congratulations. How could a guy lose if you have these four gentlemen in your corner? Add up their years of experience and I'm sure we're approaching 300 years, just joking, Ken.

Now to my lifelong supporters, Mom and Dad, Lorne and Lydia Ewasko, who I may add, are here today in the gallery as well. You have supported me in absolutely everything I have ever done; whether you have agreed with it or not, you backed me. You've taught me the importance of education, the importance to treat people with respect and dignity, basically how everyone should be treated. Also, that if you want something bad enough, work hard and put in the effort. You will reap the rewards. For that I thank you for the past 39 and five-sixth years of guidance and support.

To my other family members, my brother, Greg and his wife, Monique; nephews Owen and Sam; sister-in-law, Cheryl; nephews Vaughan and Cullen; brother-in-law, Trevor; nephews Kyle and Michael; and niece, Paige; cousins, Adeline and Crystal; and my in-laws, Wilf and Sylvia Groinus. I thank all of you for being an important part of my life.

Tracey, my wife of 15 years, my two boys, Brayden and Jarvis, I could not have done any of this without you. The three of you have been my rocks. Tracey has had to pick up my slack the last few months, taking on the role almost as a single parent. When we decide to do something as a family, we put in 110 per cent effort. Brayden and Jarvis, I know that this hasn't been easy on the two of you, but I'm very proud of you both for helping out your mom with chores and learning to do some small jobs around the house and the yard. I love the three of you so much words can't explain.

Now let's get down to some business. The richly diverse constituency of Lac du Bonnet, for those of you who have not had the pleasure of visiting, we have farming, mining, forestry, fishing, industry, hunting, tourism, and various other recreational activities. We have something for everyone. As many of you've stated, now that we are in the Legislature we must work together to build a better Manitoba for all Manitobans. We have to consider many of the needs of all of our stakeholders for generations to come.

The member from Swan River stated on Friday, safety. We, too, in Lac du Bonnet need to concentrate on our infrastructure. Cell service on some of our highways are too hit and miss, and in this day and age we should not have to worry about this such service. Whether it's on the way to Victoria Beach or Bissett, everyone should be in range.

Speaking of safety and communication, the Wabanong Anishinabe Interpretative and Learning Centre, which is being constructed near Hollow Water, the present government is looking to contribute a large sum of money into the project.

Today, I invite the honourable members of Logan, Thompson, Dauphin, Kildonan, Kewatinook, Seine River, and any other member to come for a ride with me down provincial highway/road, because I don't consider it a highway, 304 to experience firsthand the trip from Powerview-Pine Falls on the way to Bissett. It's hard to believe that with all of the money the mining industry pours into our Manitoba

economy, we would expect those people to risk their lives on that road.

I look forward to working with the honourable minister from Seine River on the personal care home promised to the town of Lac du Bonnet so that the shovel can hit the ground as soon as possible. We have other communities in the constituency looking towards better services when it comes to our aging population.

I look forward to working with the honourable minister from Thompson and discussing the many upgrades needed in our constituency: No. 520 between Lee River and Pinawa, safety concerns for ambulance traffic; No. 11, finish it beyond the tracks in Pine Falls, you know what I'm talking about; No. 304, mentioned before on the way to Bissett; No. 433 which has bounced back and forth between municipal and provincial responsibility. Since I'm dreaming today, how about the possible twinning of No. 59 Highway from Brokenhead to Victoria Beach where so many Manitobans love to venture. Let's save some lives. Now those are just a few.

Honourable member from Logan: I look forward to working with you on the ways to highlight and showcase many of the wonderful things we offer in Lac du Bonnet.

Honourable members from Dauphin and Kildonan: I look forward to working with you to help with our agricultural community and, of course, our conservation concerns.

I've spent the last 17 years as an educator. I look forward to hearing, seeing, and working with the members from St. Vital and Southdale on many of the education initiatives, classroom sizes, grade point averages, classroom composition and special needs.

Yes, we have flooding issues as well as extensive shoreline erosion in Lac du Bonnet. I look forward to working with the honourable member from Riel. Lake Winnipeg is calling.

I want to work closely and learn from the honourable member from Kewatinook on how we can assure that our constituents can increase access, standard of living and health care just like the rest of Manitobans. I know the Bipole III and a road on the east side would have definitely aided in that challenge. As I said, I look forward to future conversations.



Last, but definitely not least, my constituents and other Manitobans and I are looking forward to seeing this government's election promise of taking the school tax off of seniors and farmers. When is this going to happen and how is this going to be replaced?

I must thank everyone, my constituents, my volunteers, my co-workers, my friends, my family and my new colleagues for bestowing to me this honour of serving them in this incredible place, the Manitoba Legislature. I cherish the long-time friendships that were made and overwhelmed by the help of, until the campaign, perfect strangers. I thank you for your dedication. I look forward to working with all of you to make this place, Manitoba, a have-province for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship):** Yes, and I, too, want to congratulate you on your new position and wish you well in all your deliberations in this House.

I would like to very much thank the support that I received from the team that was put together in the Riel constituency for our last election. It was a great honour to work with a number of people there and I'd like to just mention our campaign manager, Janis Bermel. Janis and Rudy Bermel [*phonetic*] were really an important part of our whole campaign and I want to thank Janis for enduring her taxi rides from the west end to the south and back every day, sometimes through some pretty heavy traffic. So hats off to her for that.

Cindy Edmunds, who is our right-hand person, or I should say, left-hand person in Riel, really did a yeoman's service in getting things organized in the office, making sure they were continuing to run, making sure that volunteers felt welcomed and felt warmly received and, most importantly, were put to work because, of course, in a campaign there's always an awful lot of work to do, and so many people came out and really made things happen.

Our executive in Riel, our president, John Helliard, who has been—I think he told me this was about his 30th campaign that he had been active on, so it was really wonderful to have his experience and his abilities around the table and also some of the funny stories that he shared about previous campaigns and about our own campaign, because if you lose your sense of humour, you can lose

everything. So we had some good hearty laughs around that.

Michael Moyes, who was the chair of the sign committee and, of course, we all know that signs are campaigns on their own, that signs take on a life of their own and that it's one of the most active parts of any campaign. A lot of fun, a lot of driving around and a lot of drilling, so—literally, a lot of drilling.

Dennis Butcher added a lot of expertise from different initiatives he's been involved in and, boy, you can't get a better worker than Dennis. Once he decides something's going to be done, it happens, and it happens very, very quickly.

And Nancy Grant also played an important role for us. She, of course, had just moved from the north Point Douglas area, and perhaps the member from Point Douglas knows her. She was really helpful in getting a lot of things organized for the campaign and helping us right from the start.

Lana Adeleye Olusae was our money man and he really took great care and I knew that we were in very good shape right from the start and I want to thank him for his daily updates and his follow-ups.

\* (16:00)

Linda Taylor chaired our fundraising committee, and if you know Linda Taylor then you know you better call her back because she's going to be calling you back and there's no excuses. So I know she even went to knock on a few doors because she knew people weren't answering the phone, but they, in fact, were home. So that was a great, great effort, as well as the efforts of Mel Lazarek who also worked very, very hard on fundraising, on phone canvassing on election day and just about everything else going. And I think that was his first campaign that he was ever in as—I used to live in Newfoundland—as we'd say face and eyes right into it. And he really, I think, had quite an eye opener and enjoyed the campaign very much.

Of course, I'd like to thank my family, especially my sister, Susan Melnick, who again, every campaign I've been active in, she's been just as active. And it's great to have that sort of support and to have someone a bit of an arm's-length and you can just kind of run questions, you know, what do you think, what are you feeling, what are you seeing, what are you suggesting? And her advice is always very, very welcome.

There were many, many energetic volunteers and many, many generous donors, and for each and every role that each and every one of those people played, I am truly, truly grateful. And as many of us know, when it's your name out there and you see people walking in or you see a cheque coming in, it's quite humbling actually to see people supporting the candidate, the party, but most of all the vision of the NDP.

My greatest thanks go to the people of Riel constituency themselves. Due to the change in the boundaries I experienced losing a number of polls that I have been very active in and gaining about a third of the constituency. So it was really a delight to go around long before the election. I continued to canvass in between elections and to go through the polls during the campaigns, and the older polls where I was more familiar with people and they with me, but into the newer polls as well and had many, many good discussions at the door—many discussions that I would have liked to have had go on for quite a long time, an hour or so because people out there are always thinking, always interested and always engaged. And I always like to hear what the people are responding to, what their issues are, solutions that they suggest, ideas that they have for improvements and ways to move our province forward.

The main issues that we heard at the door, the No. 1 issue we heard at the door, of course, was health care. The New Democratic Party is the founding party of the universal not-for-profit health-care system throughout the country of Canada, started by Tommy Douglas in Saskatchewan who, of course, planted his roots in the social democratic ways here in the city of Winnipeg. Coming over as a young immigrant he, of course, grew up in what is north Winnipeg now and experienced several times people needing health care, not being able to receive health care, parents passing far too early to—for their children's needs, children passing, breaking parents' hearts, and determined that if he ever had the opportunity and, in fact, took and created the opportunity, that he would fight for universal health care so that people would receive health care based on their needs and not the size of their wallets. And that has been a feature of the New Democratic Party provincially, nationally.

Certainly, Jack Layton left us too soon, far too soon, but did a wonderful job of fighting for everyday Canadians not only on health care, but on

housing and fighting for seniors. So as we dedicated this election in Manitoba to Jack, I know each of us carried him with us as we went door to door in our message that we would continue to not only talk about the need for universal health care but to make sure that it's being delivered in a very real way.

So I was very, very pleased and very proud to talk to people at the door about the hiring of 2,000 more nurses, which we have pledged to do—nurses and nurse practitioners. I remember having a very good discussion with a young woman on St. Mary's Road who was studying to be a nurse practitioner and wanted to make sure that her skills would be well used. And I assured her that they would be, that she need look no further than the province of Manitoba because here in Manitoba we were building a facility for nurse practitioners and we were very happy that she was taking up this challenge with the government. Certainly, the 2,000 new nurses that will be hired complements the 3,000 that we have hired over the last number of terms and that we will continue to be working with.

I was very interesting to hear a number of people talk to me about supporting the New Democratic Party because of Gary Filmon, and they had all sorts of reasons for supporting the NDP: because of Filmon Fridays, because of—one woman told me she was with the WRHA when they wrote up the contract for Connie Curran, you know, the toast came up again. And I remember a couple of times walking away from the house saying, thank you, Gary Filmon, for everything you did because it's making our job, all these years later, even easier. Because there are some things, Mr. Speaker, you never forget and there are some things that you know that you're going to do differently.

We had a number of voters who had supported the Tories in the past but this time voted NDP because they were very afraid of privatization. And that's the word they used was privatization. And I assured people they have very good reason to be afraid. And we talked about the Manitoba Telephone System being given away to for-profit, and concerns about service and concerns is—even was raised by the opposition today in this House about the services that are being provided for cellular services in times of emergencies. So, yes, this is what happens when you go for-profit, where it's all about profit. It's not about the people and it's not about the service. So people were telling me very clearly they do not want Manitoba Hydro to be privatized.

I also had very, very interesting discussions at the door about the Canadian Wheat Board. And I said, you know, our party is very clear, whether it's the provincial New Democratic Party or the federal New Democratic Party. And I want to thank the member from Churchill and the member from Winnipeg North, Pat Martin and Niki Ashton, for the fight that they're fighting in Ottawa at this very moment, standing up for Manitobans, standing up for producers, standing up for the Port of Churchill, standing up for the people of Churchill, and standing up for a predictable system where the producer knows that they will get fair compensation for their work, where the town of Churchill knows that they will be part of a system in which Manitoba feeds the world, the breadbasket of the world. Members opposite did not take a position before the election, did not take a position during the election and refused to take a position now. We're very clear and Manitobans understand there's not this wishy-washy business. We're standing with them, we're standing for them and we're fighting for them at every level in this party. And I had people who were even retirees of the Wheat Board who were moved to actually put signs on their lawn because of the clarity that we had, and I was very proud to be able to be that clear.

When we talk about expanding education, I remember talking to a woman on the doorstep and she said to me, you know, I have an adolescent son and I want him to have somewhere to go after school. I want him to not be hanging out at 7-Eleven. And I said, you know, we just made an announcement a few days ago called After School Matters. We are the party who has rebuilt the public education system, literally from the ground up, and I want to thank the past ministers of Education in this government who literally put bricks and mortar together so kids could go to school. And I want to thank the current Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) for her announcement today around making sure that kids have places to go and things to do after school.

And we talked about the importance of not just early childhood education in the child-care system, but we talked about after public education and post-secondary education. And people were talking about their children's hopes and their children's dreams and how they wanted to make sure they were able to realize them. And I said, well, that's what we want too, which is why we have invested heavily in post-secondary education. We brought back the bursary program, which I know is very heavily subscribed, but we've also invested in the trades because we

want to make sure that if a young person is not wanting to go into a university setting that they have the trades to go into. And I started to talk to a parent about this and she said, oh, listen, my son's already got his papers, he knows all about this. And she started to tell me about our programs, and that was quite satisfying, and I said to her: Well, you know, you should come door to door with me because you're much better at this than I am. And, you know, we had a good laugh, but to know that her son had the opportunity to make the decisions that he wanted to make and will now be giving back to the economy because he was able to acquire the education that he wanted and that he needed to have.

\* (16:10)

I also—I grew up in the area that I'm privileged enough to represent, the area of Riel, which is around St. Amant Centre, St. Vital Centre, Dakota Collegiate, and it was a good place to grow up but it's an even better place to live now because of the diversity that you see in every single neighbourhood that you go to and the celebration of multiculturalism is something that the New Democratic Party also stands for.

And I know the member from Thompson talked about the diversity in our Cabinet. I, too, celebrate that. I also feel that it is normal to have diversity represented wherever we go in our province and that that is a very healthy way that every Manitoban brings to the table so much and that we celebrate the differences that come and we blend them together to create an even better tomorrow for this province.

A lot of people talked about safer communities and they were concerned about the crime that was happening, but they also felt that the position of punishment, punishment, punishment is not the way to go. And I talked to them about what the Manitoba NDP had accomplished, that although the gangs came during the late '90s, that we have been shutting down gang houses, that we have community safety programs that have been very heavily used, that we have been able to shut down, I believe, it's over a hundred crack houses and that these can be done with the safety of the individuals who are working against this so that you don't have to go and face someone in a crack house. You don't have to go and face a gang member and feel their retribution, that you are safe under our legislation and that it is very effective.

We also talked about the best way to deal with crime is to prevent it and that's why we have worked

with inner city organizations such as BUILD, and other initiatives, that when gang members say they want out, we help them. A lot of these guys, even though they're quite young and a lot of them are young men, do have families and so they want to be able to provide for their family. So by giving them a real alternative, a skill: carpentry, electrician, plumbing, cabinetmaking, home building, home renovation—they can take their skills to the marketplace and they're able to provide for their children and so their children see their parents changing the world for them and providing stability and providing opportunities that they, in turn, will hopefully take up.

And so I'm very proud that we partner with BUILD, which I believe was up for a national award a couple of months ago. Shaun Loney is the executive director of BUILD. Shaun, I know very well. He lived in Riel for quite a while and was very active on a lot of issues, and I'll have to follow up to see if they, in fact, did win that national award.

But getting back to the area of crime, the prevention and providing real opportunities is a way that can be very helpful and can be very successful, but it takes more than a punishment mentality.

I also talked to them about how the government in Manitoba had been very successful in lobbying the federal Tory government on the two-for-one and making sure that that change was made, and a lot of people didn't know about it but they were very open to hearing about it. And they were very pleased that their provincial government had done that. They were also very, very supportive of our current lobbying, which would be good if members opposite supported us in, in changing legislation, so that recruiting someone to a gang becomes a crime under the Criminal Code of Canada, because right now anybody can recruit anybody and it's okay. We don't feel it is okay on this side of the House. We feel that the recruitment into gangs is a criminal act, certainly leads to criminal activity and ruins lives, and not just the life of the gang member but family, friends and sometimes community. So we will continue to work on those effective ways to deal with crime.

The hiring of more prosecutors is something else that we were—that we are working on, and we will continue to hire more people to make sure that there's more timely sentencing and be able to keep the system moving.

The other thing that we have invested in heavily is recreation. You know, tired kids don't get into trouble; tired kids go home and go to bed. And that, we think, is really, really effective. So we talked to—we announced the building of more soccer facilities. You know, soccer is a great sport because it doesn't cost a lot. You need a pair of shoes you can run in and a ball that you can kick around on a field, and it's really a sport that is growing in the province of Manitoba.

And one of the great things about the development of soccer is that it seems to be paralleling the inclusion of girls and young women and professional athletes. We all know and cheer for our national soccer team—women's soccer team, and I think that the parity, the quality in sports, the inclusion in sports is also very, very important and certainly it's something that we support.

Playgrounds, we've invested heavily in. I'm always very pleased when I drive around the constituency of Riel and I see, through our community places, where there used to be barren ground, there is now wonderful playgrounds and wonderful play stations. And you see children there, you see families there, it's a place to go to have fun, to be safe, to have friends, to meet friends, and that's really important as well. And, of course, the member of Dawson Trail would never forgive me if I didn't mention splash pads, which is one of his pet projects, but I know that they'll be appearing in constituencies all around the province.

Affordability was something that people talked a lot about. The constituency of Riel is very interesting because it includes some very high-end housing, and it includes public housing, and it includes one section of the Village Canadien, which is the largest housing co-op in Manitoba. And, so there's really an array of people, and there are concerns about affordability, there's concerns about making sure that people can buy homes, that they can afford their homes, making sure that they can provide the utilities that they need in those homes.

And so the announcement that we made during the election of making Manitoba the lowest combined cost for electricity, home heating and auto insurance in Canada was also very, very well received. And, of course, when we look at how that's—how we are able to do that, those are, of course, through Crown corporations. Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Public Insurance, which I know

the Tory candidate from Seine River had mused about privatizing. That was something he had wanted to do as a city councillor, and then after mentioning that, I believe he was nominated by the Tory party. So that was another hint for people in south Winnipeg that the agenda, despite what was said during the campaign, that the history of comment, the history of action around privatization, was more important than what was being said during the campaign.

And I think we might have created a new word during the campaign, the word privatizer. I had never heard that myself, but it certainly fit in. And when we explained, you know, the history of, you know, again, it was Gary Filmon, 1995, no, we're not going to privatize MTS, we're not going to do anything about that, we support the Crown corporations and—well, of course, Frances Russell, wrote an incredible column that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. I think it was about four or five days before the election.

I see I've hit a nerve over there, some yakking—*[interjection]* Yes, that's hit home. Frances Russell wrote an incredible column, which was well documented, that talked about while Gary Filmon was saying he would not privatize MTS, he, in fact, had begun the very actions that were needed to privatize, as he was going out and saying—well, I know there are certain words we can't use in the House—but saying different things to the people of Manitoba, and then was appointed to the board, and I believe has made hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And I wonder, maybe that was really what was behind the plan to say they're not going to privatize Hydro during the campaign. And, I don't know, maybe they had thought they were going to start to put plans in on October 5th, but fortunately that's—we'll never know that because we're on this side of the House, they're on that side of the House.

\*(16:20)

But Manitobans really do appreciate the Crown corporations and the services that are offered through the Crown corporations, and that's the way they want to keep it. So when I heard people, you know, at the door, expressing, without my mentioning Manitoba Hydro privatization, their fears I assured them—their fears were very real, and that the best way to do that was to not support the party who were the privatizers, but, rather, to support those who have

leaders who say we won't privatize before they're in power and don't privatize while they're in power. And that's a little difference between us and the members opposite.

The elimination of the education property taxes for seniors and farmers was also extremely well-received. There are many seniors in Riel, as I'm sure we all represent many seniors in the mixed communities that we have in our constituencies, and seniors were very, very pleased about this. They have done a lot of work usually raising their children, paying for the education taxes and helping their kids out, and they agree that it's time to give them a break. And so they're looking very forward to this. And it was—I was always very pleased to tell seniors who maybe hadn't heard that announcement, that this is what we're going to do, and they obviously liked it, as we saw the results on the evening of October the 4th.

Freezing tuition to the rate of inflation was also very, very well received. I talked—as I went to the door, a lot of young people were the ones who had come to the door, and whether they were of voting age or not mattered not, because they were Manitobans and they were part of this beautiful community that we call Manitoba. And so I would have very good discussions with them about their hopes, their aspirations, what areas they were interested in setting further or trades they were interested in going into, and the freezing of the tuition to the rate of inflation meant, again, that this was a government that was willing to help them make their dreams come true. And they didn't have to leave home. They didn't have to go anywhere outside of the province of Manitoba to realize those dreams, and then, because we have such a booming economy, the assurance from Standard and Poor 'goffed' at by the opposition, but the assurance of Standard and Poor that our AA rating is remaining in place is another vote of confidence, and it's another way that Manitobans can feel good and feel secure about the government that they have and about the province in which they live and they can plan for the future. And, you know, stability in government and stability in the ability to plan is very, very important.

Protecting the environment also came up. It was another important issue and people were happy that certain announcements were being made around the protection of the environment here in Manitoba, and they were also very, very interested in what had happened this spring in the flooding and they felt

that—they understood that this was a monumental event in the history of our province. And if I could put the spring flooding into perspective, if we had not handled the Portage Diversion and built the diking along the Assiniboine as we did, there was enough water coming down the Assiniboine River that the water would have run uncontrolled into Lake Manitoba and filled up Lake Manitoba and then run uncontrolled back into the Assiniboine River. That's how much water we were dealing with this spring.

Another comparison would be if the equivalent amount of water had flowed up the Red River this spring as had flowed along the Assiniboine, even with all of our controls, the community ring dikes, the 97-plus-two raising of all the buildings in the valley, all of southern Manitoba would have gone under. And even with the expanded floodway, the city of Winnipeg would have been under threat. So that gives you a sense of the immensity of the event this spring. And I would very, very much like to thank the people in every community in this province who rose to the challenge and who volunteered day after day after day helping friends, helping family and helping those whose names they will never know, because when there's a problem in Manitoba, we don't say, oh, that's your problem, you deal with it; we say, how do we help? And, again, Manitobans rose to the challenge and helped.

I know I heard many stories of volunteers who came out. There was a set of volunteers who were sandbagging a house around the area that was going to be affected by the Hoop and Holler cut, and these people were all volunteers themselves, on a first-name basis with each other, just because they didn't know each other's last name, and a van came up and a man came out and he brought a huge container of coffee and he brought a huge amount of muffins, and he just placed them on a table and he left. And, to this day, no one knows who he was. He was just someone who was helping in the way that he could.

And I have tremendous respect for the people of Manitoba. I have tremendous respect for the rural municipalities that were affected and who rose to the challenge and for the civil servants throughout this province, many of whom didn't even count the overtime they were putting in because they just knew that that help was needed, and they would help in any way that they can.

I also want to thank the military for coming in, and I couldn't help but—you know, as I was watching the helicopters go along the—taking the sandbags out

along the Assiniboine dikes and these young people with so much pride and so much energy and such great intention, that if there was—wouldn't it be a great world if this is what armies were really used for, were to help people in times of natural disaster?

**An Honourable Member:** That's what they are used for.

**An Honourable Member:** Only, I think, was her point. You're missing the point again.

**Ms. Melnick:** So the point is, just to be clear, that this was a tremendous event in the history of the province of Manitoba, and it was a huge challenge, and the challenge has not ended yet. But the people of Manitoba have risen and the people of Manitoba have really helped in every way they could. And I want to express my gratitude for the great work that was done.

You know, we are in a different time now where we have unpredictable weather patterns. We have tremendous storms, not only in the Prairies. If we watch, Bangkok is under threat as we speak now. There were very heavy rains in Brazil and there were landslides down many of the shanty towns, and many people were literally lost in the landslides. So this is an international—*[interjection]* Well, members opposite might think this is funny. We don't think it's funny over here at all. We took it very seriously. But we are dealing with different weather patterns around the world, and so our response has to be different. And what we're responding to in this speech is the development of a surface water—

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

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating all members of the House, new and renewed, who have joined us after October the 4th. It's been an interesting journey, needless to say. I want to welcome back the table officers, Legislative Chamber and Hansard staff and the pages, who will be assisting us as we progress through this long session of eight days, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue the debate and do what we can to raise the issues that are so important to Manitobans as we go forward.

I want to congratulate Speaker Reid on his election. I've had the opportunity to have him chair committee on a number of occasions for different Estimates processes or committee meetings, and you are always fair and your comments were thoughtful,

and I look forward to your leadership in the Chamber as we go forward.

Minnedosa constituency: I had the honour of representing that riding for eight years. It was home of a former premier, Premier Walter Weir, and many distinguished MLAs over the many years that Minnedosa constituency was established. In 1999, it was—there was a redistribution and, at that time, Harold Gilleshammer was the MLA, and at that time Mr. Gilleshammer had asked for my help to help develop a team, a family of residents of the new constituency of Minnedosa. And it was a challenge. We had the No. 1 Highway splitting the constituency, and we had a number of challenges in developing a family and a team. But over the years we succeeded and we had a great family within that Minnedosa constituency, and I just want to thank the many communities that made up the Minnedosa constituency for the eight years that I represented; the Hutterite colonies who were very thoughtful and very caring and very interested in the process that takes place within the Legislature. I enjoyed visiting the schools, visiting with the leadership, and I look forward to continuing my friendships with the communities as we go forward.

\* (16:30)

The municipalities within the Minnedosa constituency had many successes and also very many disappointments over the eight years that I represented. We saw a number of things happen to our constituency that were directly related to the government in power, the NDP in power.

We saw positions, Crown land jobs, get taken away from communities such as Minnedosa and put into other areas of the province. People's jobs were lost. Their homes—their lives within a community were disconnected, and many people left the community based on that. We had emails sent to the Premier that were deleted without being looked at. We saw the minister responsible for the Crown lands, the Minister of Agriculture, come in through, not the front door of the government office, so that she wouldn't have to face those staff people. You know, we seen a number of disappointments by this government for not standing up and being strong in their decision making and how they were handling situations.

We've seen how this government handled flood forecasting and how its incompetence in that decision making has actually affected so many

families within the Minnedosa or former Minnedosa constituency. The community of Souris is still struggling with the decisions that were made by this government. Hundred-year-old trees were uprooted, yards were destroyed for, as it appears to be, no reason, if they would have been following the forecasts that were appropriate and correct. Families have lost their backyards. Their homes have lost value, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that the government has to be held account.

I believe somebody earlier had indicated that—I think it was the member for Portage—indicated if an apology was made by the government for its inability to manage forecasting properly, that would be really well received by so many constituents within rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba, who faced unbelievable situations and continue to this day.

I believe that there should have been less political interference by this government with regard to how the flood was held—or handled. I believe a member on the other side of the House was speaking about not politicizing the flood.

Well, I can say, Mr. Speaker, that when you have the Premier (Mr. Selinger) come to a community, helicopter in, the Fire Commissioner's office brings Zodiac boats and their command centre into the community, has—the Premier has his press conference and his statement, and then everybody leaves town. This is happening while people are fighting a flood. They had to encourage him to come to the dam to actually see first-hand the devastation that the community was facing and the challenges that community was facing. If that's not political interference or political 'mandarining' of the process and a slap in the face to the people of the community, then I don't know what is. People were devastated, and they speak about it still, as a terrible way to be handling a flood situation.

But a lot of good came from the flood in the sense of bringing community together. The Hutterite colonies within their area were so supportive in coming forward and providing not only food, which Hutterite communities are known for, but also their strength. They would come and build—create sandbags and throw sandbags and ensure that community people, who had been working for nine weeks, could receive some rest and respite. The community will never forget that, and I believe that the communities that have Hutterite colonies within their municipality are better for it, Mr. Speaker.

CFB Shilo was part of the Minnedosa constituency and I have to say that I was never more proud of CFB Shilo than its role that it played within the flood in Manitoba. It played a significant role in Portage and then came to help the community of Souris and other communities in the area and they were very strong in their support. And what I found refreshing was they had no issue and played a leadership role in our celebration of the success of dealing with flood and the efforts put forward. They even brought their own band, which was a part of the celebrations on the crescent after the flood.

I would like to speak a little bit about CFB Shilo and the relationship that I developed as the MLA with that community. I can't believe, and I, to this day, cannot put into words their unwavering commitment to their country and to their community. They are an amazing community, and I believe that, over time, it was humbling and often heartbreaking when I would be attending events that would be recognizing a lost soldier or a family member that would have been lost. They are very strong and they're very resilient but they are very committed to what they do in—for Canada and for us as residents. And I'll forever be grateful for that.

I believe communities like Glenwood and Cornwallis and Wawanesa and Whitehead have significant challenges before them. The flood has devastated these municipalities and these communities. We have farm families in communities such as Whitehead and Glenwood who did not plant a crop this year; farm families who will not see an income this year based on their—based on crop planting. We have people that have animals—farm animals that are displaced, cattle that are displaced.

We have outstanding compensation applications to rebuild. These applications have not even been reviewed. Some paperwork hasn't even been returned. And I believe that a lot of these individuals are at a loss of what—how they're going to be able to handle their cattle or their livestock and how they're going to make it through a winter.

So that's part of the Minnedosa constituency that I have represented over the last eight years and have had the challenges and the successes at times in representing them.

A new chapter began in the spring and through the summer, and that new chapter was called Riding Mountain. That is a new riding. It's made up of communities from Russell and from Minnedosa, and

I found it rather exciting in a lot of ways to be able to represent communities where I grew up, that I was able to reconnect with people that I went to school with, I played baseball with, my children have taken swimming lessons with. It's still home.

The communities of Russell, Angusville, Rossburn, Inglis, are communities that I have a lot of connection with. And so, through the campaign, I enjoyed reconnecting with a lot of those people. My sister-in-law is the economic development officer for the area in Russell and Inglis—Marcia—and it was quite interesting because when I would door knock in Inglis, often they would say, well, you're not the one running, it's Marcia that's running, and I go no, that's my sister-in-law. And we, you know, fortunately or unfortunately, have married brothers and this is how we are going to continue to move forward.

**An Honourable Member:** Which one is it?

**Mrs. Rowat:** Yes, I don't know, it depends. I'm asked which one is it. It depends. But Marcia is a very good friend of mine. I went to school with Marcia and I look forward to spending more time with my sister-in-law and, of course, my brother-in-law as well.

Marcia is very involved in the community and that's an excellent resource for me in making sure that I stay connected to the issues within the Shellmouth-Boulton area and the Russell area and the RM of Russell. And I believe that by continuing to work with these communities, Riding Mountain will be a very strong community and many issues will be brought forward to government over the next four years.

\* (16:40)

I grew up in Angusville which is a small little community within the Riding Mountain constituency. I laugh because my mom keeps a little number on—beside the phone of how many people live in the community and it goes up and down but never more than by one or two, but I believe the population is around 50. It's a great community to have come from, but what I have seen is a community that has lost almost everything that it has on Main Street. First was the school and then were the stores and then was the post office and then was the hotel. So I've lived in a community that has a lot of wonderful history but has seen a lot of hardship, and I think that's where I get my passion for



communities is from seeing so much loss but seeing so much passion still within that community of 50.

This summer there was a video that was produced in the community of Angusville. It was a rock video, and my daughter was able to participate in it. And I thought, what an opportunity for her to be able to be participating in a rock video that was being produced by my cousin from Vancouver who used to—who grew up in the Russell area and wanted to do something like this. And I thought this was a great chance for Mackenzie to be a part of something that was pretty special. I think it has affected her views on what she would like to do in life. I was kind of hoping she'd go into, you know, something sports-minded, maybe kinesiology or something like that, but now I think she's got a vested interest in the arts field, so I think that it was a great opportunity and I know that she enjoyed it.

I went to Angusville up to grade 8 and then after that went into Russell to Major Pratt collegiate, and when I visited the school during the campaign, I was so pleased to see so many of my former classmates as educators within that school. It was great to be able to sit down and chat with them and talk to them about what they see as issues not only within the school but also within the community, and it fostered new friendships, I would have to say.

With Russell comes an area that I'd like to cover, which is my respect and admiration for the former MLA for Russell. Len Derkach was the MLA for the Russell constituency for 25 years. It was called Russell-Roblin when I worked for Len Derkach some 25 years ago, I guess it would be, and I just want to say that I want to put on the record that Len has been a great friend, a great family friend. His family and my family have been connected for years and probably even before our ancestors came to Canada. I believe we even have roots back to the Ukraine. Len has been somebody to look to. He was an amazing public servant who unselfishly represented his constituents. He worked hard for them. He spoke highly of them. He advocated for them strongly, passionately. We remember so many debates within the Legislature where he would share his views and fight, fight very hard for the constituents of the Russell area. So I want to congratulate Len on his retirement, and I want to wish him and his family well going forward.

The Riding Mountain constituency is huge. There's 25 municipalities that make up the constituency of Riding Mountain. So, when we talk

about urban centres that have a mayor and council, in some ways, I'm a little envious because I deal with 25 elected organizations and groups through municipalities. I also have four First Nations and I have four Hutterite colonies. I have two school divisions and I have two downhill ski resorts, or two downhill ski facilities, Minnedosa and Assessippi. I have a beautiful national park that I represent, and I will have several provincial parks as well in that area. And, of course, there's tons of highway travel that I've been experiencing over the last few months.

Representing a riding that large is going to be a challenge, and I believe that, in discussions with the municipalities as we were going through the election campaign, I indicated to them that I will do what I can and I would be very open to discussions. They have my cell number. They have my email address and I encourage them to get to know me as I would need to get to know them because if we're going to make Riding Mountain as good of a constituency as that should be, as progressive and as strong as it needs to be and should be, we need to be able to relate and communicate. So I believe that over the next four years we will be building these relationships and moving forward.

The election campaign was interesting, as I said it was—it's huge. There's lots of travel time. We go to a breakfast meeting and then we travel for two hours to make a luncheon meeting, and then we travel two hours to get to an afternoon meeting, and then we travel another two hours to get to a dinner. What I learned from that experience during the campaign is we're going to have to really work at trying to co-ordinate events in different communities on different days and really try to get as many meetings in as possible during that period of time.

But what I found most interesting was the commitment to help. Obviously, that's where I come from is the Riding Mountain constituency, and my mom and dad played an integral role in helping me set up my campaign. Mom and dad have been involved in campaigns for years, ever since I can remember, and probably before I can remember. My mom ran the Russell office, and we made sure we had an office that was close to the post office and she could visit and discuss with people the issues. And anybody that she thought I should be talking to she made sure I spoke to them that day, and I think that that was something that resonated with the constituents is if—and that actually came up at several council meetings—that if they can't reach me, they'll

be phoning my mom or my dad and making sure that I get back to whoever has the issue.

So, I just want to thank my mom and dad. My dad made many trips from Oakburn all the way through to St-Lazare to make sure that the signs were in place and were visible. And my dad is getting up in years, so for him to make that effort every single day meant a lot to me, and he made sure that I knew where he had been and what was going on with the signs.

Brad, my husband, Cameron and Mackenzie, my children, it was a little more difficult for them to be engaged. *[interjection]* Yes. Cameron is in grade 12, so this is an interesting year for us, and my daughter is grade 11. And I think that what they got from the campaign it is hard work. Cameron's been asked often whether this is something he'd ever consider, and he said, no, this not something he would ever consider, and Mackenzie maybe. But it's definitely very hard on the family and I want to thank them for being there and being a part of it.

My husband works for Manitoba Hydro, which I found as a useful tool during the campaign, because people would ask me about this comment by the NDP that we would privatize Manitoba Hydro. And Brad would just laugh at that comment, and so would a lot of his colleagues, because they knew it was fear mongering and, actually, I had more people ask for signs that work for Manitoba Hydro than I've ever had. I had more personal commitments, financially and personally, from people that work with Manitoba Hydro than I've ever had. I had more phone calls from people that work with Manitoba Hydro and MTS than ever before.

So I believe that, when I'm hearing from the government side that this is, you know, a concern and it was really an issue, I actually found a lot of that going the other way. I had—Brad came home one day and said, oh, so and so wants a sign in their yard. I was at a Hydro meeting and they were mentioning they wanted to publicly show their support for our party and the work that we're doing and how we as a party were actually taking a position of being less interfering and believing that Hydro should do business, and do their business, and we should stay out of their business. And I think that that resonated with a lot of people who work for Manitoba Hydro.

I want to thank the leader for our party, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), for the five years that he's provided leadership. I've known the leader for over 25 years. I worked with him in the

Legislature when he was—*[interjection]* Yes, I guess I was part of Filmon's staff, I guess. But, you know, we had a great time and I especially enjoyed the Jim Walding celebrations that we would have. That, to me, was a highlight of the year within the building and we enjoyed that activity.

\* (16:50)

On a serious note, Brad and I have enjoyed Hugh and Jen's friendship, and we know that that will continue. We know that going forward we're going to be a strong caucus, and I believe a lot of that has to do with the leadership of Hugh McFadyen. So I look forward to that continuing.

I'm going to speak briefly on the Throne Speech, not very long. But I'm just going to talk about the financial implications that are going to be an issue with regard to the government. The level of debt in Manitoba is at \$25 billion and growing 10 per cent a year. Now that was something I heard at the doors was: How is this government going to pay for all of its spending? How is this government going to pay for all of its debt? And you know, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba right now receives \$3.65 billion in transfer payments from Ottawa, and actually almost \$2 billion of that is in equalization payments.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how this government can think that it's going to be able to continue to keep its financial or fiscal position without it raising taxes. And that is a very serious issue within the constituents of Riding Mountain. They're very concerned that this government cannot manage its finances. The NDP have already projected a \$511-million deficit for 2011 and '12 before the flood. And we know that the flood is costing nearly a billion dollars for this Province to handle. And so many issues with how they're going to implement the compensation for these families.

So I believe that on that note I think that the government has its work cut out for it. It's got four years of trying to explain how they're going to bring the budget back into a balanced situation. And I look forward to challenging the government on how they're going to be doing that and actually being a strong voice for Riding Mountain.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to share.

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today to speak in support of our Throne Speech for the First Session of the Fortieth Legislature. And I have to say that any time that one

gets the opportunity to rise in this wonderful room to speak, it does make one's heart beat a little bit faster and hope that I don't skip over anything important that I want to say.

But, before I begin, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on being elected. And I know that you will preside over our activities and make sure that we keep decorum and civility in this Chamber. And I know that you will do a very good job making sure that we do everything that is correct and proper in the House. So all the best to you and enjoy this opportunity.

As well, I would like to acknowledge and thank the table officers for their hard work and efforts to keep our House focused and running smoothly. With so many new faces in our Chamber and a new Speaker, I know that there is more work ahead for you. But we have every confidence that you will keep us on track and we won't skip a beat. We welcome also the newest member of your table officers.

Each session sees a new crop of pages in the House, and I would like to welcome the new pages. I know you are going to enjoy your time here in the Legislature. And it does get hectic, but I assure you that we greatly appreciate the way you look after us in the House. So thank you and enjoy your time here.

I would also like to congratulate all honourable members in this Chamber who have been re-elected to this Fortieth Legislature. And to all the new MLAs on both sides of the House, welcome to the Manitoba Legislature and an opportunity to serve all Manitobans. It's truly a great privilege and honour, but, trust me, it will also be the experience of a lifetime.

After an election, obviously, there are always a host of people to thank. And I would like to express my gratitude to the constituents of Rossmere who have seen fit to re-elect me for a second term as MLA. I am humbled by their endorsement to continue to work on their behalf and to make the northeast corner of Winnipeg an even better place to live.

I'm very excited to continue my role as MLA for Rossmere, a constituency which has seen a number of changes since the last election. With the boundary review, much of Rossmere has changed. About 40 per cent of Rossmere is different than it was in the last election. One of the things that I've noted is

many of the seniors that I've gotten to know over the last few years, and I think I've mentioned in this House on many occasions that I think, next to St. James, Rossmere has one of the largest complements of seniors. Many of them have now moved from their single-family homes to apartments and to assisted living, and I must say, Rossmere has its share. From Kingsford House, Kildonan House, and Donwood South to Concordia Village, all three phases of it, and to the new Devonshire House which also has, I think, a three-building complex that makes it up.

As I look at my constituency and I contemplate the coffee parties that I'm going to have to be planning for this winter, I think I have somewhere in the number of 15 to 18 seniors' apartments that are anticipating a visit from me over the next number of months. But what's also happened in the course of the election is that the homes that the seniors departed from have now been—have now seen new, young families moving in. And I have to say it was a treat walking down streets and door knocking and seeing bicycles with training wheels, scooters and hockey nets scattered all around the lawns and hearing the sounds of youngsters playing on the front yards filling the air.

So they're a new generation of folks who are calling Rossmere home, and I know, for these folks, the really important part of Rossmere and the North Kildonan area is that the education for their kids is utmost in their minds. So for them, having a wonderful school division like River East-Transcona that their children can go to is a real bonus for them, and I have to say that I'm very, very proud of the things that the River East-Transcona School Division provides for the families of the northeast corner. Certainly, the number of programs that are offered, and, in particular, in my area, the Ukrainian bilingual program which is run by the Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education, the German bilingual program, Manitoba parents for German language education, and it speaks to the families and the parents getting involved and making sure that these opportunities are there and working together with the River East-Transcona School Division to ensure that there's quality education for their kids.

One of the things I have to mention, because I think, probably, about this time, in Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto, Zane Zalis, who is the choral teacher at Miles MacDonnell Collegiate, is taking part in a performance of his *I Believe* oratorio, and I believe it's—has been sponsored by a Holocaust

survivor from Winnipeg who has made sure that this wonderful piece of music is going to be shared with not just Winnipeggers and Manitobans, but right across Canada. And it is an outstanding piece of music that was premiered two years ago by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and when I spoke to Zane a few months ago, he was really, really excited. In fact, he says, you have to come to Toronto and be there for it, but, obviously, I have to be here doing this right now. But the orchestras and the choral groups from Hamilton and Toronto, and I think it's the Toronto Opera Chorus that is going to be singing and there's a children's chorus from Hamilton that's also taking part and a world-renowned conductor that, unfortunately, my music background is so limited I can't remember what his name is, but I think it's absolutely stupendous that someone from the northeast corner of—from the music program in River East Transcona School Division is seeing his vision take flight in Roy Thomson Hall as we speak.

The boundary review also created other changes. As I said earlier, about 40 per cent of the Rossmere constituency has changed and it certainly has

expanded. Certainly, I sometimes feel that when I'm heading across from one end of Rossmere to the other, I have to pack a lunch because it has become one of the largest constituencies in the city of Winnipeg in terms of size but also in the number of constituents. Part of the change has been that there are communities that now straddle Lagimodiere so that the old Rossmere as well as some of the new communities that come into the constituency. So I really do look forward to and I welcome the neighbourhoods of Eaglemere, Harbourview South, Concordia East, parts of Transcona as well as a number of neighbourhoods that did not even exist at the time of the boundary review.

And midway through the election, Elections Manitoba sent us a thick envelope which we opened up and—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the member for Rossmere has 22 minutes remaining.

The time being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, October 25, 2011**

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