

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

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

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

<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
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	NDP
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	NDP
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SELBY, Erin, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
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TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 22, 2012

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

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 5—The New Home Warranty Act

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy (Ms. Selby), that Bill 5, The New Home Warranty Act; Loi sur la garantie des maisons neuves, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Rondeau:** This bill ensures new homes built for sale are covered by a warranty against defects in materials, labour, designs and structural defects. Home builders and warranty providers will be registered with the Province. Only registered builders will be allowed to build homes for sale for others. And the homes must be covered by a home warranty provided by a insurer.

The minimum requirement—required coverage will be 12 months for materials, labour and design, 15 months for common areas in condos, two years for major defects and seven years for structural components.

I believe this protects consumers and it provides a level playing field for builders. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further bills?

##### Bill 201—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu), that Bill 201, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, be now read for the first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, this bill requires the government to develop formal procedures to make the process of enacting regulations more transparent. It also requires government departments to develop regulatory reform plans to eliminate unnecessary regulations and encourage restraint in making new regulations. Both the government procedures and department plans must be made public. Thank you.

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

Any further bills? Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

### PETITIONS

#### Coulter Bridge—PR 251

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

And the background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The flood of 2011 caused the Coulter bridge on Provincial Road 251 west of Waskada to collapse.

(2) The current 36-kilometre detour provides only a minimum level of safety due to heavy traffic from petroleum industry trucks and agricultural equipment having to share this detour with school buses and local traffic.

(3) Local detour options at the bridge site have been rejected by Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation despite industry support to cover the costs of a temporary bridge.

(4) Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation to date has not moved—has not provided, rather, any financial support for requests to develop an engineering plan for a local bypass in the Coulter bridge vicinity.

So we petition the Legislative Assembly as follows, Mr. Speaker:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation consider co-operating with the municipalities of Arthur and Brenda, their citizens and local industries to immediately provide a temporary detour over the Souris River on Provincial Road 251 near the collapsed bridge.

And this petition is signed by B. McKinney, T. Palmer, G. Spence and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park**

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

And the reasons for this petition are as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by G. McCormick, D. Olafson and W. Bradley and many, many more fine Manitobans.

#### **Vita & District Health Centre**

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

The reasons for the petition are as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by K. Sesiuk, J. Sesiuk, A. Brandt and many more fine Manitobans.

#### **PR 520**

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

The rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander are experiencing record growth due especially to an increasing number of Manitobans retiring in cottage country.

The population in the RM of Lac du Bonnet grows exponentially in the summer months due to increased cottage use.

\* (13:40)

Due to population growth, Provincial Road 520 experiences heavy traffic, especially during the summer months.

PR 520 connects cottage country to the Pinawa Hospital and as such is frequently used by emergency medical services to transport patients.

PR 520 is in such poor condition that there are serious concerns about its safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the serious safety concerns of Provincial Road 520 and to address its poor condition by prioritizing its renewal.

The petition is signed by E. Reitbauer, P. Gray and K. Halyschuk and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

#### **Children's Advocate**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The office of the Children's Advocate is an independent office of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly intended to represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and youth throughout Manitoba who are receiving or should be receiving services under The Child and Family Services Act and The Adoption Act.

On March 23rd, 2011, the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council appointed the Honourable Edward (Ted) Hughes as commissioner to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the death of Phoenix Sinclair. The terms of reference of this inquiry include services to have been received by Phoenix Sinclair under The Child and Family Services Act. The office of the Children's Advocate declined the opportunity to seek standing at the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

On June 8, 2012, Darlene MacDonald, the Children's Advocate, made a number of public criticisms in the media respecting the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, calling the costs of the inquiry wasteful. Ms. MacDonald later issued a statement clarifying her remarks, but did not apologize to the Manitoba Legislature or to the public for her statements and did not repudiate or revoke her statements.

Prior to her appointment as Children's Advocate, Ms. MacDonald was involved with the Phoenix Sinclair case and will be called as a witness in phase 2 of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

On June 13, 2012, the grand chiefs of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the Southern Chiefs' Organization jointly issued a statement demanding the resignation of Darlene MacDonald as the Children's Advocate because they lost faith in her ability to fulfill her appointed duties.

Ms. MacDonald's comments on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry as an independent officer of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly have shown that a bias or potential conflict of interest may exist between the office of the Children's Advocate and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Legislative Assembly consider a resolution to remove or suspend the Children's Advocate.

Signed by D. Nepinak, F. Meeches, B. Manoakees and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals**

**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:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised the concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by J. Kyle, B. Heal, D. Giesbrecht and many, many other fine Manitobans.

#### **TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Human Rights Commission's Discriminatory Business Practices Act annual report for 2011-2012.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Pam Shelby and Tracey Johnson, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery we have Marusia Kaweski, representing the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, and Susan Zuk, representing the Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education. These two individuals are the guests of the honourable member for Rossmere (Ms. Braun). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And also in the public gallery we have seated, from Grant Park High School, 17 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Andrew Siebert. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard). On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** There are some alarming numbers coming out of the health-care system, in particular, in respect to ambulance off-load times.

So far in 2012 ambulances have been waiting at Winnipeg's emergency rooms for a total of about 36,000 hours. Now, to put that in perspective, that's 1,500 days or approximately 4 years of waiting, and our concern is not only with the expense of highly paid professional people waiting, it's also with the expense of highly vulnerable Manitobans waiting in pain.

In June of this year, the Health Minister said that she would address the issue and she said that she was going to start making progress on it, but there has been none.

And so I have to ask the minister today: What will it take for her to begin to address the issue in a serious way?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Yes, and I thank the new Leader of the Opposition for a question on health care.

I want to assure the member and all members of this House that I take the issue very seriously. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority takes the issue

very seriously, and to that end, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives that are under way to do the very best that we possibly can to ensure that our paramedics are serving individuals in the community that are having emergencies and need transport as swiftly as possible.

I would hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, the member did neglect to mention that, indeed, what all Manitobans expect when they have an emergency and they call 911, they want to have an emergency responder at their door swiftly. Indeed, in Winnipeg we have among the fastest response times in the nation.

**Mr. Pallister:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, a response time's nice, but getting treatment at the far end of the ambulance ride would be also an important aspect of delivering health care.

In other provinces, Mr. Speaker, when they enter a period where all ambulances are tied up and there's no ambulance to respond to the next call, they call it a code red. In Manitoba, unfortunately, under this government, it's starting to become business as usual. On October alone, we were in code red here for over nine hours. So far this year we've been in code red for more than 80 hours.

I have to ask the Minister of Health when she's going to take this issue of Manitoba's safety more seriously. What specific steps—not good intentions; I understand she has good intentions—but what specific steps can she outline today that she is prepared to take not someday but immediately to address this important issue?

**Ms. Oswald:** Yes, I believe a swift response to emergency—an emergency situation in the community is not just nice. I actually believe that it's critically important, which is why, of course, the integrated approach of our dispatch experts, of our highly skilled and trained firefighters and our paramedics has, as I've said before and, indeed, the mayor is on record saying that Winnipeg has the—among the swiftest if not the swiftest response time, at under seven minutes, in the nation.

Further, Mr. Speaker, when these patients arrive at an emergency room, they go through a triage protocol by our medical professionals. We know that we want to ensure that our paramedics are back on the road as swiftly as possible. But we do not endorse the member's opposite protocol of scoop and dump.

**Mr. Pallister:** There are results and there are excuses, and that answer was about excuses, not results.

Months ago the Minister of Health said she was making progress. The reality is that she wasn't making progress then; she's not making progress now. She's had years to address this issue, years to demonstrate that she's competent on this file. She has clearly demonstrated that she is not.

\* (13:50)

Now, people who suffer a heart attack or a stroke could die while waiting for an ambulance that is not coming. Manitobans involved in an accident may die while waiting for an ambulance that is not coming.

Despite all the procedural talk today, Mr. Speaker, is the Health Minister prepared to accept responsibility for a death on her watch, or will she commit, seriously commit, to addressing this problem?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of swift responses, that was fast. Rather than taking this issue very seriously, the member takes an opportunity to say to seniors that are at home watching question period that they need to be terrified that an ambulance isn't going to be coming when they have a heart attack or stroke. This is absolutely, patently false.

I will tell the member that we have indeed increased our paramedic workforce. We have put protocols in place to ensure that those individuals that do not need to be seen in an emergency room will be seen elsewhere, by, for example, by stationing paramedics at the Main Street Project that is seeing thousands and thousands of patients every year that would otherwise have been in an emergency department.

We're investing in new protocols where our paramedics can treat and refer and deflect from an emergency room so that our emergency rooms are saved for true emergencies.

And, Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to get up and frighten seniors is deplorable.

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

### **Ambulance Services Patient Off-Load Wait Times**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, it's a wonder that this minister is so busy congratulating herself on a job clearly not well done.

Mr. Speaker, this new information makes clear that ambulance off-load times have gotten worse, not better, under her watch. In 2010, ambulances waited a total of 12,000 hours to off-load patients at Winnipeg ERs. In 2011, they waited 37,000 hours. And this year, already in November we've reached that number, and we have another month and a half left to go.

When, other than pat herself on the back, is this minister going to do something about it?

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

I will reiterate for the member that certainly one of the most important things that we can do concerning our emergency rooms is to ensure that those that are presenting at an emergency room or that are being transported by ambulance are, in fact, emergencies that need the top priority, which is why we're creating other options for those that need medical care but indeed don't need an emergency room. It's why we're opening QuickCare clinics, Mr. Speaker, that are seeing patients with a very, very high satisfaction rate. It's why we're opening access centres to provide more access to primary care, nurse practitioners, doctors.

It's why we're working with our paramedics, with our expert in Winnipeg, Dr. Grierson, at the helm, to create new protocols for our paramedics who can use their skills, their very highly trained skills, to assess and make a decision not to transport—

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

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is missing an important point: You can't access care if you can't get out the back door of the ambulance and in the front door of the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, last June this minister clearly said in this House that she was making progress on off-load delays. The reality is that she was not making progress then and she surely isn't making progress now.

Off-load delays are so bad that the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service continued to charge the

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for the time they spend waiting to off-load patients. So far this year, WRHA has paid out over three quarters of a million dollars in fines.

When will this minister stop congratulating herself and start addressing this crisis?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, on the subject of missing the point, Mr. Speaker, I can say to the member that all members of a health-care system agree that on the occasions when paramedics are working in the emergency room and not out on the street longer than necessary, we want to ensure that there are funds available to the City of Winnipeg to enable them to hire more front-line staff to provide that care. That money that's being invested is being done so by reinvesting it into the health-care system.

He's implying that this is a waste of money. This is more money going into the health-care system while at the same time, as every jurisdiction in Canada is doing, Mr. Speaker, we're working on driving down that off-load delay time, we're working on providing options for our individuals in the community.

The paramedics are working with us. I just wonder why they won't.

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, the minister says that she's working on reducing the off-load time. The statistics tell a totally different story.

Mr. Speaker, I checked Hansard. Last year in October we asked the question of the minister about ambulance off-load times, and she said she was on it. In June we asked the question again, and she said she was on it. And now we're asking the question; she says she's on it.

But the statistics are clear. The situation is worse, not better, and it's clear to Manitobans she can't manage the file. And due to this minister's mismanagement, there were nine hours last month when there were no ambulances available to respond to any emergencies. So far in 2012, we've been in this code-red crisis for more than 80 hours.

So when will the Health Minister stop patting herself on the back and stand up and take responsibility for this serious situation that has just gotten worse in her watch?

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I would inform the member that there are initiatives that are working very—that we're working very diligently on

to drive down these times. Manitoba's first stand-alone mental health emergency room will be opening this winter. The paramedics project at the Main Street Project has diverted a significant number, a thousand people a month, Mr. Speaker, from the emergency room. The Bell Hotel project that we spoke about yesterday, incidentally, is changing frequent visitors to the emergency room into those that have homes and don't need care of that nature. The virtual ward project has driven down the need for emergency room visits for seniors substantially.

Mr. Speaker, this is in stark contrast to the Tories across the way who decided that they would close the emergency rooms overnight—

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

Just prior to recognizing the honourable member for Charleswood, I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members. We have members of the public who are viewing this question period through their televisions, and we have members of the public who have joined us here today in the gallery, and I'm asking for honourable members to allow the questions to be posed and the answers to be given by members of the Assembly. So please keep the level down a little bit.

### **Taxation Possible Increases**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** We continue to get nothing but lip service from this Minister of Health. She's had a couple years where she's promised to fix this, and it's getting worse instead of better under her watch, so she needs to do a better job.

Mr. Speaker, for the last two days, the Minister of Finance has refused to say whether or not he's going to raise taxes to pay for the financial mess that the NDP government has made.

So I'm going to ask him again: Will this Minister of Finance raise taxes to pay for his spending?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we've taken a very balanced approach to budgeting in this province. We've taken this balanced approach during a time that everybody knows is uncertain when it comes to the economy.

What we're not going to do is back proposals like we saw come across from the Leader of the Opposition in which he would either cost Manitoba taxpayers \$135 million or he would cut \$135 million



more in health services and education services. We're not going to take that approach.

Our approach is a better one, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to feign—we're not going to feign—the kind of support for poor people in Manitoba like you've seen from opposition in the last couple of days. We're going to take a real approach to helping those people in Manitoba that have trouble making ends meet from day to day—

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

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance made absolutely no sense with his comments, and we are going to keep asking this question until the minister has an answer. He's not answering the question, so I'm going to ask him again.

They've created a financial mess in this province. If—is it his intention to raise taxes in this province so that Manitoba taxpayers are going to have to clean up his mess?

**Mr. Struthers:** Mr. Speaker, year after year, when the Leader of the Opposition was the member of Portage—for Portage la Prairie, year after year, they cut supports to the working poor in Manitoba and they raised taxes on the working poor of Manitoba. That's an approach that we reject for this side of the House.

\* (14:00)

Our approach will be a balanced approach. Our approach will, Mr. Speaker, address spending and revenue items that are reasonable. That's what we saw in Budget 2012, if they were paying attention at that time. We're going to continue that reasonable, balanced approach to closing the gap between expenses and revenues in this province. We think that's good over the long term. We're not going to sacrifice—

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

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, what is reasonable and balanced about bringing back a deficit to this province and doubling the debt in the last 12 years? That is not reasonable.

Manitoba taxpayers don't find it's reasonable that they are now having to pay for a billion-dollar deficit and more deficits coming down the road. Where's that money going to come from?

So I want to ask him again: Will he put this burden on Manitoba taxpayers and raise taxes in the next few months? Is that his intention? Yes or no? The question is simple.

**Mr. Struthers:** What's not reasonable, Mr. Speaker, is the position of the Leader of the Opposition and his cohorts across the way who feign concern about low-income Manitobans, who are actually talking about, with their proposal, tax breaks for the wealthiest in our province rather than taking on measures that would actually help low-income Manitobans.

Our approach has been more balanced. Our approach—look at the recent increase, 25-cent increase targeted to low-income earners, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite would not support.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Leader of the Opposition. Will he turn to those people sitting around him on that side and tell them that they made a mistake not voting in favour of our increase to minimum tax—minimum wage? Will he turn to them and say to them, it was a mistake and we shouldn't make that mistake again? That's leadership.

#### **Gage Guimond Death Review Recommendations Implementation**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Fifty per cent of people using food banks in Manitoba are children. Is that leadership, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, in 2008 a review was done into the death of 2-year-old Gage Guimond. Eighty recommendations came forward from this review. Today, four years later, a significant number of the recommendations made are—on the list are still in progress.

We have a potential crises occurring at Sagkeeng Child and Family Services, and what does this minister do? She writes a letter to the agency. It is vitally important that the NDP make sure that all 80 recommendations are implemented. Mr. Speaker, the minister is ultimately responsible for Manitoba children in care. Four years and counting.

Why has this—these recommendations not been a priority of this minister?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to put on the record clearly what we have done in response to the concerns raised about Sagkeeng Child and Family Services.

What we did when we became aware of those concerns was to immediately get in touch with the authority which has the responsibility to work with that agency. We let them know that we found these concerns alarming. We wanted them to look into it, and we offered them any assistance that we could provide to make sure that the agency was stable and that it was able to do its job in terms of looking after kids and exercise its mandate. That's the action that we took immediately upon learning of some of these allegations.

In terms of the case that she's talking about, I understand that about 80 per cent of those recommendations have been completed. Many more of those recommendations are currently in progress.

I also note that one of the responses to that tragic death of that child was for this government to bring in a law that made very clear that the best interest of a child was to take paramountcy in child welfare cases.

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

**Mrs. Rowat:** Some of the key recommendations in the Gage Guimond review have not been implemented, and those are significant recommendations that protect children, Mr. Speaker. And I encourage the government to do better.

In March 2006, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), then minister of Family Services, said, and I quote: We are looking at an external review based on case management issues. If there were—changes to be made, we will make them immediately. This is what a responsible minister does. End quote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know how that minister handled Child and Family Services. Six years later, and these recommendations have not all been implemented.

Is this the NDP government's definition of what a responsible minister does?

**Ms. Howard:** I will say that, of course, when it comes to working within a child welfare system, there's always more work to be done. Every day that we come in and we're faced with tragic stories of children who are hurt and abused by the people who are charged with their love and care, we know that there's more work to do.

Some of the things that we have been active on are dealing with adding more positions to the child

welfare system so that there are more people who are in the positions of being able to help protect children. As I said in the answer to the last question, we amended the legislation to stress that child safety is the highest priority when dealing with children. We've implemented new tools for those people who are working to protect children so that they have internationally recognized tools to assess risk.

We are taking action. We'll continue to do so.

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

**Mrs. Rowat:** Excuses don't protect children. Children deserve a lot better than what this NDP government is offering families.

Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 2012 the Minister of Family Services said, and I quote: In a situation like this where there have been some significant issues identified with the way an agency is working or providing care and some significant concerns raised with respect to safety of a child, they don't wait to be told by the minister's office what they should be doing; they immediately identify problems and start to build solutions. End quote. Well, Mr. Speaker, those are her words and I can't see that happening right now.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Family Services Minister: Did this happen with Sagkeeng Child and Family Services? Did she actually do what she says she does in Hansard?

**Ms. Howard:** Well, I think I was clear in the answer to her first question. What we did when we became aware of these allegations was to immediately get in touch with the authority. The authority was already working with the agency on some of these issues that had just come to light in terms of some of the allegations.

I believe, and that's why we put in the law, that the highest priority for child welfare is the care of children. I take that very seriously. That's why we acted immediately on these allegations to work with the authority and to work with the agency to stabilize the situation to make sure the children that were identified in those allegations are safe. That is the responsibility that I take seriously. That is what we did.

I believe there is much, much more work for us to do in child welfare, and we'll continue to do that and not give in to the cynicism of the opposition.

### **Municipalities Possible Amalgamations**

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** After consulting in the media, this government has announced it will begin the process of municipal amalgamations. In question period on Tuesday, the Premier stated that he was looking for greater efficiencies in local municipalities.

So the question is: When will the Minister of Local Government unveil his plans for which municipalities are to be amalgamated, the time frame for this to take place? Will he commit to consult with the municipal partners before, not after, he consults with the media in this case?

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government):** I thank the member for the question.

Municipalities and communities play a vital role in Manitoba's economy, and regrettably, Mr. Speaker, approximately half of the 200 municipalities we have in this province are below the threshold of a thousand population, which was set in The Municipal Act in 1997.

Our intent is to have these municipalities amalgamate, work together in co-operation with one another, and we've always consulted with AMM and municipalities throughout our tenure as government and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Mr. Speaker, he forgot to consult before he talked to the—or to consult with AMM before he made his announcement in this case. And may I remind this minister that, by law from this Legislature, municipal governments must balance their books each and every year, something that this government is not capable of doing.

So when does the Minister of Local Government intend to share his plan for municipal amalgamation with those municipalities who will be affected by this unilateral decision? Will his consultation be through the media, or will he commit to sitting down with the affected municipalities?

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Lemieux:** You know, Mr. Speaker, when the act was changed in 1997, there was a tremendous amount of consultation that took place at that time with a lot of stakeholders, including the municipalities, on what to do. And we agree that the a-thousand threshold is just the beginning. There are many municipalities that are larger than a thousand

that are looking at working together with other municipalities close to them geographically.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, just for the opposition, you know, to understand that this process has been going on for a number of years, and this has not just started the consultation. So we intend to work with the municipalities. But be clear: There will be amalgamations happening, and we've set a deadline for that, for those amalgamations to take place, and we'll continue to work with municipalities to ensure that we'll do whatever we can to ensure that they happen.

### **Bill 201 Government Support**

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** I was pleased to introduce Bill 201, The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act. Business in this province deserves every opportunity to succeed in the economy, and the NDP is content to see them fail.

Across the country, small businesses are thriving: 89 per cent of small business owners in Saskatchewan recommend starting a business in that province, compared to 80 per cent in Alberta, 71 per cent in BC, but only 53 per cent in Manitoba said the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, reducing red tape is a low-cost way that the government can support entrepreneurs. I ask this government: Why don't they set targets to reduce red tape the way the other provinces do?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade):** Well, I appreciate the member's question today, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell the members opposite that we have cut a lot of things, including red tape. We've cut the business tax for small business from 9 per cent to zero—9 per cent when the Leader of the Opposition was in caucus; it is now zero. We're the first province to do that and the only province to have done it so far as well. We also cut the corporate tax from 17 per cent to 12 and a half per cent, Mr. Speaker. We cut the corporate capitalization tax.

Manitoba is a very competitive province in which to do business. In fact, there are 106,000 businesses in the province of Manitoba, and the vast majority of them are small businesses, and they are responsible for creating more than half the jobs that are being created in rural Manitoba.

We'll continue to cut things in a meaningful way that will have impact on small business and a

competitive environment here in Manitoba, and we are working on cutting red tape.

**Mr. Graydon:** This government has no sense of what it takes and—required to run a business in this province.

The NDP, without consulting the business community, expanded the PST with almost no time to get up to speed, not recognizing the technology needed to implement this tax grab. Small businesses across the province are now expected to file PST on a quarterly basis rather than a monthly basis. This results in an increase—in a penalize—in a penalization of \$600 a year as the backdoor tax grab that they implemented. The government didn't inform business that they could still file on a—monthly taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government: Why can't they reduce red tape without taxing Manitobans even more?

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** It's amazing, Mr. Speaker. This member gets up to talk about accountability, and his own leader won't answer questions about the HST in this province.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Minister of Finance, to conclude his remarks.

**Mr. Struthers:** That is a very touchy subject for our friends across the way, Mr. Speaker, isn't it?

In Budget 2012 there were a number of announcements that were made that are real benefits to reducing red tape for small, medium and large business in Manitoba. It's too bad members opposite didn't have the foresight to vote for that budget and help us put those into place. We're merging 'liquory'—lotteries and liquor, and that's no nursery rhyme, Mr. Speaker. We're merging those two Crown corporations to—and one of the benefits of that is to reduce red tape for businesses who work with those corporations.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite put his finger on one very good, tangible way in which we are working with small business and the leadership of small business to reduce that red tape by allowing companies not to report as often—

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

The honourable member for Emerson, on a supplementary.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, when we talk about accountability, we have a Finance Minister that can't answer the question whether he's going to raise taxes or not in the next budget. My goodness.

It's clear that this government does not support small business. Those who own a small business are increasingly feeling the need to sell or leave the province as this government increases red tape and increases taxes. Every program this government implemented increases red tape and regulation on small businesses with no apparent consultation, accountability or economic benefit. Business owners are faced with a bureaucratic nightmare, and only 53 per cent of business owners recommend starting a business in this province. That's pathetic.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this government: Why won't they stand up today and support Bill 201 and support all businesses in this province?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we support all businesses in this province through the initiatives such as the Manitoba Business Gateway, BizPaL, TAXcess, the Manitoba Business Portal, AccessManitoba, all kinds of tools that we have provided for small business to succeed here in Manitoba.

And, you know, it's rather interesting members opposite talking about what we do to support small business. We're a very competitive province, and one of assets that we have in this province that's very attractive for businesses to locate here is cheap hydro rates, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when YES! Winnipeg hosted a meeting of consultants who are looking at Winnipeg as a place to do business, and they were absolutely impressed by what we had to offer and said we should be singing it from the rooftops. And we will do that because we have a very competitive environment here. We're going to build hydro and keep it cheap, and members opposite want to scrap all the hydro projects.

#### **Children's Advocate Call for Resignation**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry is revealing how the NDP's management of the child and family service system failed a little girl who was tortured and killed.

And yet the Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, declined the opportunity to seek standing at the inquiry. She publicly called the costs of the inquiry wasteful.

The NDP have broken the sacred trust Aboriginal leadership placed in them to properly oversee the devolution of child and family service to Aboriginal child welfare agencies.

Today I welcome to the gallery Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, Brennan Manoakesick representing Grand Chief David Harper, and Gerald McIvor representing Grand Chief Murray Clearsky. They prepared the petition I submitted today calling for the removal or suspension of Children's Advocate Darlene MacDonald.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the NDP government: Will they remove Children's Advocate Darlene MacDonald?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** I also want to welcome the chiefs that are in attendance today. I've had many, many meetings with them where we've had constructive conversations on the issues of child welfare and what we need to do together to strengthen that system but also strengthen the communities that we're all accountable to.

I do want to remind the member, I think as he knows, that the Children's Advocate is an office of the—is an officer of the Legislature. She doesn't—she's not my employee. She doesn't report to the government; she reports to the entire Legislature.

And I would also remind him that he was on the committee that selected her, that hired her. As he was on that committee, he would've been fully aware of her employment history at the time that she was hired. He had no objection to her hiring that I can recall, having been on that committee.

He is welcome to voice his objections now, and other people are welcome to voice their objections now. I believe that it would send a very, very alarming message to the independent officers of this Legislature if they thought this Legislature was going to fire them every time a member disagreed with what they—

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

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, you know, I think we made a mistake when we hired Darlene MacDonald.

And the fact of the matter is what has happened since then is this: The Phoenix Sinclair inquiry is the most important look at our child and family service system in a generation, and we need to take the opportunity to improve the system and fight hard for

the better lives for the children of our province, as the Manitoba grand chiefs want.

And yet, unfortunately, the person who should be standing up impartially and strongly for children, the Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, has declined the opportunity to seek standing at the inquiry and has publicly called the costs of the inquiry wasteful.

\* (14:20)

I ask the NDP government: Will they act to remove the Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, from her position for failing to support the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry and for her failure to stand up for children like Phoenix Sinclair—

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

**Ms. Howard:** I have to say that I think everyone in this province is going through a very painful experience hearing every day the circumstances of the life and the unspeakably tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair. I feel that kind of sadness and anger as I hear what happened. I felt it, you know, when I first became minister and I got to read that history, and I think we're all going through that kind of pain.

We called the inquiry because we believed that it was necessary to have a full and complete airing of what happened, to learn what more changes can be made to the system to improve it. I will remind the member that Ms. MacDonald did say that she believed the public has a right to know went—what went on in this situation. That's exactly why we called the inquiry. We are going to watch the inquiry proceed and we will continue to commit ourselves to the actions necessary to improve the system for all of our children.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, we want the best. We want somebody in the Children's Advocate who is standing up for children, not for the system.

Darlene MacDonald's comments on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry being wasteful showed a bias, potential conflict of interest with the office of the Children's Advocate at the inquiry.

On June 11th and 12th, I called upon the Minister of Family Services and Labour and upon the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to ask for the resignation of Darlene MacDonald. The minister declined to seek a resignation and actually defended her. Around this time, the three grand chiefs jointly sought a meeting with the Premier to discuss Darlene

MacDonald's resignation or removal from her office, and the Premier didn't even respond.

I ask the minister: Will she act today to remove Darlene MacDonald as the Manitoba Children's Advocate? Will she join me in calling for this change?

**Ms. Howard:** I think it's very regrettable that the member has chosen this road, but he has chosen it.

I will remind him once again that the Children's Advocate is an independent officer of the Legislature, of the entire Legislature. The entire Legislature is responsible for that appointment. He participated in that appointment. He fully knew her employment history at that time. He raised no objection. It's fine today he says he made a mistake.

But I have to say that my belief is that if it becomes the practice of this Legislature to fire an independent officer every time we don't agree with something that that independent officer has said, then no independent officer will be able to hold any of us to account. And that I don't think is going to serve the people of Manitoba well or this Legislature well.

So he is welcome to his position. I understand it. I respect the position of the chiefs. We've had many meetings on many issues with both me and the Premier when it comes to child welfare, but I must respectfully disagree with him on this point.

#### **Energy Strategies Government Initiatives**

**Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley):** Hello, it's good to be back. I want to welcome the new–newest new leader of the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives to the Chamber. And I couldn't help but notice that he's already, in this first week, taken shots at Manitoba Hydro. It doesn't exactly distinguish him from his predecessors.

He may not be aware that since he was last here, energy efficiency, geothermal heat pumps, biomass systems, even the electrification of buses is under way here in Manitoba and we have a brand new energy strategy.

I wonder if our Energy Minister could bring the honourable member up to speed on some of the neat things that are going on here in Manitoba.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines):** Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to respond to that question, and for the edification of all members of this Chamber, that highlights of this

strategy, which we've announced this week, include Canada's first Pay As You Save–PAYS–Financing Program, that covers the upfront capital costs of energy efficiency upgrades based on utility cost savings, that will help middle- and low-income Manitobans right across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, a Biomass Energy Support Program that will help Manitoba's remaining coal users and others transition to renewable and locally grown biomass energy.

Thirdly, an electric vehicle road map that will facilitate the adoption of all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles, and the Green Energy Equipment Tax Credit for geothermal and solar thermal energy.

Mr. Speaker, I–it is distressing to see that the minister–the member opposite has made a mega-mistake–

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

#### **Speedway International Government Knowledge of Operations**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the Fire Commissioner's office is part of the environmental licence process for all situations like the St. Boniface fire explosion of early October. At the very least, it would have received one of those seven hard copies or one of the 22 CDs that go with an environmental licence. The minister also knows that the environmental licences are a public document. He stated that.

So with all this openness, why is the Minister of Conservation saying he didn't know what was at the site when it exploded?

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):** Well, Mr. Speaker, my first comment on this was yesterday.

I want to remind the House that the Office of the Fire Commissioner is the–a provincial lead when it comes to issues that face us about the risk of fire, and I think the tragedy in Québec reminds us, and the closeness of this tragedy, how critical it is that we respect that kind of leadership, and I'm glad to see it going to work.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner, first of all, is pulling together the stakeholders, looking to make sure, as I am within my own department, that we are turning over every leaf, that we are drilling down, that we are going to make sure that if there are any

lessons to be learned from this terrible fire in St. Boniface that we will make changes both internally and externally as well.

And, for example, I've been insisting with my officials that we look to see if there's anything better we can do in terms of communicating, particularly with municipal officials when it comes to fire.

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Holodomor Awareness Week

**Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere):** Mr. Speaker, November 19th to 25th is Holodomor Awareness Week in Canada. This year marks the 79th anniversary of Holodomor, the Ukrainian famine genocide. At this time the country and the province will stand with Manitoba's Ukrainian community and many other communities that were affected by this tragedy.

The Holodomor was the artificial famine that occurred in 1932 to 1933 under Joseph Stalin's Soviet regime. At that time Ukraine was home to the most productive agricultural lands in the Soviet Union. Stalin, however, imposed a policy of forced collectivization and raised Ukraine's grain quota far beyond manageable levels. The USSR's motive was to break down Ukrainian nationalism by denying the people their harvest. This meant that while large shipments of grain were being exported to western markets, thousands of Ukrainian people were dying daily from starvation. The genocidal famine slowly and painfully took the lives of 7 million people. Many Holodomor survivors came to Canada and set new foundations in Manitoba.

In 2008, Manitoba passed an act to recognize the fourth Saturday of November as the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Holodomor Memorial Day. Throughout this week, students are learning about the Holodomor in school, community groups are hosting film nights, lectures and discussions. On November 20th, two world-renowned Ukrainian researchers presented a lecture on Stalin's secret files which displayed first-hand accounts of these heinous crimes.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that members of the Ukrainian community, including the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada and Manitoba Parents for Ukrainian Education, are here with us today. They, together with the greater community, will

gather at Winnipeg City Hall this Saturday. There, they will remember the millions of lives lost and the people who lost their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children and friends in this premeditated famine. A memorial service in commemoration will be held. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian-Canadians recall the heartbreak and loss left by this genocide and yet their strength, dignity and courage have inspired all Manitobans.

Dyakuyu and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:30)

### Brett Sheffield

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** Mr. Speaker, Brett Sheffield is only 26 years old and is impressing people every day. Brett owns 1,700 acres of land near Pilot Mound and is a dedicated and passionate farmer. A little over a year ago when the town's health club was going to be closed, Brett stepped up and purchased it, realizing its value to the community. All of this from a man who just finished his diploma program in agriculture from the University of Manitoba.

In May, Brett was named the 2011 student entrepreneur champion for Manitoba and Central Canada in Advancing Canadian Entrepreneurship program, competing against 750 students from across Canada for the national championship. Earlier this month, Brett was able to travel to New York, representing Canada at the Global Student Entrepreneur Awards. Brett was required to give a 12-minute presentation where he has to talk about the history of his business, his plans for the future, his mentors and his level of education. Brett placed third in the world in New York, which isn't bad for a young farmer from Pilot Mound.

Brett now has plans to combine his farming operation with his dad's and purchase more land to grow his operation. After that he wants to find more efficiencies in his own farming operation and to continue to grow his bottom line as any good entrepreneur would. Brett's hard work shows why entrepreneurs can change our economy are in the backbone of this—the backbone to economic development.

His dedication to the community he lives in is incredible and shows that any project in any community is never too big or small. I would personally like to congratulate Brett on his national championship and on placing third internationally,

and I look forward to hearing all about the work of this fine young man in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Westwood Pet Valu Fundraising Events**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, when we think about the contributions of service animals, one that immediately jumps to mind is the contribution made by police service dogs in keeping our community safe.

The Winnipeg Police Service's K-9 teams help track suspects, search buildings, locate evidence and find missing persons. This is dangerous work, and it is really important that both the human and canine members of the team get as much protection from harm as possible.

Today, I would like to recognize the fundraising efforts of the Westwood community as a whole, in support of Winnipeg Police Service's K-9 unit.

Pam Shelby and other staff at the local Pet Valu held a fundraiser this July for the Winnipeg Police Service's retirement and vest fund.

In just a week, generous customers and Westwood residents contributed over \$1,060 in support of the fund. To wrap up the fundraiser, service dog Diesel and pup recruit Bailey came with their human partners, Constable Jay Jaskiewicz and Constable Scott Moirer, to meet with the customers.

The K-9 unit created the retirement and vest fund last year to improve safety, performance and quality of life for police service dogs.

Through donations to the fund, the unit can purchase ballistic vests so that dogs can be protected at the same level as their handler. The fund also assures retired dogs comfort after dedicating their lives to protecting their community.

This is not the only fundraising initiative in which this hard-working team is involved. The pet store also runs two other fundraisers every year in the winter and in the spring.

Money raised last Christmas went to local dog rescue shelter, Hull's Haven, while proceeds from the annual March fundraiser went to the Winnipeg Humane Society. Pam and her staff aren't stopping there either. They are already planning another fundraiser for next summer.

Mr. Speaker, service dogs risk their own safety to help protect our communities. With this in mind, I

would like to commend Pam Shelby, the staff at the Westwood Pet Valu and the generous people of Westwood for their efforts on behalf of police service dogs.

#### **Nathan Fleck**

**Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz):** Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't think a trip to Australia would encourage someone to pursue in-line hockey as a vocation in life. That's exactly what happened to Nathan Fleck of Neepawa. Growing up, Fleck paid his way through the Neepawa Minor Hockey Association, and while on a Rotary International exchange trip to Australia, he missed the sport and soon started playing in-line hockey.

While Canada is famous for playing the game on ice all year, countries like Australia play in-line hockey which incorporates a concrete or tile surface with roller skates, rather than the ice and skates so familiar to Canadians.

Five years ago, Nathan became the executive director of the National Inline Hockey Association, with responsibility for preparing the national in-line team for the world championships. Taking over a program that hadn't won a world championship since 1998 was a challenge, but it was a challenge that was right up Nathan's alley.

In his five years of involvement, Nathan has helped the team improve from eighth in the world rankings to a fourth-place finish three years ago and a bronze medal two years ago. All this hard work led up to the ultimate goal, a world championship.

At the 2012 IHHF Inline Hockey World Championship, Canada started off with a tough loss to Slovakia, before rolling off victories over Germany, Great Britain and redeeming themselves over Slovakia. Canada then defeated Germany 9-5 in the finals to capture their first world championship in 14 years.

Canada was not favoured to win the title in 2012, but after defeating perennial favourites, they have shown that they can be a favourite for many years to come.

Nathan Fleck has truly built this team from the ground up. His responsibilities include choosing the coaches, selecting athletes for the tryouts, organizing the team and figuring out the logistics to get the team to the world championships. This hard work paid off with the ultimate prize, the world championship.



I would like to congratulate Nathan and the rest of Team Canada on their success, and wish them the best in the next world championship.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Aboriginal Veterans Day**

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, freedom is a fragile thing and should never be taken for granted. This month we observed Remembrance Day, a day to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by Canada's soldiers to give us freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Remembrance Day ceremonies were held across Manitoba.

What many Manitobans are not aware of, however, is that this month we also mark Aboriginal Veterans Day. Today I would like to acknowledge all those involved in the moving ceremony that was held at the Arborg Legion on November the 8th for Manitoba's Aboriginal veterans.

For many decades the military contributions of First Nations people went unrecognized. Aboriginal soldiers returned to find themselves unable to access the services they needed and still excluded from non-Aboriginal society.

This is why the Assembly unanimously passed a resolution in 1994 to observe Aboriginal Veterans Day on November the 8th, and to honour those who for years were forgotten by this country. The motion was introduced by the Honourable George Hickes, who was the NDP MLA for Point Douglas and who later became the first Aboriginal Speaker in Canada.

This is the fourth year that this day has been observed in the Interlake. This year wreaths were laid, two minutes of silence were observed, and several poems were read, including *In Flanders Fields*. I had the honour of speaking at the ceremony, as did the president of the Riverton and District Friendship Centre and Randi Gage, one of the founders of Aboriginal Veterans Day. Veterans who served in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and as peacekeepers were in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all of those who helped with the Aboriginal Veterans Day ceremony at the Arborg Legion. I ask the Assembly to join me in recognizing and thanking all Manitoba's veterans for their bravery, courage and commitment to this great land.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

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

**Mr. Speaker:** To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Administrator:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the 40th Legislature, and the proposed amendment by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) in amendment thereto, and standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows, who has 13 minutes remaining.

**Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows):** I love my job. I love meeting new people, being invited in a true North End welcoming style to participate in so many interesting activities. I tried cricket for the first time in my life—I never missed, brought greetings at the ceremony where I was not chosen as most likely to succeed, had the absolute honour of attending the first ever Filipino street festival and learning—leading the parade, astounded, Mr. Speaker, by the work done by Aida Champagne, Ley Navarro and a large band of other volunteers.

It was my pleasure to nominate Aida Champagne, Amandeep Seh and Maurice Lakusta for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for their excellent volunteer work. All accepted with a characteristic humbleness that seems to encapsulate the North End.

\* (14:40)

This summer, Mr. Speaker, I was at The Maples recreation centre, along with the MLA from The Maples and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to check out a game I'd never heard of, kabaddi. This game is all about strength and strategy. And, anyway, I was thinking as I watched about how fortunate we are in Manitoba to have so many rich, vibrant cultures to make things better for everyone. And then suddenly, as I was watching, I realized that I was surrounded by a large group of the strongest, most powerful men I've ever seen in my life. They play it shirtless. What can I say? But kabaddi was definitely now right there beside football as a favourite, and I will be back next summer, I'm sure, with the maple—the member from

The Maples. I'm not sure you enjoyed it in the same way that I did.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of sitting down with a group of residents' association leaders, sharing ideas for making our community stronger, and I'd like to quote Sue from our constituency. She was born in the North End, Mr. Speaker, but she had moved to Calgary. When they returned, they chose the North End above all other communities, and this is what Sue said: It's the idea of a sustainable lifestyle, to be part of a community that has always been important to us.

In Calgary, what you hear about Winnipeg, ah, but we know that it's not just mosquitos and 40 below and that's all you need to know. It's all the culture, all the community and all the local spots. It's all the friendliness. It's all the people talking to you, Mr. Speaker, for no reason at all. It's people going out of their way to help you when they have no connection to you. There is a depth and a wealth here that we did not find anywhere else. Sue's steps have led her back to the North End, not only to delight in it today but to be a working part of why it will be better tomorrow, and I am proud to be part of a government that values the North End in just the same way. Thank you.

**Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris):** A pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech again this year. It's, I think, my tenth time that I've spoken in response to the Throne Speech. Yes, hard to believe, hard to believe, it's the tenth one. I was thinking about it and they're still not any better. They're still as bad as they ever were, Mr. Speaker.

I want to again thank my constituents, my association and my supporters for the honour of serving them here in the Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your role.

I want to also congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), on his election to MLA and as-acclamation as Leader of the Official Opposition, and as I listened to him speak yesterday, I felt inspired by his abilities that he has brought to this Chamber from many years of experience both here and in Ottawa. I enjoyed listening to him and I think that that is the type of leadership that we are lacking in this province and that what we sorely need. And I'm looking forward to the weeks and months ahead where the Leader of the Opposition is able to connect with the communities in Manitoba and therefore lead us into the next election.

I'm always reminded when I stand up to speak in this Chamber of the significance of what the work is that we do here and the significance of this Chamber. It's an honourable position, to represent people here in the Legislature, and it's a job that should be taken very seriously. It's a job that should be done with heart. It should be done with vision, passion, honestly, Mr. Speaker. We should have some vision as to where we want to go in this province, and I think that's what is lacking and that's what I'm disappointed in, in this government, is I don't see any of that. I don't know if they take their job here seriously because what they're doing here is they're not only representing the people that elected them to put them here, but now they are charged in the role of being responsible to all Manitobans.

But, instead of doing that, instead of being responsible and acting and governing for all of Manitoba, they choose to put their own self-interests first and they choose to only govern for themselves; their biggest priority being what can we do to get ourselves elected next time, not what can we do for the people of Manitoba, what is the long-term vision, how is our province going to be better over the years? It's not about that for the NDP; it's about how it can be better for the NDP and how they can get their seat back in the next election. That's not forward thinking; that's self-serving. And it's just dishonest; it's absolutely wrong.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are two roles in the Chamber here; we have the government role and we have the role of opposition. And we've been chosen at this particular point to be the—Her Majesty's royal—official opposition—loyal official opposition. Have I got that right? And it's a role that we take very seriously, because I can't imagine what would be happening in this province if this NDP government were allowed to run roughshod over the people of this province without some checks and balances that we are able to bring in this Chamber and in our constituencies, in their constituencies and everywhere in this province.

There's much to oppose. There's much to oppose. They make our job pretty easy, actually. There's so much to oppose. You just have to ask yourself have things gotten better or have they gotten worse? Well, they certainly have gotten better. Look at all those extra taxes that came out just this last year. Just before the last election the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood and said on CJOB radio: I won't raise taxes. And what happened? Within weeks, Mr. Speaker, he imposed the biggest tax hikes in the

history of the last 25 years and added \$184 million worth of new fees and taxes on the backs of Manitobans. He just put his boot on the back of every single working family in this province. Shame on him. And it's not working. It's just not working. It's absolutely, absolutely gotten worse.

We have the biggest debt in—well, we've doubled the debt. We've doubled the debt. They've doubled the debt. The NDP government has doubled the debt since they came into office. They came into office with a balanced budget and they doubled the debt. How did they do this? When times were good money was flowing in from Ottawa, unprecedented payments coming in from Ottawa, times were good; money was coming in. What did they do? They spent it all, because they have a spending addiction, Mr. Speaker. They spent it all, helping out their little friends here and there and putting them places and giving them jobs and whatever they needed to do to prepare themselves for the next election to win. All they thought about was themselves.

The deficit—a billion-dollar deficit—highest, unprecedented deficit in the history of this Province. That's the legacy. That's the legacy. So when you ask people is it getting worse or better, the answer is it's getting worse, Mr. Speaker. It's worse. This is the legacy we are—in this province this NDP government is going to leave to our children and theirs and our grandchildren and their grandchildren. They're the ones that are going to be paying the mortgage that they've taken out on Manitoba over their time in office. They've mortgaged our families, they've mortgaged this province, and who's going to pay for that? It's going to be our children and grandchildren I don't even have yet, but they're going to be paying for this NDP government's total mismanagement.

You know, I want to ask again: Is it getting better or is it getting worse? Because today we were talking about Phoenix Sinclair and I recall being the critic when it was discovered that Phoenix Sinclair had been found to be having been deceased for about nine months and no one knew that she had died.

\*(14:50)

And at that time, we were—[interjection] That is seven years ago. That's longer ago than that little girl lived, Mr. Speaker. That little girl would have been in high school now. It's appalling that it's taken this long to bring this issue to where it is today. And we know that the friends of the NDP wanted to stall that; they wanted to stall that. They didn't want this to come out in the open, but it is.

But is it getting better or is it getting worse? Well, it's not getting better—it's not getting better. We know that there still are issues in Child and Family Services. There are reports gathering dust with literally hundreds—accumulated hundreds of recommendations that this government needs to act on, and it hasn't, Mr. Speaker.

How serious are they taking this, because they're not getting any better. The minister keeps standing in her place and saying, we have more work to do. She's had seven years since the death of Phoenix Sinclair. She hasn't made any progress. Things are not getting better; things are worse in the child welfare system.

I think the latest stats say there's over 9,000 children in care. That's unbelievable—unbelievable. I think that probably is—I don't have the figures right in front of me, but I believe it's almost double what it was five or six years ago. That is not getting better; that is getting worse under this NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, when this whole thing was evolving, the changing, the devolution of Child and Family Services, we warned this government and said, you have to go slowly here—you have to go slowly. This system is big, it's cumbersome, there's issues. Why hand over a system that isn't quite right? Give it some time. Don't rush in. And what did they do? They rushed in, Mr. Speaker. They rushed in and did it, and guess what happened? Kids fell through the cracks, and the biggest casualty of all was Phoenix Sinclair—and also followed by many, many, more children. That is a failing—a very tragic failing of this government.

They keep saying and congratulating themselves and patting themselves on the back about what good work they do. Well, I wonder, is it good to be the child poverty capital of Canada. Is that what they aspire to? Mr. Speaker, we keep getting this designation, year after year, and they do nothing about it. It's not getting better; it's getting worse.

Record use of food banks—record use of food banks. They talk about Manitoba being affordable, but what about the people that can't afford even the basic necessity of life, and that's food. Housing is deplorable for these people. They have to go and choose between paying for housing or paying for food, or paying for a bus fare or whatever, I don't know, but it's just that they can't afford food. And that's why we see all these food banks having to provide for these people that can't afford food. That

is not the sign of a prosperous province. That is a sign of failure.

And we have failed in this province, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have failed families, they have failed children. It's children—it's mostly children that use these food banks. Can you imagine a mom that has to get her kids up, trudge down to the food bank for breakfast before she gets them off to school? That is not the sign of a prosperous province. That is a sign of an NDP failure in Manitoba.

We talk about health care today. The minister again is bending herself around backwards trying to back—pat herself on the back, talking about how wonderful she's doing in health care. She's not even listening to what's happening. Either she's not listening or she's just incompetent and doesn't know what's going on at her department, but we heard about ambulances sitting, waiting—sitting in parking lots waiting to off-load patients so they could actually get care. For heaven sakes, there's more ambulances in the parking lot than cars, Mr. Speaker.

This is a failure. This is not a good thing. This is a bad thing when people have to wait in the ambulance. We're talking about paramedics, nurses, doctors sitting in the ambulance waiting for them to get people into the hospital because they can't get triaged into the hospital.

Now, not only are they sitting there waiting, they are taken off the streets for anybody that needs an ambulance. So imagine that your son or daughter is involved in a car accident, Mr. Speaker. Heaven forbid that, but imagine someone you know is involved in a car accident, needs an ambulance and there's no ambulance available in a city of Winnipeg because they're all in the parking lots of hospitals. That is not a good thing; that is a bad thing. Things are not good in Manitoba; things are bad under the NDP. They've failed on health care.

When they can spend three-quarters of a million dollars, wasted just because they have to pay fees, because they—ambulances are sitting there. That money could be used for so much more. That money could be used to get people off waiting lists in health care. Could be used for front-line services. It could be used for more food at food banks, Mr. Speaker. It could be used for a lot of things.

We could fix a few roads and bridges here and there, too. You know, there's lots of things that could be done with money that's just being wasted.

There is a disparity between health care in the city of Winnipeg and outside the Perimeter. You know, I had a call from a constituent whose 97-year-old father had to be discharged from the hospital and they had to take him home. Okay. But he had to come back every day to the hospital to check his IV or to get an injection, and it was—it's difficult. You can imagine a 97-year-old senior having to make that trip back and forth.

Was there a way to help this person get some local care with home care? Well, you know what the answer was, Mr. Speaker? You can send your family members in and we can train them how to set up an IV. That is unbelievable—unbelievable. You know, I mean, it's not right. It's not safe. It's a disgrace to seniors. It's total disrespect—disrespect for the people that built this province. It's just disrespect.

So when I ask if things are better or worse, does that sound better to you? No, it sounds a lot worse, Mr. Speaker.

I have to say that this is a bud—a Throne Speech that is lacking in just about everything. It reminds me of several that I've heard before, but this is the—I think, probably the worst one that I've heard. You know, and we always get—that was—the NDP always say, well, why don't you, oh, vote for it. Why do you vote against it? Because, you know, I can't vote—I'm going to tell you why I cannot vote for this. And that's because there's record tax increases, record—while despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, the government continues to spend beyond their means to the detriment of future generations. So I can't vote for that, Mr. Speaker.

\* (15:00)

Despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers in other jurisdictions, the provincial government has doubled the provincial debt. Well, I can't vote for that, Mr. Speaker. You know, families know that they can't double their debt and survive. They know that they can't run deficits, deficits, deficits after—year after year after year and survive. They know they have to live within their means. And, if they live outside their means one year, it's really bad news for the next year. But this government just continues to go further and further and further in debt.

Despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers from other jurisdictions, Manitoba is the child poverty capital of Canada. Again, Mr. Speaker,

I cannot vote for that. Despite record tax increases and record increases in transfers at other jurisdictions, Manitoba food bank usage is at a record high, and children are the ones using the food banks. And that's—I can't—I cannot vote for that.

Our infrastructure definite is not—deficit is not being addressed, and roads and bridges are in disrepair. We saw a bridge actually fall down. The bridge in St. Adolphe fell down. How many other bridges are falling down? Lots. Even by their own government's admission, their bridges are falling down. I can't vote for a government that is not investing significantly in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we saw a big flood last year. Floods are something that I'm quite used to seeing, Mr. Speaker, because almost every year we have one on the Red River, and last year we saw one big one on the Assiniboine River. But the way it was totally mismanaged and mishandled and improperly forecast was deplorable. The way the Premier (Mr. Selinger) actually stood on people's properties and put his hand on his shoulder and said, don't worry, we'll take care of you, and never saw him again.

There's so many people out there that have not been compensated, that have been told they have to appeal. So they go to the appeal process and get another ruling, and you know, this is all a way to wear down people so that they eventually get discouraged and go away. Well, they're not going to go away—they're not going to go away. That's why I'm not voting for this Throne Speech.

We have long wait times. We just saw, just talked about long wait times, Mr. Speaker. Our students continue to score at or near the bottom in core subjects such as math, reading and science. Our universities are still ranked near the bottom. There's a critical shortage of affordable housing.

This government continues to meddle in Crown corporations. Oh, I wish I had more time. I forgot to talk about the problems that this government is creating in Crown corporations. My goodness, I'll have to save that for another speech, Mr. Speaker.

We're the violent crime capital of Canada. Too many people, Mr. Speaker, are living in poverty, are leaving this province because of the tax laws here. Too many people are leaving, too much debt, where the food bank usages are as high as they've ever been and higher, child poverty capital of Canada, violent crime capital of Canada.

Things are not getting better under this NDP government. They're getting worse and worse and worse. It's deplorable. When times were good—when times were good—they didn't put any money away and save it as a cushion for when times were bad. So what happens when times get a little bad? They turn to the public and say, okay, now we have to get you to pay for our mistakes. That's what's happened. The public is going to have to pay through increased taxes and fees for this government's mismanage and mistakes.

This Minister of Finance could not stand in his place and say he won't raise taxes—he won't raise taxes—so I think that he is going to raise taxes, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I'm not voting for this Throne Speech. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** And I'm really glad she's not, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the essence of democracy is that our citizens get a choice. Our citizens get clear choices in this House, and we put forward a balanced, optimistic, reasonable plan. We've put that forward for Manitobans in a number of elections over the course of the years. We've—we did that with our budget, back in April. We're doing it now with the Throne Speech here. We'll do it again with the budget in 2013.

Voting against our throne speeches and our budgets hasn't worked so well for our friends across the way in the past. I don't expect that'll work well for them in the future. It does, Mr. Speaker, draw very clear lines between them and us, and I'm really glad that that line is there and that line is clear because I would not want to defend the proposals put forward by members opposite.

But I'll get more into that later because, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I sat in the House and I listened to the inaugural speech of the new Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister). I don't think it's just the polite thing to do, to listen to each other in this House; I was very interested in what the new guy—well, not exactly new—sort of the new guy who used to represent Portage la Prairie in this House had to say.

But he is in a new role, there's no denying that. He is the new Leader of the Conservative Party of Manitoba and he's the new Leader of the Official Opposition. He's in a different position now than what he was when he sat back in one of these seats behind me, back in the '90s. As a matter of fact, I

remember in the '90s they had to unbolt his chair at the back and move it back a few inches because he is a rather tall fellow and I remember when they did that, which was a very accommodating thing to do—I think that was fine—but in those days he was an MLA, he was a Cabinet minister. But, Mr. Speaker, now he wants to be the premier. That bar gets tacked up a little bit when you are the leader of a political party. There's a different level of microscope on you and the speeches that you make. And I got to say I was impressed with much of what the Leader of the Opposition's—the new leader said. I think that—I think it was—I really appreciated him talking about himself and his family and where he comes from and the things that shaped his thinking, the things that he learned from over the course of his years.

*Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased when I presented a budget in this House to make reference to my grandfather, my mom's dad. I think we should do that as officials. I think we should do that as elected people. I think it helps our constituents in every corner of this province understand what makes us tick, understand where we come from and what motivates us and where we've learned our lessons. So I really appreciated, and quite often, I—when I was listening to the member—the Leader of the Opposition, I thought, yes, that's a lot like some of the things, being a rural Canadian boy myself, I connected with. My grandfather told me stories of ploughing the fields up in the Swan River Valley and some of the ways in which they kept the lines—the furrows—straight. I remember those stories. I think they're great. I think we should learn from those kind of lessons, and learn from those kind of stories.

But then, Mr. Speaker, and, as the—as my colleague in Local Government is saying, you have to pivot from those experiences into some kind of vision, some kind of leadership because without that you don't get people to come along with you, and even the new Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) will not be able to do this by himself. That's why I asked today in question period, I asked him if he would turn to his colleagues and suggest to them that a real measure that we put in place, a real measure to help people who live in poverty in Manitoba, and what I was talking about was the 25 cent increase to the minimum wage that we've put forward, that we've put forward on a consistent basis—incremental, consistent basis—over the last number of years, something that has really put a lot of money into the hands of the working poor in

Manitoba. I asked him if he would show the leadership that's necessary to turn to people around him and say, you know, the time has come that we get serious about helping poor Manitobans. Under my leadership, we'll support increases to minimum wage, something that's specific to Manitoba working families, Manitobans with low incomes.

\* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition didn't take that opportunity. He didn't show that leadership—at least not yet. Maybe I'll ask him again as the session goes on. But he didn't turn to those around him who voted against, every year against, increases to the minimum wage. Instead they put forward—under the cloak, under the guise of some kind of support for the working poor in Manitoba, as they feigned that support, they brought forward a proposal that would increase for the—for those of us in this House—let's pick on ourselves first for a moment. Everybody in this House—we make a good salary. Everybody would benefit from the proposal brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Instead of saying he was coming forward with a benefit for us here, he tried to portray it as if it was his grand plan to help people who make minimum wage, who are struggling in this province. You know, if you like the proposal at least be straightforward enough to describe what it is; it's a tax break for people who make a lot of money. If you are serious about helping people of poverty in this province, work with us, support us. In putting forward an—the—and you should have supported—you know, the member across the way who's chirping right now should have supported the increase in—the 25 cent increase in the minimum wage we did.

Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't tell us what they're going to do with the HST. You know, they talk about—the one member gets up today and says, oh, you got to be accountable, and I've brought a bill forward to make sure everybody's accountable; oh, we're all going to be transparent. And then his own leader won't answer a single question, duck and dodge and weave, when he's asked about the HST. The HST would cost more to the people they purport to represent than what their own proposal was talking about. So at the best members opposite are giving to poor people on one hand and taking it away with the other—at best. That's not leadership. That's not a balanced way to move forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite like to make fun of the—of Manitoba's affordability, and

they never take this serious because they don't want to get into a debate about Manitoba's affordability. They want to have a very, very narrow, very, very exclusive, very small-minded approach, which only—limits the discussion to taxes. Now, even if we were just to accept that premise—even if we were to accept the premise—that Manitobans make decisions based only on the amount of tax they pay, I would not fear a debate with members opposite even on those grounds because every year this government has come forward and improved the tax situation in Manitoba—every year. And every year the Conservatives across the way say, oh, they didn't go far enough. Oh, they did—oh yes, the—we're the worst in the country by far. Boy, oh—I tell you.

If—what Manitobans are asking us to do is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. Our vision, our approach, is much different than the approach—I almost said vision, but then I took that back quickly, but the approach of members opposite. The approach of members opposite, which is narrow and self-serving and protecting their buddies, is out of step with what Manitobans are looking for. Manitobans want a balanced approach. Manitobans don't want us to repeat the mistakes that were made in the past.

And, you know, here's another thing I thought was quite interesting about the speech from the Leader of the Opposition. He's made a big deal of saying, oh, you got to look—you can't look in the rear-view mirror; you got to look forward. And then he said—he said, the—I'm taking notes of how many times members opposite refer to the '90s. And he said, 16 times we've referred to the '90s. Do you know what? [*interjection*] Oh, one more? Are you kidding? More than that? I love to talk. I'd love to—you know, the only person in this place who loves to talk about the '90s more than we do, is the member from—is the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister). He spent about a half hour of his speech yesterday defending the Filmon government.

You know, they did such a sensitive job in those days—sensitive. Mr. Speaker, even the Liberals, and I'm sure the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will back me up on this—even the Liberals under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, put forward the national tax benefit, child tax benefit. I remember Prime Minister Chrétien saying at the time, this specifically will help single moms who are living on assistance. What did that government of the then-member for Portage la Prairie do? They stepped in. They stuck their hands right into he pockets of single

moms in this province and they took that money—they clawed it back. Is that a reasonable, balanced—it—the member for—the former member for Portage la Prairie referred to it as intelligent and that Manitoba was blessed to have such a fine government as the Filmon government, which he was part of.

Mr. Speaker, that person who was expecting that money, who was not expecting it to be ripped out of their pocket, would—I doubt would agree that we were blessed with that government. I doubt they would say it was an intelligent approach to social services, and I'm fully confident that people who are impacted, the people that those folks across the way hurt back in the '90s and they hurt again today with their proposals, I'm confident that they would agree with our balanced approach in terms of dealing with the uncertain times that we are dealing with.

And it's not just us, it's the federal government. It's other provinces, Mr. Speaker. It's a world situation that we need to deal with. Turn on your news at night, folks. Europe is in crisis. The US is dealing with a protracted slowdown. I saw reports coming out of China that says that hot economy has cooled. There are pressures around the world and they do—and they are not—we are not, in Canada nor in Manitoba, immune to those.

Mr. Speaker, the—we have a package in Manitoba. We bundled up hydro rates, vehicle insurance, home heating. We bundled that up and we put it into law, saying, we're going to have the lowest in the county. Do members across the way actually think that Manitobans look and they say, oh, in Manitoba we can have the lowest rates. We have a reasonably low level of taxation, we have the lowest rates, we are the most affordable.

Even Saskatchewan, in their budget, says that we're the most affordable. We've got all this going for us. Oh, but you know what? They bumped the taxes up on this, we're going to move somewhere.

Manitobans are smarter than that, give them some credit. Manitobans make decisions a—way more complicated than what we see coming across the way from the Conservatives. And the Throne Speech that I'm going to vote in favour of—I will vote against the amendment brought forward by the former member for Portage la Prairie—I will be voting in favour of this Throne Speech because it recognizes the economic uncertainty of the day. It commits us, despite that economic uncertainty, it despites us to protecting those services that matter most to

Manitoba families: health care, education, protection of kids. And, Mr. Speaker, it commits us to strategic investments to grow our economy.

We will do that—we will continue to do that. We're not going to be detoured by the naysayers across the way, we're going to continue with our balanced approach.

And, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me this time to speak.

\*(15:20)

**Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to get up in this Chamber and give a speech, to—a rebuttal to the Throne Speech, in fact. We are today debating the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition.

And, I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the new Leader of the Opposition, and we do wish him well. In fact, we wish him more than well in the next election, that perhaps he can exchange that title for an even better one. And we'll wait to see what the electorate has to say about that in about three, three and a half years.

As I was saying, it's always great to be here and I thank the people for St. Paul for having placed me here. That would be the individuals from Springfield, the part of Springfield that I retained, Oakbank and Dugald, the individuals who reside in the rural municipality of East St. Paul and those who reside in the wonderful rural municipality of West St. Paul.

And, I've—I have the opportunity often to meet with them and talk with them, certainly have the opportunity on the daily basis, if not more often, to be able to take phone calls and emails. And, although there are a lot of needs, a lot of issues, it is always great representing them and they are very kind and generous to myself and my family. Never want to give a speech without thanking them.

Mr. Speaker, this Tuesday we had an amazing event in West St. Paul. It was held at the Middlechurch senior's home. It started off with the presentation of a Queen's jubilee medal to Lionel Pang and it grew from there. We actually then honoured St. Benedict's Monastery, their hundred years in Manitoba. And, they currently have their facilities in West St. Paul.

And then, we also honoured, at Middlechurch Home, 11 centenarians, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who live at that home and we were able to honour them. That's the most centenarians of any personal care home in this province. For those who don't know what that means, that means those who are over a hundred years old. And, even more remarkable is the fact that they ranged in age from 100 to 104 years old. It was remarkable. And we were able to give each one of them a certificate.

Unfortunately, I do have to say to this House, one of them didn't make it to the ceremony, she passed the night before, so we presented the family with an appropriate certificate.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

And, Lionel Pang, who got the Queen's jubilee medal, happens to be the principal of Principal Sparling School which this year celebrated a hundred years of being open. In fact, they had a beautiful open house this year and over 500 people attended.

So, it was really commemorating and—being able to honour individuals and institutions who have contributed a lot to this society. In fact, I would have to state that whether it's St. Benedict's or Principal Sparling School, or the 11 centenarians, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is—a lot of them got where they are and survived because of common sense. They would have been the individuals where they would have run on the philosophy that a dollar earned is 75 cents spent, 25 cents saved, a lesson that perhaps the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) could take to heart. That, unlike this NDP government, where a dollar taken in is almost \$2 spent—certainly a dollar-something. And, we're not quite too sure where they are on that yet but we're going to get the summary statements and then we'll be able to quote those.

But we do know that this government has had great difficulty living up to their commitments and living up to their promises. There's the promise during the last election—if the NDP would be re-elected, there would be no tax increases. Over and over the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, went forth and said, there will be no tax increases. Everything we do will be within our budgets. There will be no tax increases.

And, Mr. Speaker, the first time that they set foot in this House, the first opportunity they had to present a financial budget in front of this House, the



first thing they did was raise nine taxes and took \$180 million out of the pockets of Manitobans. They couldn't even wait for the ink to dry on the province—on the promise that they made to this province before they broke it. It wasn't even out of the packaging yet and already they'd broken that promise.

And now we heard, and it was one of these odd, odd times in this Chamber, the NDP had a Throne Speech and they—a Throne Speech is usually supposed to be good news for government. And what they did is on the day of their Throne Speech, they pre-empted it with this story. Now, I don't know if that was by design that they wanted to actually tank their Throne Speech by giving this bad news, but they—that's actually what they did. And they announced that the promise—another promise made in the last election, that they would balance their books by 2014, was another commitment that they had no intention of keeping.

Mr. Speaker, two strikes already on this government. Two strikes where commitments made during election. And I listened to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) get up and talk about democracy and people chose. Yes, well, people actually chose based on certain promises, both of which had been broken. Both have been broken: (1) no tax increases to pay for the promises, and (2) the budget would be balanced by 2014. Neither of which, I suspect, they ever intended on keeping. Neither of which that they could keep. And they broke those promises, and it was based on those that, actually, people voted for the NDP.

I would suggest to the Minister of Finance, the Cabinet and members opposite, that they should actually look back at those individuals. I mentioned the 11 centenarians who, in fact, in our office—and I mentioned that at the event we were calling them centurions because they're heroes; they're warriors.

They went through some difficult times and they knew the value of a dollar, and they knew the fact that you don't spend more than a dollar for every dollar you earn. And I would say to the Minister of Finance, he should actually look at that lesson. The fact that we had a \$1-billion overexpenditure last year, and this year we're not too sure where that's going to end up.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is a problem. And he should look at this—those centenarians, and look at the way they ran their lives and how they helped to build a wonderful, strong province of Manitoba and a

great country of Canada. And they certainly didn't do it by bankruptcy.

And I listen to the Minister of Finance talking about what's going on in Greece. Yes, Greece was following his model of financing, that they were borrowing and borrowing and spending and spending, and they got themselves to the point where they couldn't afford their own debt. And that is becoming a problem for this province. The minister better be careful that he is getting us to a point where we will be like Greece and Spain and Portugal, we will not be able to afford the debt that we have, Mr. Speaker.

And the other troubling thing is they're also foisting a lot of debt onto Manitoba Hydro, which is actually underwritten by the Province of Manitoba. And the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro knows that, and he's—the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, I'm sure, is very good money manager of his personal finances. I'm sure that he's very careful with the way he spends his personal money. I would suggest to him he would never, never spend money the way this government does in his own personal life. And, frankly, I don't think anybody would lend an individual the kind of money that they do to the government and let them spend it the way they are.

The debt on this province is going to become a millstone around the neck, and we've heard, for generations to come. Both the Minister responsible for Hydro and the Minister of Finance know that.

I would suggest to members of this House and I would recommend strongly that they support the amendment and not support the Throne Speech, because the Throne Speech—frankly was—it was even pre-empted by the Minister of Finance himself. It was 'dereft' of any new ideas, it was a retread of same old themes. We've seen the kind of broken promises and commitments over the years, Mr. Speaker, and I would recommend to all members of this House, like I will on behalf of the people of St. Paul, will be voting for the amendment and against the Throne Speech.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

\* (15:30)

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** It is an honour to speak to this 2012 Speech from the Throne. This is the ninth legislative session I've been privileged to be a part of, and I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, I haven't

lost the excitement and enthusiasm to represent the people who've elected me to serve them, and I, like, I think, most members in this House, don't take for granted the freedom we have to speak both inside and outside this Chamber about things that matter to us and to our constituents.

The Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, marks the direction of the government for the coming year and beyond. And while I'm proud to serve as a member of Cabinet, including Attorney General for the last three years, my first responsibility, of course, is to the people of Minto who've elected me to the Legislature. And this is a government which both looks out for and lifts up the people that I represent.

And in my time, I'm going to talk of the remarkable young people in Minto and their importance to the future of our province. And I'll talk about how this Speech from the Throne continues to build a brighter future for the people that I represent.

For those who don't know, for the members opposite, I'll talk a little bit about the constituency of Minto. It's mainly—the West End of Winnipeg is the way you describe it. It starts only a few blocks north and west of the Legislature. It's not geography, Mr. Speaker, that makes it special. There's no rivers, there's no beaches, no lakes, no mountain ranges, no hills, no forests in Minto. Since the boundaries were redrawn for the 2011 election, we don't even have a creek in Minto, but—and I know my vantage point may be a little different from some members' vantage points, but I can tell you, I can stand on Sargent Avenue at almost any intersection and see both ends of my constituency.

What makes the West End special is what's always made it special, Mr. Speaker, and that's the people. And it's people who came from Scotland and England and Ireland, from Iceland, Germany, Poland, the Ukraine, Italy, Portugal, Vietnam, the Philippines, the Caribbean, China, Korea, Africa. Really the entire world has come to the West End, and it really is an area that keeps reinventing itself. It's home to many of Manitoba's Aboriginal and Metis people, many coming south from their northern communities.

You spend time with young people in Minto and you see the bright future that Manitoba has. And, you know, we have some real opportunities, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba, according to our Bureau of Statistics and Stats Canada, actually has the highest percentage of its population between 15 and 24 years of age than any other province in Canada.

I see our young people in schools. Now, most students of the West End wind up going either to Daniel McIntyre Collegiate or Tec Voc High School. And I want to tell you, there is a healthy rivalry between those two schools and one of my most difficult political roles is to balance out the Maroons and the Hornets in my community.

If you go to DMCI, you'll find outstanding academics, you'll find sports teams that can compete with the big suburban high schools; you'll find performing arts that really are second to none in this province and you'll also find some vocational arts as well.

If you go to Tec Voc, you'll find outstanding academics, sports, performing arts, but also first-class technical and vocational training preparing students for high-tech, well-paying careers here in the province of Manitoba.

Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) attended at Tec Voc for an announcement of further support for trades training in the province of Manitoba.

And, of course, I am very proud to have a Hornet sitting right behind me. The honourable Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief), of course, is a Tec Voc grad which he tends to remind me time and time and time again.

What's really impressive, of course, is young people who refuse to fit stereotypes that people may want to create for them. And so, when I meet young people, I might meet student athletes who are also honours students who also sing or play in the band. Or I'll meet kids who are involved in dance who will also whip you just as quickly on the basketball court and then head off to their faith community to make a difference in their community.

And I try not to fit those stereotypes either. And while I don't mind being known by my students as the guy who's suing big tobacco, I'm equally proud to be known as the guy who does his best to make it out to watch their teams succeed in the basketball playoffs. And I don't mind being recognized as the Minister of Justice who introduced legislation to improve human rights, but it's equally rewarding, Mr. Speaker, to be recognized by students at the mall or students at the Cindy Klassen recreation centre. I should add, that's where—a place where a lot of the young people in my community go to work hard to

try and bulk up and put on muscle and put on weight. It's also a place where guys like me run around the track and try and take off some of that weight that we tend to gain in some of the unhealthy parts of the job that we do.

Now, we talk in our Throne Speech and other Throne Speeches and our budgets about keeping more young people in schools and getting them through high school. And the numbers, Mr. Speaker, tell a great story in Manitoba. When we took power in 1999, only about 71 per cent of our students were actually getting through and completing high school. Well, it's 84 per cent now. We've almost cut the drop-out rates in half in the 13 years we've been in government. And the Throne Speech confirms that we'll continue to work with the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship and we'll keep going after that and we'll keep reducing those drop-out rates and getting more young people through school.

You know, it's exciting to be on the front lines to celebrate with our young people as they finish high school and graduate and move out into the world. In June, I attended both high schools' graduations, as I always do, and it was a really special time. A ceremony in the morning, well, the ceremony at Daniel McIntyre, went on and it went on and it went on, and that's because this year they had more than 275 graduates—more than anybody can remember and that school's been in the West End for more than 90 years. And then I went to the evening Tec Voc grad at Duckworth Centre, which is a great grad; it's always a highlight of the year. And Tec Voc had more than 200 grads, which, again, is more than anybody could remember in the school's history and that school's been there for more than 60 years. It doesn't happen by accident. It happens because of the investments of this government; it happens because of the involvement of the families, the hard work of the students; and really, Mr. Speaker, it comes down to the respect that we give teachers and educators in our system in Manitoba. That's why kids in the West End are set to succeed.

Now, of course, there are many other things to celebrate with young people in the West End. After eight years as the MLA now, I get to see the places these young people are going. And some of the students I used to read stories to in I Love to Read Month or some of the students who grilled me in question-and-answer sessions in their classes are now moving on to university, to college, into trades or into the workforce. And many of those in the

workforce may be full-time or they may be part-time, and some of those students may be supporting their families—even supporting family members overseas. And if you meet young folks from my community, you might meet them, you know, pursuing their education working in the service industry. They might be serving you at the Convention Centre for one of the many dinners that we have the privilege to attend; maybe they'll be checking out your purchases at Polo Park or maybe helping run their family's restaurant on Notre Dame or Sargent or Ellice. You know, I'm proud we fought for a fair minimum wage for these young people and better protections for workplace health and safety. And I know our Progressive Conservative opponents have very different ideas on minimum wage and workplace health and safety. It was Hugh McFadyen who called minimum wage increases political candy. And it's the members across the way who call safe workplaces—well, they call those regulations red tape and they oppose them every step of the way. And you know, we think it's important that we provide fairness and safety and justice for those young workers.

We heard in the Throne Speech about investments in our post-secondary institutions. The University of Winnipeg field house is going up just across the street from Minto constituency, but that's okay. That's okay, because we all work together. It's going to be a valuable asset, not just for the university, but, Mr. Speaker, for the larger community. And it really keeps up with how the U of W, over the past many years, has broken down the barriers between the university and the surrounding community, communities like mine, in recent years. Many students from the West End wind up going to the University of Manitoba, which is undergoing a tremendous expansion and transformation as Project Domino nears its successful completion. The U of M healthy living centre, of course, will open in 2015 and be a great resource for that university and for the entire city of Winnipeg and province of Manitoba. And this year, Mr. Speaker, we'll take a major step in expanding Red River College. There'll be \$60 million invested in a new skilled trades and technology centre where students will receive trades training for construction and manufacturing sectors where there are skilled, high-paying jobs waiting for them.

Many young people are pursuing employment in the health-care field, and, unlike in the 1990s when my friends and my classmates fled Manitoba—they fled Manitoba because of short-sighted cuts to health

care—today's health-care graduates have a bright future right here—pharmacy, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy. I know students from Minto will be part of an expanded nurse practitioner program at the University of Manitoba, and many will wind up—they'll wind up providing care to Manitobans at the Health Sciences Centre just, again, across the street from the constituency of Minto, which continues to develop.

\* (15:40)

Now, Mr. Speaker, people from the heart of this city know what's good for the heart of the city, and the development of a groundbreaking urban and inner studies program at the University of Winnipeg will harness this knowledge and continue to help us innovate. And, you know, if the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) wants to register for some courses and learn about the inner city, I invite him to join my West End students. He may learn something and that'll be a good thing.

Now, students in the West End don't expect a free ride. They don't want a free ride but they want and they need their education to be affordable, and we've continued to keep tuition rates affordable. So it's the best and the brightest, and not just those who are lucky enough to be born into wealthy families, who have the chance to excel and be part of our economy and have all the chances they should have. And that's why we've got not just among the most affordable tuition rates in Canada, we also have the 60 per cent tuition fee rebate, to encourage our young people to stay in or to return to the province of Manitoba. And our tuition policy and our minimum wage policy have opened the door to more and more West End students moving on to higher education.

Now, not every student has had the opportunity to be prepared to step right out of school and into higher education or the workforce. And, Mr. Speaker, we know sometimes just keeping those young people engaged in school is a challenge in and of itself. And that's why legislation requiring schools to support young people who may not feel at home in a traditional high school classroom, well, it's another positive step in including everybody in Manitoba's economy and getting more young people to get their graduation, to succeed, to be able to step out into the workforce.

And it also starts early. And we know that lower student-teacher ratios mean better results for students in the West End and everywhere else in the province of Manitoba. And in the very first year of our

commitment to reducing class sizes for kindergarten to grade 3, we've partnered with school divisions—we've partnered with our school divisions to fund 79 more teachers, and we've brought 176 more classrooms down to 20 students or less.

And, you know, there are challenges in the busy schools in the West End where many, many students are not learning English as their first language, sometimes not even as their second language—sometime as their third or fourth language. But they work hard and so do their teachers and so do their families. And I'm welcoming the new legislation we'll be introducing in support of community schools, because I've seen how programs at schools like Wellington School, which, of course, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) visited with me some time ago, and John M. King School, involve parents and result in better outcomes.

You know, all children deserve to attend schools where they feel welcome, where they feel safe and where they feel respected, and I'm looking forward to the new measures we'll be introducing to help parents, help students and teachers fight bullying in and around our schools.

Now, maybe you'll see young people from Minto involved in Manitoba's growing and vibrant arts and culture community. You know, I know a lot of talented musicians and dancers and actors and artists. Maybe you'll see them at Rainbow Stage or at the theatre centre or maybe even on the Ellen show or on stage at Air Canada Centre in Toronto with Lady Gaga.

Maybe you'll meet some young people from Minto at Folklorama. I've got to tell you, after nine years, I never grow tired of celebrating our diversity with people from all over this province. I never thought, Mr. Speaker, that I'd get to a point in my life where I would watch more live dance than live sports, both with my own daughters and everybody else's. But, you know, I've come to accept that and, frankly, I've come to cherish that fact, and I maybe have learned a little bit more about dance than I ever thought I would know before.

You know, it's our young people who want to be part of a dynamic and exciting place to live. And in the past years our government has worked with the private sector and community partners to make important investments in world-class amenities, from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to Investors Group Field to the redevelopment of Assiniboine Park. Plans for the expansion of the Winnipeg

Convention Centre were announced just days ago. Private sector investments are also leading the way, whether it's IKEA Winnipeg, to the new retail developments right around Polo Park, where I know a lot of west enders will be working and a lot of west enders will be shopping.

And, you know, young Manitobans, like the ones I represent, are talking about bringing the Women's World Cup to Winnipeg. They're talking about the Juno Awards. They're talking about the Canada Summer Games, and I can't tell you how much they're talking about bringing in more and more world-class performers that will be performing in our world-class stadium on the University of Manitoba campus.

And, you know, young people in my area don't have a lot of money and neither do most of their families, but they know with a strong economy and low housing costs, Manitoba continues to be one of the most affordable places to live. Young people know that their families pay the lowest rates in the country for utilities bundles made up of home heating, electricity and auto insurance, and our government doesn't just talk about that: we've put that commitment in law, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, I could go on for a lot longer about all the great things happening, but I want to give my—both my opponents and also my colleagues the chance to talk about their own constituencies and talk about the great future we have in Manitoba for young people. And, you know, I'm blessed with some of the amazing people that I represent and I will continue to represent them as best I can. They've made it clear to me they want us to keep investing in activities to keep young people engaged, to keep them busy, to keep them connected. They want us to take on and ensure consequences for those who would hurt our communities, and they know a balanced approach is the best way to keep us safe.

So on behalf of young people I represent and their families, I'm proud to support the Speech from the Throne. I'm proud of young people who represent their families, who represent their heritage, who represent their faith communities in their neighbourhood so well. It's young people like Yvonne and Christian who express their faith and work to build our neighbourhood; young people like Samson who's a football player—rapper—artist who is also proud to share his Ethiopian heritage with us; young people like Sarah who issued a call to her grade 12 classmates, as a graduation present to

themselves and others, to pursue social justice in the West End and others; and many others who are part of a bright future for Manitoba. I know they'll keep challenging us to continue to open opportunities, to do the right thing, and they'll keep telling me what works and what they think we could do better.

Most young people know this NDP government is on their side, and most of the rest are those who haven't heard or who don't know what it was like for young people in Manitoba when a Progressive Conservative government slammed doors in their faces and shut them out of opportunities. When there's a choice between the hard-working and dedicated youth in my community and those few elsewhere who would close those doors, who would close out those opportunities and keep people in my area from achieving everything that they can and they should for the province of Manitoba, I'll stand up for my young folks any day, any time. And that's why I am proud to stand with my colleagues and my friends as New Democrats, and, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support this Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment that our new leader has presented to this Legislature and ensure Manitobans and those constituents in River East that supported me, that I will stand up for what they want and what they believe. And I know what I ran on, Mr. Speaker, in River East in the last election campaign, and I know that the majority of constituents did support the position of our party and I was fortunate to be re-elected to this Legislature. And I didn't have the opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech last session, so I'm pleased—I guess this would be my 25th response to the Speech from the Throne in this Legislature, and I'm honoured and privileged to—

**An Honourable Member:** You've got a long ways to go yet, Bonnie.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I haven't caught up to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) yet, Mr. Speaker. There may come a day when I do surpass his longevity in this Legislature, but I'm not quite there yet.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured again to serve the constituents of River East and want to thank them for their confidence and their support in my ability to represent them, and we do have a wonderful community in northeast Winnipeg that is growing and is thriving—a lot of young families. We have

lived in our house in that same community for 40 years now, the same house, and raised our children right in that community in our community, and we're seeing now the changeover on our street. Many of us in those days were young families with young children that attended the school system, River East School Division, and many of those families have now moved out. Some have moved on to condominiums. Others that were a little older than we were have moved into seniors complexes, some into nursing homes, others into different locations. And we're seeing in our community and on our street the changeover and the turnover to young families again moving into that community. And it's great to see. We notice it especially at Halloween when we see more children coming to our doors today as a result of that changeover. And that's natural in any established community right throughout the province.

\*(15:50)

And it's good to see those young families moving into our community, and it's good to see, also, Mr. Speaker, that they do value the same values as Progressive Conservatives in many ways. And that is that they have strong family values, they have a very strong work ethic and really do not believe that government should be doing everything for them. They believe that governments have a role to play in supporting community when community shows initiative. And that's very different from the philosophy of the New Democrats—extremely different. And I'm pleased to see that that strong community pride and that strong worth—work ethic is alive and well in River East constituency.

I want to thank—excuse me—the volunteers that work so very hard in my constituency. And it was a very difficult election for me this last time. We had some family issues that I had to deal with right in the middle of the campaign. And I don't know how many of you have children, grandchildren. I'm blessed to have two young girls as grandchildren, four and six years old now, and they are my pride and joy. But, Mr. Speaker, I have a daughter that had a heart attack during the last election campaign—right in the middle. And I had to take a week off because I knew where my priorities were and they were at the bedside of my daughter. And she is recovering well, not that we didn't go through many, many difficult months where she required a lot of family support. And so, I've taken a—had taken a bit of a back seat over the last year to make sure that I had my priorities straight. And my priorities were to be with

my family, to support my family, to support my daughter, my son-in-law and my grandchildren through this difficult time. And I am pleased to say that things—she is doing extremely well and I'm just thrilled. But it just makes us all recognize and realize that we're very vulnerable. There are many, many things that are outside of our control.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that we do, in many instances, have a good health-care system and some expertise within that health-care system here in Manitoba that does support families. There are significant shortcomings and we experienced just from the questions and answers today in question period that things are not improving in our health-care system like we would like to see. When people are waiting for ambulances to come when they're in a time of medical crisis, we should be able to respond as a province and as a community to their needs. When they arrive at the emergency departments in our hospitals, they should be able to get the attention that they need from the expertise that's within our health-care system—and it is there. But they can't always access that expertise, and they line the hallways of the emergency department. And I have seen firsthand over the last year, as I visited the emergency departments, that people are lined up on stretchers in the hallways with emergency responders at their sides having to spend their time waiting for patients to get in to get the expert care that they deserve and that they need. And it's shameful that that is moving in the wrong direction.

I've seen ambulances out in the parking lots, and I know that this government, when they were in opposition, talked about hallway medicine and how people were lined up in the hallways. Well, Mr. Speaker, they can't even get into the hallways today. They're lined up in ambulances out in the parking lots waiting to get into the hallway on a stretcher where they have to sit with an emergency responder until they can get in to get the expert care that they need and that they deserve, and that's shameful. It's moving in the wrong direction, and to have a government stand up and try to defend that kind of backwards move is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, we also see, years after children have died so tragically within our child and family services system, that things are not improving. We see time and again a government that says one thing and does another, ministers of Family Services that have stood up in this Chamber and wrung their hands and talked about how they were out of their skin because of the kinds of things that were happening to

children in our child and family services system. And then we see, six years after reports that they had access to, reports that we didn't have in our hands, but recommendations from reports and reviews that were done six years ago, that haven't been acted on today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't call that protection of children and putting the safety and security of children first. I have dealt with—and I'm no longer the critic for Family Services, but I have dealt with and I continue to deal with a few families that have given the last six or eight years of their lives to fostering high-needs children within the system, that have had those children removed from their homes for no safety reasons by an agency that hasn't even got a plan—a case plan developed for those children.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's been done in a very inhumane way in some instances. And I do raise those issues with the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard), and those families are not going to come out publicly because they're not going to jeopardize the children that are within their care.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful that that kind of thing is continuing today when we have successive ministers of Family Services over there saying that they are going to fix the system, that they are going to make sure that children come first. That is not happening, and there needs to be some action taken on the recommendations that this government has had in their hands for years.

Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to seeing some action from this new Minister of Family Services on some of the commitments that she has made. Ultimately, The Child and Family Services Act is a piece of legislation that was implemented and passed by this government. It is the government's responsibility, it is the minister's responsibility, to enact that legislation and to make sure that children are safe.

Mr. Speaker, they can't pass the buck to the authorities or to the agencies. It's the minister that is ultimately responsible to ensure the safety and security of children, and we are going to ask questions and we are going to hold this government accountable to the legislation that falls and the children that fall under their watch.

\* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure and the opportunity to now be the critic responsible for Immigration and Multiculturalism. And in my first

years of government way back in the early '90s, I had the responsibility for Culture, Heritage and—it was Culture, Heritage and Recreation was the department when I was first appointed and it was a visionary, Gary Filmon, as the premier of the province, that changed the department to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. And he was way ahead of other premiers and other provinces across the country, and the mandate that he gave me at that time was to begin negotiations with the federal government to develop a made-in-Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. Now, we started that dialogue and discussion with the federal government, and I wasn't the minister that was there at the end of the day. It took several years to negotiate that agreement, but I think we negotiated a very good agreement that would allow for immigrants to come to our province to fill the job shortages that we couldn't fill with Manitobans.

And I think that program has progressed and we have seen immigration play a very major role in who we are today as a province. And I'm proud of that and I'm proud that our premier of the day, Gary Filmon, had that vision and that we continue today to increase our population through immigration.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will stand by the Provincial Nominee Program, and I will ensure that this government continues to provide the settlement services, and I'll be watching to see whether they continue to decrease their support to the immigration settlement programs that they have. I mean, they've been on a downward trend across the way and we need to ensure that the supports and the services are available to the immigrants that are coming to our country today to ensure that they do integrate and adapt and become productive members of our society. So I'll be working very carefully and watching what this provincial government does into the future.

I want to say I'm looking forward to the session. I want to indicate that I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne, but I will be supporting the amendment that our new leader put forward. I look forward, under his leadership, to seeing positive solutions and concrete suggestions on how we can move Manitoba forward. So with those comments, I just want to say to all of those that are new to the Chamber, to the pages, to the interns that have been appointed for this year, congratulations. I'm sure you'll find that this place is challenging at times but can be pretty exciting, and I know that you will learn a lot.

To you, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the job that you do. To the table officers and those that serve us here in the Legislature and to our staff, very few in opposition as compared to what government has, staff that work very hard on our behalf every day. To everyone and to members of the government side as well as my colleagues here on the opposition side of the House, health and happiness and maybe a bit of a more balanced approach from government as we move forward, because I believe that Manitoba is a great province and that we do have opportunity, but we can't see it dragged down by the kinds of policies, regressive policies, that this government has in place today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just begin my remarks by welcoming you back to the Chamber and to say what a privilege and an honour and a pleasure it is to serve as your deputy in here and I look forward to doing so for the days and months and years to come.

I would like to begin my remarks by expressing my extreme gratitude to the people of the Interlake who have re-elected me for the fourth time now just a little over a year ago. It's always a surprise and a pleasure when you win an election, and the last election was particularly challenging with the flood that we had experienced and I'm just glad that they indicated their continued faith in me to carry forward on their behalf. None of us should ever, ever take it for granted that we're going to be elected or re-elected. So, we should always bear in mind that the people that we serve are out there and we have to do our utmost to see that their issues are addressed.

I, as have others, want to also congratulate the new member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the Leader of the Opposition, on his election and acclamation as leader. He is now the third member of Fort Whyte that I've shared time with in the Chamber and the fourth Conservative leader that I have seen. And I'm sure that I'll be welcoming another one in the years to come. You know, I'm wishing him the best in the few years that he has in here. I know when they don't measure up they get summarily executed rather quickly and abruptly over there. So, you know, I hate to point that out to him, that that's the fate that awaits him but, you know, I'm sure he'll enjoy his time in here and I wish him the best in that regard.

I do want to speak to the speech here and the first issue in the speech, of course, was referenced to

that catastrophic flood that we experienced last year and are still experiencing as a people. And, no more so is that evident than in my constituency and the Interlake itself where I still have, you know, in excess of a thousand people who are under evacuation orders. And, you know, 18 months and counting after the election, we're still trying to repair all the damage.

This was a catastrophic event, the greatest natural disaster in the history of our province, what I like to think of as the flood of the millennium. And, I'm just very proud to be a member of the NDP because this particular government has done so much to combat that particular event. We've gone so far above and beyond what could be expected of a provincial government, and we've done so largely in the absence of the federal government, to who have the fiduciary responsibility to address large-scale disasters such as this. And, I really have to say, I'm very disappointed in their performance to date.

I look back to the flood of the century, which paled in comparison to the flood we experienced last year. One case in point being that farmers in the Red River basin actually planted a crop that year. The water came up, there was a flood, and within weeks, it was gone. People got back to normal. And yet the Liberal government of the day, under Prime Minister Chrétien, did acknowledge that a major disaster had occurred. That standard DFA was not sufficient to cover off a disaster of that magnitude and did step up to the plate with additional dollars, over and above just a standard DFA, in the form of the JERI program, the Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative, which addressed a wide range of things over and above just DFA, including loss of income, for example.

And, an example of that would be the fishers in area 6 who were cut off completely from the market, ineligible for disaster financial assistance, got nothing from Ottawa. This government stepped up to the plate and compensated them for their entire season of fishing. A very unique move, kept that community of fishers afloat, whereas members opposite and their federal counterparts would have cast them adrift and did so.

Cottagers, another group of people ineligible for disaster financial assistance. This government stepped up and helped them as well.

And farmers, last but not least, who have been impacted by this flood, in particular, ranchers who have to pasture cattle around the lake and cut hay



and who support the Conservative members to a large degree, although it remains to be seen if that continues on into the future because, once again, another group that was cast adrift by the federal government, not just last year but this year as well.

\* (16:10)

I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (Mr. Kostyshyn), came out to my constituency in August and toured along the lake in the inundation zone, met with some of my producers. And it was the very next day that that minister made an application to Ottawa for an AgriRecovery program to help ranchers in the inundation zone, who could not get onto their pastures for a second year and were unable to cut hay in the inundation zone for a second year as well.

This minister stepped up, made the application for an AgriRecovery program which would cost share 60-40, not 90-10, which is standard DFA, but we'll take the 60 per cent from them. To this day, no reply, which doesn't surprise me. I've dealt with this over the 12 years that I've been in office. Many, many times farmers in my areas, because of inclement weather, have dealt with disaster, and ranchers in particular. And I can—I don't have enough fingers on my two hands, I think, to count the times that the federal government has left them twisting in the wind. One year it wasn't until March that they announced some feed and freight assistance to farmers. Those farmers had to wait all winter not knowing whether or not they were going to get any assistance from the government, which I think is just a deplorable way of managing your files and, you know, once again, here we are waiting for confirmation that they will cost share.

So this flood is not over yet, and we have work to do, but both levels of government have worth-work to do. The cost of this flood was well over \$1 billion. I think, to date, we've got \$100 million out of them. So, for a disaster that typically you would expect 90 per cent federal assistance, what we've got is 10 per cent of assistance so far, and we're waiting.

I look to one project in particular, the Lake St. Martin emergency outlet, which was a—extraordinary accomplishment by this government, to put in place that type of infrastructure, on time and under budget, I might add, that changed the face of the flood. There's no question in my mind and in anybody's mind, I don't think, that that emergency action was the difference between being in a terrible

state going into this year, as compared to the lake being now within its range of regulation.

So an emergency action such as that cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 million, and, to date, no commitment from the federal government, again, in regard to cost sharing on that project. Ninety per cent would be nice; even 50 per cent would be a surprise. I'm not at all surprised that we've got nothing to date, because that's just typical of how they conduct business in Ottawa.

Members opposite like to talk about health and—well, let's look at health. Thirty years ago, the federal government paid for 50 per cent of the cost of health care in this country, something that is most important to Canadians. Health and education: those are the two most important services that governments provide; 50 per cent 30 years ago, 20 per cent today, and if they continue on their path, which I'm sure they will, they will be cutting their contributions to that critical system of delivery down to 11 per cent.

So there are you go, federal government, once again, walking away from their obligations. And, well—well, they did it before, back in the '90s, under Filmon, slashing the training positions for doctors. You know, we're still feeling the effects of that today. And God help us if they ever do return to office, because we will soon be losing the universality of health care. We'll be going to a private, for profit, two-tiered system, something that's not talked about enough in this Legislature, but the people of Manitoba better never forget that because that is where they will take us if that unhappy day occurs when they do return to power in this province.

Other issues in the Throne Speech here, of great interest to me, of course, is the whole process of amalgamation of municipalities, and the minister spoke well in question period on that topic. Municipalities with less than 1,000 people—clearly dysfunctional. You know, I observed during the flood last year, one of the things stuck out in my mind was, you know, the municipalities were on the front line and they did a wonderful job for the most part in fighting the flood, but it became quite obvious that many of them just did not have the capacity or the resources, the expertise or staff to really lead on a major file like that. And, if we can put municipalities together into larger entities, where they can pool their resources and deal specifically with a very challenging issue like that, emergency measures, then it will be an improvement.

I'm also hoping—and I know that amalgamation will solve a problem that I have in the Interlake dealing with former local government districts that are the poorest of the municipalities, and who were cast adrift by the Filmon government back in 1997 when they were forcibly, without any consultation or notice, converted over to municipalities and basically thrown to the wolves to fend for themselves. Amalgamating these poorer municipalities together with some of the more wealthier ones will resolve that problem.

I've acknowledged the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) and I know he's working hard on the new Growing Forward program, something that our farmers need. And I recognize that there will be great emphasis put on innovation and trying to look at more processing of goods so that we can move away from being hewers of wood, drawers of water. He's on the right path and I compliment him in that regard.

And one point I want to make about farmers: When we did the Throne Speech, I had two of them in the gallery—or not in the gallery, but in the Chamber here with me as guests. One of them was my wife, Rozanne, and the—another was Ross Fridfinnson. And when the speech was over, their observation to me was the one thing that stuck out in their mind was mention of the sewer and water projects here in Winnipeg and the acknowledgement that the City of Winnipeg is, in fact, the largest contributor of nutrients to the lake. We, as rural people, are very happy to hear that the City of Winnipeg is now going to start to manage its manure. And we look forward to that because farmers have always done their utmost to be good stewards of the land and for the most part have been very successful in that regard. But all of us contribute nutrients. The three quarters of a million people inside the Perimeter here are stepping up with the encouragement and the financial support of this government to deal with that issue.

Highways, infrastructure, something that's near and dear to my heart, and I'll just acknowledge the one project. Provincial Trunk Highway 68 that now spans the entire Interlake from No. 8 Highway, the last segment of that road is being—or is complete now at the narrows—goes right across the Interlake across to No. 5 Highway. We've now opened up an RTAC highway, unrestricted traffic right across the Interlake to the west. So that gives us alternate trade routes. It's not just north, south; everything comes to Winnipeg. Interlakers now have unrestricted access

to all of western Canada because of that project, a very expensive project—spanned several ministers—is now complete. I'm very happy to see that now behind us.

Another thing that was in the speech, mention of the green plan and of the new wildlife—or the fish and wildlife enhancement fund that we're working on, something that is very near and dear to my heart because I do enjoy sitting in the occasional tree stand and harvesting some of that wild meat which is pure and unadulterated by any growth hormones or what-have-you. This type of a project will enhance the habitat for game, will give us the resources to monitor species, to combat threats to our wildlife like chronic wasting disease which we see in western Canada, indeed, in Saskatchewan—a great danger to us here in Manitoba and I'm happy to see that our Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) has his eye on the ball and has made this very important step to go forward on this front.

\*(16:20)

And I do want to give my colleagues time to speak as well, but one of the components of the speech, as well, was mentioned of the Arctic Bridge and the focus on the BRIC countries, the four fastest growing economies in the world: Brazil, Russia, India, China. It's important that we focus on this, and this government, again, is doing that.

There's so much potential for Churchill, but it needs government help, and obviously not getting that from members opposite or the Conservative government who have pretty much, you know, signify—or signalled the death of Churchill if the Canadian Wheat Board is gone, which it is now. This puts incredible pressure on the Port of Churchill, and unless we can strategize to get some solutions there, then it's in trouble.

And this government is working on that, and I'm working on that as well. I've worked very closely with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). Him and I travelled to Russia together a couple of years ago, and into Siberia myself, not once but twice now. So much potential for new trade routes.

We're looking at the pole itself, flying directly over the pole, working in conjunction with the Russians who have the elliptical satellite system that gives coverage to the polar cap, unlike the geosynchronous satellites that circle the equator that

don't give good coverage. This is unique technology and a unique opportunity for the province of Manitoba. It dovetails nicely into our whole plans for CentrePort, which over the next couple of decades will change the very face of Manitoba. Accessing these BRIC countries, Russia and India in particular, will be key to that success, and we're well down the path in that regard.

And I'll just close by saying I had the greatest honour of my life. Just a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to meet and speak with the former president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev—I do speak a little bit of Russian—and I was very much impressed with the man. His warm and sincere reception of me was one of the highlights of my political career. And I want to thank the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for arranging that personal introduction, and I also want to thank Leo Ledohowski, who is the owner of Canad Inns, who arranged for my invitation to that dinner.

It's good to know important people like that on occasion. And, of course, I've known Leo for many years. Both of us are Poplarfield boys. The Ledohowski family also owned the Coronation Hotel in Poplarfield a few years before my family took ownership of it, and Leo knew my father, Mike Nevakshonoff, very well.

My dad used to coach him in hockey when he was a little boy, and the Ledohowski family was not so wealthy back then, and my father anonymously bought Leo a set of shoulder pads and hockey gloves, and gave it to him, and Leo's never forgotten that, and it's now gone full circle. His invitation to me to that dinner, I say that the obligation has been settled in that regard, so. And my father is looking down upon me, and I'm sure he would agree.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address the Throne Speech and I look forward to the days to come here in the Legislature.

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Welcome back to everybody into this session of the Legislature. I particularly would like to welcome the new MLA for Fort Whyte in here as our new leader, and I think we'll be very excited—we're very excited about that. And he'll do a fabulous job, as I'm sure he has done already this week as you all saw.

Welcome also to the pages. We had them in Public Accounts Committee, for those members that were in here, and they—that was their first introduction, I think, to the legislative process, and

they did very, very well. And we really appreciate the help that we get from them here.

So a couple of things that have happened more recently. You may have heard last night that Neelin High School, the varsity girls who were a four–a AAA school went up to AAAA provincials this year, won last night, so they are in the finals next Monday. So, hopefully, go to look to see that. Crocus Plains usually has been in the finals, from Brandon, and now we have a change in the process. So good luck to Neelin, and congratulations to them.

Unfortunately, my son was in the provincials and lost to Steinbach, but, you know, Steinbach then lost to a Winnipeg team. But, anyway, great to see the youth out there participating and nice to watch them, of course, in these events.

We had a couple other occurrences in our family this summer. My eldest daughter, our eldest daughter was married to a fine young gentleman from Boissevain. They farm down there. And I know some of the members here have daughters and this was my first wedding that I participated in as a father, and it had to be one of the most difficult things I've ever done, walking my daughter down the aisle. I don't tend to be that emotional. I have been in the House from time to time, but, wow, that was really, really something and quite–quite more difficult than I had expected.

Anyway, we need to speak, I guess, on the Throne Speech here a little bit, and it is quite the speech. Usually, I think, we like to see some vision in a speech. We saw a lot of hindsight, 20/20, what may or may not have happened. It depends on how you look at things, but usually in a vision statement you see a little more forward thought. But even with vision statements, you know someone I do have a great deal of respect once said, you know, if you have enough vision statements, let's say, 13 of them, I think it's been now for this government, does that mean we're having a hallucination? So, perhaps this government must be hallucinating to come up with their budgets for the last several years. Manitobans wish they were hallucinating. Almost a billion dollars over budget last year. How can you possibly—how can you do that? It's absolutely unbelievable, but the NDP did it.

And that was bad enough, the increase in the deficit. But it's also the debt that has been piled on Manitobans over those years, huge amount increasing in the debt, but even last year the debt went up \$1.986 billion—almost \$2 billion added to

Manitoba's debt. I thought that was kind of odd when I started to look at the books. Had to look at the fine print to see where this all happened, and you know there's a little bit of smoke and mirrors there, but still an astounding amount of debt that we have added to Manitoba, and that's not all from the flood. Yes, there is a component there, and as the previous speaker said, 90 per cent of those dollars should come back from the federal government. Odd that we would slag the federal government when we're expecting them to help us, but it's up to you. Shocking.

You know, it's difficult for many of us to understand how bad of a financial situation this NDP government has put us into in Manitoba. And then, you know, as little as a couple months ago, the Finance Minister told us he was on target to meet the province's financial targets, on target this year. Just the same as he was before, but you know last year at this time he said he was on target then blew the budget by a billion dollars. So, anyway, missed the balanced budget again, you know. And it's strange how that adds up year after year, but that the Finance Minister will hit the target of \$500-million deficit—is that what he was planning for this year, I believe. It's still a huge amount. One year prior he was on target—\$2-billion increase in net debt, and here we go again. So, being on target for this minister costs Manitobans dearly.

But, you know, then it was not really a great surprise, certainly to most of us that understand finances in Manitoba, as difficult as some of these are to understand. Well, it's difficult to understand, but you know it was not a big surprise when he admitted on Monday this week that he would not have a balanced budget until who knows when. Certainly not 2014 because we can't do that anymore. So let me think now. When's the next election? Hmm. I wonder if that might be the date. We'll watch that just prior to that date. But, of course, this government is, we just heard over here from the hecklers, can't take responsibility for its own actions because, heaven forbid, they might have an impact on anything. Everyone else is doing it, seems to be their excuse. And we know that's not true, certainly not true in the rest of the world. Yes, there are nations that are difficult situations. There are provinces that are in difficult situations, but ours is quite the exception. And it's not okay to do what everything else is doing.

You know, I'm reminded some other—from some other sage advice that I have received in my lifetime,

and I'm sure some of you have growing up as well, probably from your parents. You know, would you jump off a cliff just because your friend did? Well, of course not. We have common sense, and of course, a fiscal cliff. We now have a new buzzword, a new phrase that we're going to use in defence of this particular actions here, the fiscal cliff, to make it look insignificant, to make this look acceptable, and it's certainly not acceptable to Manitobans.

\* (16:30)

This government chose this path; they must take the responsibility for the huge increase in deficits and a huge increase in Manitoba's debt, for the largest tax increase in 25 years, and we surely expect another large tax increase on poor Manitobans again this year. This government has put us in so much financial difficulties, so much financial trouble that it can't provide the basic services to Manitobans without raising taxes. And what about the hidden taxes?

There was some musing in the media here about, hmm, let me think now, I wonder if Manitoba Public Insurance could pay for roads. How about that? They did a survey 64 per cent, no talk about a confidence level, how do you get there, public consultations and all that type of surveys, but, you know, Mr. Speaker, I received that survey on the phone. Note to Manitoba Public Insurance: Maybe you should not conduct a survey with the MPI critic because then they know what you're looking for. Isn't that strange? But, if you take the MPI critic out of it, then it's no longer a random survey; it may not be as valid. But what's the validity anyway? So I know how they got to that conference level: you know, on a scale of one to 10 where one means strongly disagree and 10 means strongly agree, how would you rate the following? And they lead you along the garden path much as this government does.

Oh, I do have experience in survey design and I know how to get to the results that you seek by changing the questions and making them that way. So it is possible to get the 64 per cent, but that means there's other Manitobans that don't want the money spent on the roads, and, indeed, what was the question? You know, how would you rate safety? Is safety important to you? That does not mean that Manitobans want money spent on the roads by MPI. Indeed, when I have been out in the public, as many of you have been, it has been one of the topics of conversation. People are astounded that this government would take ratepayers' money to spend

on roads, and in Winnipeg alone, not in the rest of the province, much like they talked quite a while ago about donating \$20 million to universities of ratepayers' money in MPI. That was not acceptable then; this is not acceptable now certainly. But what's next, Mr. Speaker? Snowplows sponsored by MPI because we're not clearing the roads anymore? You know, the drawbacks for the NDP government here, the NDP members, is there would be no Jets' ticket with that sponsorship. Oh, that's too bad, isn't it? Yes, I'm sure you're disappointed.

But, you know, not a lot of talk about justice in this, and I'm learning about the justice system in Manitoba and how it's working, how it's not working. We seem to have a fair catch-and-release system here. It's not doing the province any favours, and, you know, to cover the failure, the NDP wants to sort of redefine recidivism so it doesn't look like as many people are committing crimes after they're released from jail.

But it's a shell game, and I think that's probably something that's illegal in Manitoba. You never know, but, you know, no one buys it here anyway, and Manitobans know by reading the headlines that our province is again the violent crime capital of the year. It's very impressive to have a record of that nature, I'm sure. Do they know really what that means? We had the highest level of violent crime among provinces despite a small drop in 2009. We had the highest homicide rate of the provinces, and Winnipeg, of course, had the highest homicide rate among all Canadian cities. Manitoba had the highest sexual assault rate, and police estimate only one of 10 of those are recorded.

Winnipeg, by far, has the highest robbery rate in Canada, as does the province as a whole. Manitoba still has the highest youth violent crime rate and the second highest overall youth crime rate behind only Saskatchewan, and we heard about poverty here in this Chamber today. Manitoba again had the second highest break and enter in the country, and the third highest firearms rate behind—offence rate behind Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. So, you know, auto theft, we're doing a little better on that maybe, but still third highest auto rate and it's only a second time in more of the decade that we didn't lead the country. So are these things that this government is proud of?

We announced that we're going—in the Throne Speech we announced another method of dealing with the gangs because they've been growing in Manitoba, so this is gang strategy number—what?

Do we number these? I don't know. I haven't seen a number on this one, No. 10, No. 11. Apparently that strategy is not working.

And we talked about environment here. In the recent times, we had obviously a devastating fire and explosion, and the Province is trying to say, you know what, we're going to blame somebody else because it's obviously we didn't know what there was there a bit.

Mr. Speaker, these environment permits under The Environment Act, the Conservation Department issues, I have completed several of these, and it takes a lot of time and money for businesses to complete these. These are serious documents, and we—they are taken seriously by the businesses. And I always did them because I thought it was important that a director of the company was responsible for this and should know what's in these documents and what Manitoba Conservation was asking you to do.

So what are they asking you to do in this one? Indeed, they ask this particular company to provide a map of the facility, so they know what's in the facility. They—in that map it tells the processes that are going on that facility, and this government tried to say, oh, we didn't know what was happening there. Well, they had the document. This document is public. How can you say you didn't know about it?

They are supposed to receive an emergency response plan, and I know those emergency response plans. I've filled out several of them, and I've filed them with various agencies and I know what that entails, Mr. Speaker. And it does cover everything that would have been in that particular facility so that not only is the Province aware of it but also the first responders. In fact, I used to invite our first responders to our facilities and tour them through there so they could have an expectation of what they might experience were we to have a fire or an explosion or even indeed a theft so that they weren't coming into it blind.

And that is what companies do with this serious Environment Act. They know that it has a huge impact on their business and that it is taken seriously, but this government seems to be ignoring it. They're saying, oh, well, we really didn't know what was going on there despite—I believe there were four photo opportunities there for the province, so they must have been proud of something. They must have known something was going on there that maybe they—hmm, is that strange? Do you go to a photo op without knowing what you're going to a photo op for,

what you should be proud of? This company was doing well, and it was something this Province was very proud of, but, you know, in times of duress like this, you really find who your true friends are. And I'm sure Speedway has found out that this government is not their friend.

You know, in some of the previous speeches here, there was some talk about safe workplaces. Manitoba has an environment where we have safe workplaces, and that's all very good, workplace safety and health, but you know, there is this provincial building in Brandon, and I know it's been a challenging structure for the Province. I know many people that have worked there over the years, and it's always been a problem with heating.

So I do have a constituent that is working in the provincial building at this point and—several of them, actually—but this one in particular is working with a handicap. And that handicap gets worse in the cold, and this poor young lady has been told that, well, you know, the heat's not very good in the provincial building on the third floor, you're going to have to deal with it. Well, can I plug in a heater? No, you can't plug in a heater because then it'll crash all the computer systems. So what's more important? And does workplace safety and health apply to the old provincial buildings? There's a question for you. It should. It should. Your own rules should apply to your own buildings, and I know this has been a problem for the Province for a long time.

You would rather not spend money and defend an individual that is working with a handicap in one of your facilities. Is that what you're telling me? Hmm, very interesting. Workplace Safety and Health forces businesses to comply. Is it not important for the Province to comply with its own rules?

And I know the Province will be bragging about the east-side bypass in Brandon. It's open now. There's kind of temporary lighting in effect that blinds some of the truckers, but, you know, we're working with it. And I'm sure they'll talk about what a great thing it is, but, you know, 12, 13 years ago, I was on a working group that was deciding what infrastructure projects for highways were important for Brandon and the Westman region right around Brandon. And that bypass was No. 1. Everyone in the whole entire area decided and agreed without doubt that the highway bypass 12 years ago was the No. 1 infrastructure project that needed to be completed.

\* (16:40)

And we were shocked when the Province told us, well, our estimates are that it's going to be just over \$12 million to do that bypass. We were so shocked by that cost, because the south bypass was nowhere clear—nowhere near what that cost was. We were so shocked that when the Province also said, you know, we could do a—an overpass and a diamond interchange at the Trans-Canada Highway because we want to get away from those level crossings with the stop signs, because they are dangerous on the Trans-Canada Highway. But, if we do that, it's another \$12 million. We were so shocked by the first \$12-million estimate, no one had the temerity or the audacity to ask for that overpass. Just do the bypass, please. That's the No. 1 priority.

So, some 13 years later, it's been completed. \$28 million is the number on the sign, and it hasn't been changed for—since before the election. So, in the last year and a bit, that number may have changed again. If we look at inflation in that time period, the \$12 million is \$16 million. What happened to the other \$12 million? Can't you manage? Maybe it's in the deficit. Obviously it's in the deficit. This government doesn't know how to manage, Mr. Speaker, and it's very obvious in the way that we see them spending money.

But what we're going to see this year, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen in the past year is we had a tremendous year in agriculture. It could have been a little bit better. It's always—something could have been better. The weather didn't co-operate all the way, but Manitoba's growth this year is coming from agriculture, and I hope they all understand that in this House. That agriculture is the engine of the economy for this current year. They had a fabulous year, and that's where it's coming from.

So I think we've talked about agriculture before, Mr. Speaker. I know I'm not necessarily going to make you a farmer, but we're still trying to educate, as I'm trying to be educated.

**An Honourable Member:** There's still time.

**Mr. Helwer:** There's still time. As long as the tractor doesn't hit the train. That's what we worry about, right? But anyway, that's—I've covered a lot of things in this today, Mr. Speaker, and it is an interesting document. As I said, perhaps, more of a hallucination than a vision, but we'll leave that up to Manitobans to decide.

There's a lot of concern over there—out there about how things are being done. A lot of concern

about this MPI proposal, and I'm sure that the government members are hearing about that just as much as I am, because it is something that the public is quite irate about. If Manitoba Public Insurance has extra money, give it back to the ratepayers. That's people that put it in there and they pay their rates. They don't pay their rates to make safer roads. That's the responsibility of MIT.

The other question they've had is, you know, if MIT is—or if MPI is saying, you know what, we want to improve the safety of the roads, that's an admirable project, but does that mean that MIT is providing roads to Manitobans that are not safe? Are we driving on roads that are not safe? Is that what MPI is telling us—hmm, it's an interesting question for them. Perhaps we'll have to ask that, because obviously, you know, does MPI have engineers? I know MIT does. I know they have engineers, and they're good at what they do. They design good highways—most of the time. They work well.

So are we going to say that, yes, most of the time, because we have a bridge in Brandon that we have to repave every two years because it's falling, you know? And yet we did repave the one side again this year because the approaches are falling, and now the approaches on the other side are starting to fall. And I understand that was a design feature. Well, the bridge that was there previous to this never had that.

We have a conduit running in that bridge. What happens when the approaches fall so far that they cut the conduit off and they cut the hydro and they cut the water and they cut the lines that are running through that conduit? Hmm, was that part of the planning? Don't know. We'll have to ask that.

But, if MPI is going to contribute to safety, does that mean they're going to have to hire safety engineers. So we'll duplicate services. We'll have the engineering component of MPI, and then they'll be in conflict with the engineering component of MIT, and, I don't know, maybe we'll have to hire a mediator. Figure it out, which one is right, because in my mind MIT is the one that provides the services. Their responsibility is for the highways. In fact, it's in their mission statement. And it is not in the mission statement, surprisingly enough, for MPI. They're there to provide low-cost insurance to Manitobans for automobiles. That is their mission statement.

There is some more flowery language as well as there is in our document that we received here on

Monday, but that is the core and the crux of their mission statement.

So thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy being in the Legislature. This is obviously the second time we've done this for some of us new people, and we hope to not to infringe on too many rules as I know you will keep us in order. You've done a good job so far, and I am very impressed in the manner in which you manage the Chamber.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be back in the Chamber again and proud to rise in support of the Throne Speech. Proud to be a part of a government that continues to put people first. Proud to be part of a government that focuses on the things that matter most to Manitobans by protecting the jobs and the services that they count on. I'm proud to work with this fantastic group of people on this side of the House, and I'm proud to be a member of one of the most progressive, the most civilized and the most compassionate governments in Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to represent the constituency of Fort Garry-Riverview, one of the most well-established, historically significant and politically progressive communities in our city and our province. Fort Garry is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, and I, along with my colleague from St. Norbert and from Fort. Richmond, are honoured to work with the Fort Garry Historical Society to celebrate this momentous achievement.

Since being elected last October, this past year has been among the most rewarding and a most educational of my life. Not a day goes by where I don't learn something new about my constituency and about this province. The work that goes on each day in our community is awe inspiring, and I'm thrilled to work with such energetic and involved citizens. The incredible high schools and public schools and Montessori schools in Fort Garry-Riverview, the fantastic daycare centres, our superb community clubs, our vibrant small businesses our awesome sustainability organizations, and our beautiful parks and green spaces make Fort Garry-Riverview a great place to live and to represent.

But none of this happens by magic, Mr. Speaker. The people in my community are more than just taxpayers. They are true citizens who value citizenship above all else, and we work together

every day to make sure that our constituency remains strong, safe and sustainable for generations to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome the new Leader of the Opposition to the Chamber. It is admittedly a retro back-to-the-future kind of thing they have going on that side of the House. It is recycling at its finally–finest. During the last election our motto was Forward, Not Back. The new motto on our side of the House is Back, Not Forward. But that's no surprise to us on this side of the House. And I have to say we were eager to see him in action just yesterday in his maiden speech. It was a fine speech–  
[interjection]

True that, says the member from Brandon East. He certainly had a captive audience on this side of the audience. I wish I could say the same for the members on that side of the House. I've seen happier faces in a dentist's chair than I saw behind him yesterday.

I was also to hear about the new leader's many, many, many experiences, because he took us back to the day and he articulated all of the many and varied things that he'd done in his life. I regret that he was–been unable to hold a job all these years. But perhaps he'll have a chance to hold this one a little bit longer.

But then, as my colleague from the Interlake cautioned him, that is something to always be careful about with that group. And, you know, there's really no shame in being acclaimed as a leader. In fact, bravo to him for standing up and taking up the mantle of responsibility.

**An Honourable Member:** No one else would.

**Mr. Allum:** No. Yes–yes, that's right. The real shame is that the other 19 members of his caucus didn't want to be leaders. They didn't want to be leaders of the province. They didn't want the mantle of responsibility. They did not want to govern on behalf of all the people of Manitoba.

\* (16:50)

No, quite in fact, it's the opposite, Mr. Speaker. They pretend to be the government in waiting, but, in fact, they're the opposition in hiding. They're a caucus that is inordinately comfortable in opposition. The people of Manitoba recognize that and I hate to give you political advice and to help you, but, for goodness sake, the decorum that you show in this House day after day after day tells the people of Manitoba that they are not ready to govern not now

and not in the future. Certainly not in the next election.

Now, Mr. Speaker, listening to the new Leader of the Opposition's speech yesterday, it's evident to me that even with a new leader, the Conservatives still don't have an agenda. Or if they did, and that's a big if, I think we'd all agree, it's a tired retrograde Republican agenda that would embarrass even Mitt Romney.

You can't take your speaking notes from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and expect to have any credibility with Manitobans. You can't expect to make a positive impact on the public if you're always following the scrooges of Manitoba public discourse.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the contrast between this government and this side of the House and the opposition is obvious. We believe in a balanced approach; they believe in reckless tax cuts, reckless cuts to programs. We believe in building Hydro; they believe in mothballing Hydro projects. We believe in enhancing the minimum wage; they vote against it every single time. We believe in promoting environmental sustainability; they believe in ramming a hydro line through the boreal forest. We believe in standing up for Manitobans; they believe in tearing down an immigration program that was the envy of all Canada. We believe in governing in the public interest; they believe in governing for private gain. We believe in governing for all Manitobans; they believe in governing just for their friends.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm proud to support the Throne Speech. There are many exciting elements in it but I want to highlight just a few in the few minutes that I have.

The first is our commitment to add 75,000 more workers to the labour force by 2020. It's a government–we're a government that governs for today and takes care of tomorrow all at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, closely related to that is our ongoing commitment to education and our investments in our universities and our colleges and our public schools and our day school–daycares and our After School Matters. We care about the future for young Manitobans, for Aborigines, for newcomers. We want to make sure that they have the tools to join the labour force so that they stay right here in Manitoba for generations to come.



We've also committed to introducing a five-year health-care sustainability plan that will secure the foundations of a public universal health-care system in Manitoba, also for generations to come.

And, finally, is our commitment to the environment. Our commitment to clean energy and to clean water and to sustainable neighbourhoods, also to maintain for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to represent Fort Garry-Riverview. I'm proud to be a member of this government and I'm proud to support the Throne Speech.

Thank you so much.

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** It is my pleasure to rise today in this Chamber and to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is my second opportunity to do so and it is my great pleasure to continue to represent the constituency of Morden-Winkler, one of the fastest growing areas in Manitoba; a powerhouse in industry and agriculture and in business.

As a matter of fact, Morden just became Manitoba's newest city and that was only proclaimed a few months ago. So this area continues to grow and expand, and I am so proud to be able to represent the people of that region.

There are so many accomplishments that are taking place. So many new recognitions that are being made in that area. So much new growth that is coming to the area, new residents settling in that area, and it is my great pleasure, as I say, to continue to be able to represent that area.

And today we're responding to the Speech from the Throne, and it is what I would characterize as something being a mile wide and an inch deep. It is an exercise in the cosmetic over the substantive. The Free Press said in a headline, the NDP spends and spins. But I think what best captured the essence of the Speech from the Throne was a statement in a Winnipeg Free Press article the day after that said there is a growing disconnect between the glowing pronouncements of the Manitoba government and cold reality.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that really sums it up. When I look at the speech, with respect to promises made and the record on even health care, I see words like secure and innovate and transform and launch

and productivity and there are any number of \$10 words used, but I assure you that there isn't the record, there isn't the substance. The last 13 years tell a very different story. And it's that that troubles me more than anything.

Nevertheless, I'm happy to stand today and to be in this place and to put a few comments on the record. And, first of all, I do just want to acknowledge what a great honour it is to be able to be in this place and to have this role. It is an honour that very few Manitobans are afforded. And every one of us, regardless of where we sit in this Chamber, we know how fortunate we are.

And I am so fortunate to have just an excellent staff in my constituency office who work very hard and often respond to things on very short notice and get the job done. I'm so thankful to have research and intern support here in the Legislature; so fortunate, of course, to have the support of my colleagues in this place.

And they have been so accommodating for those five of us who are newer to the PC caucus. And it doesn't matter if you're asking a question or getting a sense of how to approach a task, I have found them to be very accommodating and very patient at times. I want to also thank, of course, my board of directors back home.

I'll thank the Speaker as well for his role, for the table officers here in the Legislature, for the staff members and for the pages, and congratulations to each of you. This is a tremendous opportunity that has been given to you as well. I know you will enjoy your time here very much, and so we welcome you aboard, too, and hope to get to know you a little better.

I wanted to say as well that just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to have my 13-year-old with me in the Legislature for the annual Take Your Kid to Work Day.

I had that same privilege last year with my daughter Madeleine, and just about a week or two ago Evan joined me and we had a chance to go round, see the Chamber, visit some of the officers, stop in at the Speaker's office, see the mace, tour around a bit.

It's a great opportunity, and I know that's a very effective program that we have in Manitoba operating to give kids an opportunity to see a

workplace, to see how things go on, to see what their life will look like perhaps after high school and beyond. So that was a great opportunity to have.

But about the Throne Speech: The Throne Speech shows to what extent this government has become self-serving, to what extent they have become tired, to what extent they are simply out of ideas. And at each opportunity that the NDP has had to take the correct way, it seems that they've taken a way that is politically expedient, a way that is easier,

a way that protects perhaps their interest and their ideology.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) will have 24 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 22, 2012

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Bill 201	
Bill 5—The New Home Warranty Act		Graydon; Bjornson	83, 84
Rondeau	75	Graydon; Struthers	84
Bill 201—The Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act		Children's Advocate	
Graydon	75	Gerrard; Howard	84
<b>Petitions</b>		Energy Strategies	
Coulter Bridge—PR251		Altemeyer; Chomiak	86
Maguire	75	Speedway International	
St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park		Maguire; Mackintosh	86
Wishart	76	<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Vita & District Health Centre		Holodomor Awareness Week	
Smook	76	Braun	87
PR 520		Brett Sheffield	
Ewasko	76	Graydon	87
Children's Advocate		Westwood Pet Valu Fundraising Events	
Gerrard	77	Blady	88
PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals		Nathan Fleck	
Briese	77	Briese	88
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		Aboriginal Veterans Day	
Annual Report of The Discriminatory Business Practices Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012		Nevakshonoff	89
Swan	77	<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
<b>Oral Questions</b>		<b>GOVERNMENT BUSINESS</b>	
Ambulance Services		<b>Throne Speech</b>	
Pallister; Oswald	78	(Third Day of Debate)	
Friesen; Oswald	79	Wight	89
Taxation		Taillieu	90
Driedger; Struthers	80	Struthers	93
Gage Guimond Death		Schuler	96
Rowat; Howard	81	Swan	97
Municipalities		Mitchelson	101
Pedersen; Lemieux	83	Nevakshonoff	104
		Helwer	107
		Allum	111
		Friesen	113

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