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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
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CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
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DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
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FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
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OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills? Seeing no bills, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Spring Budget 2016

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, last month I attended a prebudget consultation meeting hosted by the NDP Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) in Ile des Chênes, Manitoba. Together with about seven other people, we heard the MLA for Dawson Trail begin the meeting by apologizing for being part of a government that increased the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. He apologized for not listening to Manitobans, and he assured the few people that were in the room that he and the NDP indeed now wanted to listen. It was an admission of broken trust from a broken government. Of course, he didn't apologize to Manitobans for referring to them as howling coyotes during the PST debate.

After a presentation by the Minister of Finance, a question was asked about whether or not there actually was going to be a budget in the spring. After all, people, however few there were, were there for a prebudget meeting, presumably to give advice for a forthcoming budget.

The Minister of Finance said that they had committed to bring in a budget and they were going to fulfill that commitment, but they were keeping their options open, and maybe there would be an economic statement or maybe nothing at all.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the prebudget meeting began with the MLA for Dawson Trail admitting that the government didn't listen in the past and that the Minister of Finance saying that they wanted to listen now about a budget that they may never bring in. That's a strange way to run a government.

Manitobans deserve to know just how deep the hole is from the NDP, how dig—how deep they are digging it, so that future generations can know how much they owe. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) needs to commit today to bring forward a budget in the spring before the upcoming provincial election, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

Shauna Collins

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, joining us in the gallery today we have many friends, family, and colleagues of Shauna Collins. Among them is Corrine Ostertag, executive director of River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery, and John Coutu, Shauna's partner.

These people and many others lost Shauna when she passed away on October 24th. I attended Shauna's memorial service this past weekend and witnessed an outpouring of grief, fond and funny stories and love.

Shauna's kind spirit naturally fit with her passion for quality child care. From 1986 until her passing, she served as a pillar of the River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery.

Shauna served the daycare in many roles over the years, as a front-line worker, special needs co-ordinator, program supervisor and most recently as a board member. No matter what small crisis interrupted the day, a broken dishwasher or a sick co-worker, Shauna put the kids first and reminded everyone to smile, breathe and take your time.

Shauna was instrumental in the building of a new child-care centre to offer an even better experience for the children and to add more spaces for families who need them. Now, in this colourful space, kids watch movies in the Shauna Room and they play with Shauna's Playdough, the recipe she created. For the children who are devastated by their loss, these are ways to remember her.

Knowing her commitment to quality child care, I believe Shauna would have been encouraged by the commitment to create thousands of more spaces contained in yesterday's Throne Speech. And she would have never let me forget to keep that promise.

Shauna's legacy lives on through the staff she mentored to provide excellent care to the children, and her legacy lives through the generations of children and parents who fondly remember Shauna from their daycare years. These children learn to be kind, to be loving and to laugh often from Shauna. I can think of no better evidence of a life well lived.

Those with us today and the many others who are part of Shauna's life will never forget her.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature, I extend our condolences to her family, friends and all who loved her.

Thank you.

Personal-Care-Home Beds

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has failed to build the number of personal-care-home beds that seniors in Manitoba need. In fact, this NDP government is misleading Manitobans with false information about what they have actually done or misleading with information about what they will be doing.

The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy says we need between 5,100 and 6,200 beds by 2036. That means 250 beds must be added every year for the next 21 years. And that is not happening. In fact, it is going to be years before we see the beds appear.

This is a catastrophe in the making, Mr. Speaker, and it is going to fail the old, frail, vulnerable seniors.

Since 1999, this government has only increased the number of PCH beds by 3 and a half per cent. In fact, they cut PCH beds from 2008 to 2011.

A week ago, there were 81 panelled elderly people stuck in inappropriate beds in Winnipeg, an acute-care hospital bed where they—when they needed to be in a PCH bed.

And according to the most recent freedom of information request, over 400 panelled patients who should be in a PCH bed are stuck in hospital beds throughout Manitoba because the NDP have failed to

build enough beds. They have created a bed crisis and it's only going to get worse.

And Mr. Speaker, all we're getting from the NDP is news releases, but there are few shovels in the ground. All we're hearing are broken promises and broken trust.

Thank you.

Sikh Protest in India

Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I bring to the attention of the House a tragedy that took place recently in the district of Faridkot, India, but has also touched the lives of many Sikh families here in Manitoba.

Last month, police in India opened the fire at Sikh protesters, injuring 62 people and killing Bhai Krishan Bhagwan Singh and Bhai Gurjit Singh. Relations between the police and protesters had been tense for a while over the recent desecration of a copy of the Sikh holy book Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Protesters demanded the arrest of those responsible, and tensions escalated to a few violent clashes.

This kind of religious intolerance is alarming, and the tragic deaths of Bhai Krishan Bhagwan Singh and Bhai Gurjit Singh were completely unnecessary.

* (13:40)

Here in Manitoba, we fully support the families who are speaking out against these acts of violence and standing up for human rights. The response of the Sikh community here in our province has been touching. Recently, I joined Winnipeg Sikh families at the candlelight vigil on the steps of our Legislature to show our sympathy for the families of Bhai Krishan Bhagwan Singh and Bhai Gurjit Singh and for the global Sikh community.

I spoke at the vigil and reflected on how often religion is used by leaders as an excuse to exclude or discriminate against other groups of people. But we must reject religious fear mongering and the terrible violence it leads to. We must recognize that every family deserves to feel safe in their home and welcome in their community.

I pray for the peace in Punjab, and I hope that no leader in any country, including our own, will use religion to advance his or her selfish agenda.

Thank you.

Volunteer Firefighter Recognition

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, heroes amongst us, power, professionalism, passion, commitment to the volunteer fire department. On Friday, August 7th at 9:15 a.m., members of the Virden RCMP received a call about a house fire caused by an explosion from a ruptured gas line.

The first people on the scene were two Manitoba Hydro workers, Doug Voak [*phonetic*] and Nicholas Rawlings, [*phonetic*] and Constable Dave Trudeau, who selflessly tried to rescue the injured party but were pushed back by the extreme heat. When the other RCMP personnel arrived, Wallace District Fire Department was on the scene. Without regard of their own safety upon learning someone was inside the home at the time of the explosion, three firefighters, Brett MacDonald, Ben McLean and Dugan Anderson, jumped into action amongst the rubble with the fire less than three feet from them. They found the homeowner and cut him free and removed him from the scene while Austin McKee and John Davidson and Dave Ternier were manning the hoses.

Constable Chris May, [*phonetic*] the second constable on the scene, assisted in moving neighbours out of their homes and assisted with spraying the fire to assist firefighters in the rescue. Constable Jason Lafreniere [*phonetic*] did crowd control and assisted in removing people from the area and also helped remove the injured male to the ambulance.

Mr. Speaker, I would be proud to recognize these courageous men who on their call came and ran towards danger and put their lives on the line for the rest of us. Please recognize our local heroes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have no guests to introduce, so we'll proceed directly to oral questions.

Political Staff Public Financing

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): The NDP have a long history of taking taxpayers' dollars and using it for their political campaigns. Of course, there was the vote tax where millions of dollars were used to go into the NDP party because they weren't able to fundraise anymore. There's millions of dollars in political advertising happening now, thinly-thinly-veiled as government advertising, Mr. Speaker.

During the leadership revolt, of course, the Premier hired individuals to work in the Premier's office by day and, of course, secure his leadership by night, Mr. Speaker. Now we learn that since December of last year, the government, the Premier, has hired more than 30 new political staff, many in new positions, and these are all designed to be his taxpayer-funded political campaign.

Why is the Premier taking money out of the pockets of hard-working individuals and front-line services and putting it into the pockets of NDP political operatives, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the people that have come to work for the government. They do a terrific job. They bring ideas. They bring experience in the community. They bring a real passion for public service, and it's all being done within existing budgets.

The member for Steinbach is, as usual, misleading the House with the information he puts on the record. It's within the existing budgets. People that have proven experience in the community, people that care passionately about the future of Manitoba and are bringing their energy and their time and their service to the public in Manitoba, I'm proud of the contribution they're making, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, there really is no budget, and the Premier hides most of the information.

We know that when it came to the \$670,000 of payouts that he gave individuals who weren't supportive of him during the leadership, he held the details on those payouts. Now we learn, of course, that there's at least a dozen staff who received an average of 22 per cent increase in their pay in his political staff.

Now, many Manitobans struggle every day—every day—with their families to ensure that they can pay for the increase, the record increases in taxes that were brought in by this government, by this Premier.

Mr. Speaker, why is it that NDP staff can afford to get a 22 per cent increase in their pay while average Manitobans are struggling to pay for their tax increases?

Mr. Selinger: The member may have missed it, but we actually just passed the budget.

The people that are coming in are replacing people that have left. On the—in the main,

Mr. Speaker, they're for the most part earning less than the people that left.

They're providing excellent public service to the people of Manitoba within the budget that the members opposite just voted against, a budget that provided some of the best infrastructure spending in the history of the province, created over 9,000 jobs last year, provided additional daycare spots, provided money to build personal-care homes in Manitoba, provided money for family services and support to children and families, provided money for social housing. All those things the members opposite voted against.

They're deflecting attention from their agenda of severe cuts and austerity for the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, and the Premier's well aware that we voted against waste and political payouts, which were contained in that budget.

Mr. Speaker, there is no limit—there is no limit—to the way that the Premier will use taxpayer-funded dollars to try to advance his political causes. The clearest example was during the leadership when he took hundreds of thousands of dollars and used it to hire people within his office to secure his leadership, and then used hundreds of thousands of dollars to give payouts to individuals who weren't supportive of his leadership, all written—all written—with a taxpayer cheque.

And it doesn't end, Mr. Speaker. On October 28th of this year the Premier appointed Heather Grant-Jury to the board of directors of Manitoba Public Insurance for a three-year term. Presumably that's the same individual who he hired to prop up his leadership campaign, now appointed to the board of directors of Manitoba Public Insurance.

Are there any parts of government where the NDP isn't going to use to benefit his friends and allies, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the government is well served by people that come to work for us, well served by their experience, well served by their excellent reputation in the community.

It's no surprise to me that the member from Steinbach likes entering into personal attacks on people that have a record of community service that may exceed the record of community service he has.

And I only remind him, when he was serving in government and when the former government was here, they made payouts to people that had been

involved in the largest election vote-rigging scandal in the history of Manitoba. That was their record. They never put it—they never reported it to the public. They never disclosed it.

And when it comes to open government, when it comes to over—open government, just last week they did a throne speech that was invitation only, behind closed doors. What kind of an example of that—is that of open government?

Political Staff Salaries Public Sector Salaries

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): We know the Premier's office provided raises to political staff averaging at least 22 per cent. But some of the individual numbers, Mr. Speaker, are even more alarming. In fact, the Premier's previous director of issues management received a 62 per cent raise this year. That's before he left for Alberta.

How does the Premier (Mr. Selinger) justify a more than 60 per cent increase to NDP staffer when public sector employees got less than a 1 per cent increase last year?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, this is part 2 of the Conservative reaction to a visionary Throne Speech that talks about a new Manitoba.

You know, this new open opposition, when asked to provide the information that they had a press conference on this morning, their researcher conveniently left the press conference before they could ask the questions, and they have not tabled or provided one bit of information about the allegations they're making in the House today.

I ask the member: Table the information, provide it, or, in fact, Mr. Speaker, admit you were wrong.

Mr. Speaker: Before I recognize the honourable member for Tuxedo for the next question, I want to caution the honourable minister. When you're placing your questions and—questions by members of the opposition, responses by the government, please direct them through the Chair.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the information that we are discussing here is disclosed in Public Accounts. I'm sure the member opposite should be aware of where to find that.

The Premier's subsequent director of issues management, the person that replaced the individual

who got the 62 per cent raise and left for Alberta, Mr. Speaker, he received a 33 per cent raise last year, while at the same time the public sector workers received less than a 1 per cent increase.

* (13:50)

I'll ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) again: How does he justify a 33 per cent increase in—raise for his political staffer when the public sector employees received less than 1 per cent increase last year, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Speaker, you—bad research equals bad information.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to advise the member that the specific individual that they're talking about—and I don't like talking about individuals, but they don't mind attacking people—was on maternity leave for part of the year. Therefore, the salary that's reported in Public Accounts isn't the full salary would—normally would have been received in the full year; that was maternity leave.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will table documents that indicate some of the positions that they talked about today in their so-called revealing and new open way. The director of issues management has had no change in salary; director of Cabinet communications has a 5 per cent increase; director of Premier's Secretariat, 10 per cent salary reduction; director of priorities and planning, 10 per cent salary reduction; director of legislative affairs, 5 per cent salary reduction. I will table these figures for the members opposite.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this Premier has billed taxpayers more than \$3 million in raises, new hires and severance payouts, while at the same time public sector employees have received less than a 1 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier just admit that, as his former minister of Finance the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) said, and I quote, the Premier is increasingly being driven by his desire to hold on to his leadership rather than by the best interests of Manitobans, end quote?

Mr. Speaker, is that why the Premier chose to give his political staffers a massive salary increase at the expense of those public servants?

Mr. Chomiak: The new by-invitation-only Leader of the Opposition who's going to be more open, Mr. Speaker, and said this morning that the government had hired more special assistants and

more executive assistants. They said that. They provided no information. Their researcher left conveniently before it could be confirmed.

I will indicate that in 2014 there were 19 special assistants; in 2015 there were 19 special assistants. In 2014 there were 19 executive assistants; in 2015 there were 19 executive assistants.

Mr. Speaker, we are tired of this tired opposition that has no ideas—it is stuck in the past; they can't see the forest for the trees—that doesn't believe in the future, that doesn't believe in Manitobans. I'm proud to be of a government that has a vision that's going to provide hope for the future, not a redundancy, not a mean-spirited, go-back-to-the-1990s government.

Access to Family Doctors Government Promise

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this NDP Minister of Health is a really good example of why the NDP can't be trusted. She continues to misrepresent promises and changes them when the promise is failing.

In the 2011 Throne Speech, the NDP promised a doctor for all by 2015. When they were failing to keep that promise, they changed the promise to say that they would make sure that every Manitoban had a doctor by the end of 2015.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us: Will she keep her word? Will all Manitobans have a doctor by the end of 2015?

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

I can say that our government is very proud of the fact that every year we have seen a net increase in the number of doctors in our province since 1999.

I can also assure Manitobans that we have been having excellent connection between doctors and those in search of a doctor. In fact, actually had a meeting this morning with folks on the updates on the numbers, and we're on track to our targets. We have over 60 per cent of folks being matched within 24 hours. And we have high numbers, up into the 80s and 90s, of regular matching.

So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we're on track, and that's part of the reason why we keep investing in our Doctors Manitoba contract, investing in QuickCare clinics and nurse practitioners, because we invest on this side in primary care to look after all Manitobans.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health met with a concerned group of citizens from the Yellowhead health committee. They told the minister that they had a shortage of 37 doctors. That means that approximately 55,000 Manitobans in that area do not have a doctor. No doctor, no care.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell them: Will all 55,000 of them have a doctor within the next 45 days?

Ms. Blady: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

And, yes, I had an amazing meeting with those folks, and they brought a wealth of information from their community, and it's part of an ongoing series of dialogues that I have had with rural communities and that I will continue to have. In fact, I'm looking forward to AMM next week because we've been working with the communities and talking about strategies to best meet the needs. And one of the best examples has been Swan River and the five docs that have come to that community and what we're doing there.

So, again, it's about a new model. It's about working with communities. And that's one thing this side has done. We have worked with doctors. We have worked with communities. We brought nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants. These folks just cut.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, according to our last freedom of information on the Interlake-Eastern RHA, they were short 29 doctors. That means that approximately 36,000 residents from that region do not have a doctor. And in the WRHA annual report they said that 11 per cent, or 78,000, Winnipeggers do not have a doctor. So just from these three regions, approximately 169,000 Manitobans do not have a doctor.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to tell Manitobans: Why should anybody trust anything that she or her government says when they keep making promises and then they keep breaking those promises? They break their trust all the time, why should we believe her now?

Ms. Blady: And, again, Mr. Speaker, thank the member for the question. And, as I said, the Family Doctor Finder has already connected over 30,000 Manitobans with a primary-care practitioner.

We've already fulfilled our 2011 election commitment to add 200 more doctors. In fact, we

added 276. We've seen a net gain of 732 more doctors, including 250 more family docs. And, again, today more than 2,116 physicians are practising in Winnipeg, with another 632 working in Brandon, rural and northern Manitoba.

Again, we've invested; we built up the complement of doctors and nurses. I do remember, on the other hand, back in their day, doctors fleeing, being on strike, and nurses walking away and being fired. So, again, we invest; they fear monger and fire.

Food Banks Usage Increase

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, food bank usage is up again in Manitoba. According to the HungerCount report by Food Banks Canada, Manitobans' usage of food banks is up by 3.4 per cent over last year, more than 2 per cent above the Canadian average.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government continue to force more and more people to use food banks regularly?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): We certainly have the same concerns that the hunger report identifies. We have to reduce poverty, and that's what this government's been doing since 1999.

We have some strong examples of what we have done with the creation of the ALL Aboard strategy that assists in creating more jobs, more child care, building more affordable housing, implementing Rent Assist.

And what did those guys do, the drive-by poverty activists? They slashed EIA rates. They clawed back the National Child Benefit. That's what they did, and then, on top of that, created a snitch line.

Please, I don't need advice from them.

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, since March 2008, when the ALL Aboard strategy came out, we have seen a staggering 58 per cent increase in food bank usage here in Manitoba, leaving 5.3 per cent of Manitobans as regular food bank users, the highest in the country.

Clearly, this government is generating a lot of work for food banks.

Why are the only steady growth we see in the use of food banks?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: The best way out of poverty is jobs, and that's why we have made the investments we've had on infrastructure, creating 60,000 jobs. What did they do when they were in power? There was no infrastructure happening, no job creation at all.

We have the No. 1 unemployment rate in Canada, and we don't stop there. We're building more affordable housing; 4,000 more units have been built, and we continue to refurbish the units that are existing. When they were in power, nothing happened around housing.

We're going to continue to make those investments, create jobs, provide good quality housing, good quality child care. We are not going to be reckless, and we certainly will not be scrapping the ALL Aboard strategy.

* (14:00)

Mr. Wishart: Well, Mr. Speaker, sadly, more than 42 per cent of the food bank users last year were children. That means of the nearly 64,000 people using food banks March 2015, over 30,000 were children.

With the highest child poverty rate in Canada here in Manitoba, why is this government so determined to keep Manitoba children from getting a good start in life?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We take this information seriously. That's why we are continuing to make the reduction in poverty with all of our community partners, working with all of the partners, looking at strategies that are going to support the creation of jobs, providing more affordable housing, increasing child-care spaces. Those are significant.

We have a strong record—by increasing minimum wage. You know what they did? They froze it seven years in a row. That is reckless and dangerous and creates poverty.

What we have in plan with all of our partners is improving opportunities for all Manitobans, making sure that we all have a chance to thrive and be—contribute to our economy. We're going to continue on that path. We have more work to do. We're committed to do that with all of our partners, and we will not be drive-by activists.

Freshwater Fish Management 2011 Report Recommendations

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Seafood Watch recently urged consumers not to purchase freshwater

fish from our three largest lakes, claiming that those fisheries are among the worst managed in the world. The minister's response, Mr. Speaker, was, not surprisingly, to strike a task force.

Has the minister even read his own 2011 report, which I'll table, the Technical Assessment of the Status, Health and Sustainable Harvest Levels of the Lake Winnipeg Fisheries Resource? Why is the minister reinventing the wheel?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I thank the member for the question. In fact, I thank the member for any question on the environment, something that is a little strange coming from them, a government that would cut half a billion dollars from their budget. I would imagine the department of the environment would disappear altogether under their watch.

But, obviously, from the last annual general meeting their party had where there was not a discussion of one resolution on the environment at all over the two or three days that they met, to hear questions on the environment from members opposite today is a little ironic, to say the least, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the 2011 report, again, commissioned by this minister, by his department, noted that data concerning our fisheries was, quote, inadequate, and that the lack of information made it impossible to determine the health of our fish stocks.

Mr. Speaker, so the minister has in one hand a report recommending adequate surveys and monitoring, and on the other hand, since its release in 2011, he has cut almost \$20 million from his department.

Is the minister even aware that the C in his portfolio stands for conservation, not cuts and crisis?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, there we have it: the member for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business standing up for the environment, and the fishery in particular, something that they have no interest in, judging by the fact that while I was in Estimates with the member opposite for a period of more than six hours, there was not a single question about the fishery whatsoever. So their conversion on the environmental road to Damascus is quite astonishing, to say the least.

But to speak of the fishery, it was our department, our government, working in conjunction

with the Skownan First Nation, which achieved eco-certification for Waterhen Lake. This is the first lake in the western hemisphere, the second lake in the world, to achieve this status, Mr. Speaker.

So we have nothing to apologize for when it comes to protecting and advancing—

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

Mr. Martin: Big game, crisis; zebra mussel, crisis; now our fisheries, crisis.

The NDP's own 179-page report called for the creation of a Lake Winnipeg co-management board.

Can the minister advise how many times this board has even met since the recommendation in 2011? And to save the minister time thumbing through his briefing book, I can tell you the answer is zero, because like every other recommendation made in his own 2011 report, he has ignored it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, there you have it, Mr. Speaker. Now we know what members opposite think of our fishers.

Because we believe in consulting with people; we believe in engaging fishers, putting them together with our scientists on this co-management board that's been in place for years. I know that for a fact. I've attended many co-management board meetings myself, personally, when I was—well, I am the MLA for the Interlake; I remain so. But when I was a backbencher, many, many times I've attended these meetings.

So in terms of implementation of our lake management plans, which was a part of our announcement last week, I want to just put on the record that a very esteemed Manitoban, Mr. Harold Westdal, has agreed to work with us toward eco-certification of more lakes in Manitoba here, Mr. Speaker. There are 100,000 lakes, many lakes involved in the commercial fishery. We will see that these lakes are respected around the world—

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

Management Practices Government Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I—yesterday, of course, the people of Manitoba were treated to a pre-election promise fest from a government desperate to buy

support with borrowed money from our kids and our future.

The question, of course, becomes, can they be believed on these promises, Mr. Speaker? Let's take a look at the record to determine that.

Number 1 promise was that they would improve health-care wait times; our wait times are 10th: broken promise. Improve education results; our students rank last in the country, 10th: that's another broken promise. Child poverty, they said they'd address that; we lead the country in child poverty. No tax increases, I recall the Premier making that promise; we have the largest tax increases under this government in Canada. Stable or higher credit rating, they promised that, and we had our first lowered credit rating in three decades.

When a government like this consistently breaks the trust of the people of a province and breaks their word, why should Manitobans believe anything they say?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans said, make sure we have good jobs and investment in infrastructure. What is the result? Lowest unemployment rate in the country.

And, as well, we have the best job creation rate in the country, Mr. Speaker, more people now working in the province than ever in the history of the province, and that's at the same time that the number of working people in Manitoba is growing.

More people living here, more people working here, higher wages, low unemployment rate: very different than the vision of the Leader of the Opposition, an agenda of shutting down growth in the economy, Mr. Speaker. No export of hydro: \$10 billion gone away, 10,000 jobs gone away. Balancing the budget on the backs of privatization and cuts to services, we've seen that movie before: higher rates of unemployment, more people on social assistance. Minimum wage, seven times he froze it; we've raised it every single year.

We're lifting Manitobans up. He wants to bring them down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are honest people. What brings Manitobans down is governments that lie to them.

Balancing the budget, the Premier said he was ahead of schedule last election campaign, and he doubled our debt. He said he'd take the gas tax and use it for roads; he didn't. He said Bipole III wouldn't

cost Manitobans a single cent—I remember that promise; hundreds of millions of dollars and record rate hikes. He said he'd respect the balanced budget law, Mr. Speaker, and he and his 34 cronies over there took away the right of Manitobans to vote. And he said he'd reduce wasteful spending and he continued to hand out money to his pals.

Mr. Speaker, these are broken promises after broken promises after broken promises. When a government like this consistently breaks the trust of the people of Manitoba and breaks their word, why should anybody believe a 'thingle'—a single thing that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) says?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition promised everybody in Manitoba there would never be any privatization of the telephone system. And then he stayed up all night and forced people to go through public hearings in the middle of the night so he could ram that agenda through.

Now we have among the highest telephone rates in the country. Every time a person picks up their cellphone bill, they can thank him for having among the highest rates in the country. That's his promise to the people of Manitoba that he broke, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:10)

And now what does he want to do? He wants to privatize daycare in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. In his alternative throne speech, he did not promise one more daycare spot in the province of Manitoba. He said before that he would privatize the ones that exist.

Lower wages for the people that work in daycare, less pensions for the people at daycare, less daycare spots that are affordable for the people of Manitoba: That's a dark vision for the future of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier and the pitiful actions he's just portrayed demonstrate that he seems to believe that the simple dull repetition of false statements gives them an element of truth when, in fact, such is not the case.

The Premier has no trouble making promises. In fact, out of sheer desperation, he's making more than he ever has before. Yesterday, over 50 high priorities of the government, over 50 promises, billions of dollars, all of it taken from our future, all

of it destined to be paid for by those who come after us, Mr. Speaker.

No problem making promises, a big problem keeping promises. He promised not to raise taxes on the people of Manitoba and imposed record tax hikes; he claimed it was ridiculous and nonsense. Mr. Speaker, what is ridiculous and what is nonsense is the proposition that anyone would believe a word that came out of his mouth.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, same old double standard from the Leader of the Opposition. Raised the gas tax, cut the highway budget: That was his record. Cut the budget, less money for schools, less children in schools.

When we came into office, the graduation rate from school was 71 per cent. It's now 87 per cent, a dramatic improvement. More young people in school than ever before, more people graduating than ever before. We're keeping young people in school with good options for the future. Ten thousand apprentices in Manitoba, 10,000 apprentice opportunities in the province of Manitoba, at a time when we have the lowest unemployment rate.

We listened to the people of Manitoba. They said, make sure we have a future for young people in Manitoba. We're providing that future with a budget, with a Throne Speech, with a plan that moves the province forward every single day, Mr. Speaker.

And he might have missed it this morning: That includes key infrastructure investments on the Perimeter which will move goods and services to our key markets and make sure there's less traffic in the neighbourhoods—

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

Eating Disorder Treatment Wait Times for Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, for 16 years this government has failed to adequately address eating disorders, which are one of the—have one of the highest mortality rates of any mental illness. Very concerned Manitobans like Elaine Stevenson have championed this cause for many years, and yet they were completely ignored when trying to get input into the Throne Speech.

Why was there no mention of any effort to address eating disorders or the long waiting times for the treatment of eating disorders in yesterday's Throne Speech?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is a tragedy when anybody is experiencing an eating disorder. It makes their lives very, very difficult, and we've seen some horrible outcomes of that, which is why we have a special centre, which is why we have put special resources in place to assist people with eating disorders, and we will continue to support that.

I only say to the member of the Liberal Party, just a few months ago he was advocating for prevention with respect to alcohol, Mr. Speaker. Now he's advocating for lower prices for alcohol. He has completely abandoned his position on preventing people from having serious addiction disorders. That is not a way forward on eating disorders, on addictions.

We will provide the support to people. We will ensure that our Crown corporations have 2 per cent of all their profits made available for social responsibility. We will do that with all the things that affect young people or anybody in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and we will protect our health-care system from a reckless program of tax cuts from the Liberals and the Conservatives in this House. We will ensure it's there for Manitobans when they need it.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we have confirmed today that the waiting times for treatment for eating disorders in Manitoba are up to eight months. That's far too long.

For families struggling with eating disorders, psychological help is clearly important and necessary, and yet it's extraordinarily expensive for many families to get psychological treatment. Indeed, getting help for eating disorders has drained the savings of many families.

Manitoba Liberals have already announced that they will address this, but the NDP have remained silent.

Why is the NDP ignoring such a desperate situation in our province and the solution which the Liberals have put forward?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we have special resources in place. If anybody's on a waiting list for eating disorder treatment, they're offered support; they're offered additional help. We've put additional resources in the budget for health care. The member opposite has voted against it.

And I can only say that his sudden reversal of an interest in prevention and a support for lower prices for alcohol with less social responsibility, with the position being put forward that you're going to privatize the alcohol system, the liquor control system in Manitoba, will only put many more Manitobans at risk of all kinds of disorders, of all kinds of issues, of all kinds of grief and all kinds of misery.

That is not a program for the future of Manitoba, and I would like to offer the member from River Heights the opportunity in his third question to recant on that desire to lower liquor prices and privatize the liquor control system in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we have confirmed today, I repeat, that waiting times for the treatment for children and adolescents for eating disorders are, at the moment, up to eight months.

The throne-Speech from the Throne was, in fact, a sign of a government which has become desperate. The NDP government is now promising what it's shown a complete inability to deliver in 16 years. Manitobans have watched this government fail to deliver in 16 years, and they have no faith in the NDP tackling any of this province's real issues.

What will the Premier actually do today to dress-to address what is really needed for children and adolescents with eating disorders and help to make sure that they can get access quickly to the treatment when they need it?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question. These are important questions.

When Manitobans need assistance, we want to ensure that they have those supports available to them in the community, not just in hospital facilities and treatment facilities but in the community so they can remain with their families, they can retain-remain in employment.

As of October 2015, the wait-list for that program was about 25 people, down from 32 the year before. Nineteen people will begin the program in the next couple of months, Mr. Speaker. We will look for ways to expedite that, for sure.

But I say to the member opposite, if he's really concerned about prevention when it comes to people, he needs to reverse the position that the Liberal Party has taken on privatizing liquor in Manitoba, on lowering liquor prices in a way there is no social responsibility attached to it-attached to it.

We know on this side of the House that that is a very dangerous path to pursue for Manitobans. It's reckless, it's irresponsible, and it mimics what the Conservatives are promising to do as well, which is also to privatize liquor. We know they've been doing research on that in other jurisdictions.

Why do the Liberals and Conservatives think that they can buy the votes of Manitobans with cheap booze?

Perimeter Highway Upgrades Interchange Development

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, we're at it again. Our government continues to invest in this province and its infrastructure at record-breaking pace. Pembina Highway, the Perimeter bridge, the Perimeter from Highway No. 1 to Pembina being repaved, and all we hear from the leader opposite in his alternate throne speech and his vision is cuts, cuts, cuts.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, I was at a press conference with the First Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, Chris Lorenc, and Terry Shaw from the Manitoba Trucking Association, and they were there to hear the wonderful news on how we're invested in the south Perimeter into four different interchanges, building this province, creating more jobs and building for a future in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation please tell us on this incredible announcement in the south?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Infrastructure by the numbers, Mr. Speaker: First year we ramped up highway construction, increased 44 per cent; last year, 10 per cent over that. Last year, a record year in terms of paving, by the numbers, 30 per cent higher than any other time in history. And in the Throne Speech yesterday, \$4.5 billion: that's how much additional money we're putting into infrastructure in this province.

* (14:20)

Four, Mr. Speaker, the number of interchanges the Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced this morning that we're going to replace from lights into interstate standard interchanges.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's another number: It's zero. That's how many major projects the Tories did

in the '90s. It's how many of those projects would proceed if they were in government.

I've said it before; I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker. It's a choice between the get-'er-done NDP and the shut-'er-down PCs.

Participation in New West Partnership Impact on Craft Brewing Industry

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the recent Alberta announcement of preferential pricing for craft beers located in provinces belonging to the New West Partnership has put Manitoba microbreweries at a marketing disadvantage.

Will this NDP government reconsider their refusal to join the New West Partnership, yes or no?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): Mr. Speaker, we're certainly very proud of our craft beer strategy.

And taking a look at the Throne Speech yesterday, which the Lieutenant Governor mentioned about how Manitoba will be hopping, it certainly will be, Mr. Speaker, because we've seen not only craft beer being great for the citizens of this province and having alternatives with regard to the selection of beverage that they want, but also agriculture will benefit. As a matter of fact, we grow the best barley in all the world to make beer, and also we grow a lot of hops in Manitoba as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, we're very proud of working with—in partnership with many of the people in that industry. And we look forward to many more microbreweries opening in the future.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech indeed stated that Manitobans can expect to see as many as 10 new craft breweries in the coming years. Yet this NDP government refuses to become part of a trade agreement that would be highly beneficial to the craft breweries. They close down the trade that these breweries can do in the provinces beside us to the west of us and—by not joining the New West Partnership.

Does this mean the NDP government is re-considering its refusal to join the New West Partnership?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we've heard many times before from the Conservatives as well as the leader from the Liberal Party about privatizing liquor and we understand that this is a huge mistake.

And the reason why, Mr. Speaker, this government put into law a 2 per cent net with regard to profits taken from alcohol sales, liquor sales in the province of Manitoba, going to Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and others. And we wouldn't see that happening, I don't believe, if the private sector owned all the liquor stores in the province of Manitoba. There's no incentive for them whatsoever to be addressing this and to putting 2 per cent of net into social responsibility.

And as a government, that's the reason why, at least one important reason why, we feel not only all the jobs that are created through Manitoba government employees but also the social responsibility—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by T. Bax, K. Bennici, K. Forsyth and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Beausejour District Hospital—Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in the northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by A. Gordon, N. Gordon, D. Dumas and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Brain Injury Canada, cited at <http://braininjurycanada.ca/acquired-brain-injury/>, estimates that 50,000 Canadians sustain brain injuries each year, over 1 million Canadians live with the effects of an acquired brain injury, 30 per cent of all traumatic brain injuries are sustained by children and youth, and approximately 50 per cent of brain injuries come from falls and motor vehicle collisions.

(2) Studies conducted by Manitoba Health in 2003 and 2006 and the Brandon Regional Health Authority in 2008 identified the need for community-based brain injury services.

(3) These studies recommended that Manitoba adopt the Saskatchewan model of brain injury studies–brain injury services, sorry.

(4) The treatment and coverage for Manitobans who suffer brain injuries varies greatly, resulting in huge inadequacies depending upon whether a person suffers the injury at work, in a motor vehicle accident, through assault or from medical issues such as a stroke, aneurysm or anoxia due to cardiac arrest or other medical reasons.

(5) Although in-patient services including acute care, short- and longer term rehabilitation are available throughout the province, brain injury patients who are discharged from hospital often experience discontinuation or great reduction of services which results in significant financial and emotional burdens being placed on family and friends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to develop and evolve community-based brain injury services that include but are not limited to: case management services, known also as service navigation; safe and accessible housing in the community; proctor or coach-type assistance for community reintegration programs; improved access to community-based rehabilitation services; and improved transportation, especially for people living in rural Manitoba.

(2) To urge the provincial government to encompass financial and emotional supports for families and other caregivers in the model that is developed.

Signed by K. Standeven, K. Boyd, L. Kilmury and many other fine Manitobans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (First Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no further petitions, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business and consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): I move, seconded by the member of Fort Rouge, that the following address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this Fifth Session of the 40th Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

* (14:30)

Ms. Lathlin: It was an honour to help build the vision that the Throne Speech lays out. I can honestly say that I feel deeply connected to this vision. As the representative for The Pas, as an indigenous woman and as a Manitoban, I feel that this vision includes me and my community. This vision delivers on important priorities that matter to my family, friends and neighbours in OCN and The Pas and to communities across northern Manitoba. This vision provides me a sense of belonging as a Manitoban. This is recognized by the Throne Speech.

In regards to restorative justice and safety, I just wanted to say that I'm proud to be part of a government that are going to take very important steps to provide paid leave to Manitobans who are victims of domestic violence, and we will make legislative changes to strengthen protection orders. And I know for a fact I'm speaking on behalf of many Manitobans. As a survivor of domestic abuse, this is very important to me. Our vision for Manitoba is one where everyone can feel safe in their homes and their communities. We will bolster supports for victims of crime while tackling the root causes of crime with a restorative justice strategy.

With that, I'd like to share it is national Restorative Justice Week. My experience with restorative justice, one—I absolutely support this initiative. I first learned about restorative justice when I was a university student at University of Manitoba. I was taking a course on Aboriginal people in the Canadian legal system, justice system, and with—there, we studied a book, well, restorative justice by Rupert Ross, and we learned about how communities would work with the offender and the victim together with a sharing circle that may have consisted of—with elders, community members, leadership and families as well. They found that this was an effective approach to help the victim and the offender help go back into their community in a positive way. Also, too, we do currently practise this restorative justice initiative in my constituency. Norway House, Cross Lake, Opaskwayak Cree Nation currently have committees working together to address this.

So with that, in regards to restorative justice, those who make mistakes and commit crimes need ways to move on with their lives at the same time as they face justice for their actions. As people move through the restorative justice process, our investments in jobs and training will give them more options to return to being productive members of our communities.

And with that, I'm proud to be part of a government that will partner with the University College of the North to build a new trade centre to help students take advantage of the good jobs created by Manitoba Hydro, our investments in northern infrastructure and mining. We will encourage—we will engage with northern communities through Opportunities North to support our shared vision of a strong and sustainable northern economy.

I believe it was just last month our Premier (Mr. Selinger)—I was privileged to host our Premier in my home community, The Pas and OCN, and we attended the Opportunities North gathering. It was a gathering of leadership, community members and from health, from Tolko to education, to chief and council and mayor and council. It was an excellent opportunity for us to gather, sit in working groups and address—there was 10 questions on how to build a strong, sustainable northern economy. Those exercises were great. We got to communicate with each other and share ideas and even learn from other people as well. And that exercise was very beneficial for my community and northern Manitoba, and more opportunities for that will be coming ahead.

And also, too, with that, proud to be part of a government, too, that will provide training and job opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment by strengthening our Social Enterprise Strategy with our partners, including BUILD, Aki Energy and Manitoba Green Retrofit.

I'm also proud to be part of a government that will continue to reject calls to privatize Manitoba Hydro, calls to cancel all export sales contracts and calls to cancel development projects which would put thousands of Manitoba out of work.

In the North we will partner with the University College of the North to build a new trades training centre to help students take advantage of the good jobs created by Manitoba Hydro, our investments in northern infrastructure and mining. In fact, today in The Pas UCN campus, there is a gathering of local community stakeholders. They're coming together to plan strategies, utilizing opportunities provided by our government. I believe their theme is linkages, linking our stakeholders to help address to increase a strong northern economy. And, again, this is happening at The Pas UCN campus, a great gathering for this initiative.

And also, too, I'm also proud to be a part of a government, too, that is looking towards creating better education and job opportunities for First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth.

In regards to families—and I just wanted to say our government wants to tackle some of the toughest issues with collaboration and a focus on prevention. The colonial legacy of residential schools, the '60s scoop and the child-welfare system is something we have promised to work with First Nation advocacy groups on. We believe that indigenous communities must be full partners in our efforts to support and keep our families together.

My family, Mr. Speaker, is a success story of keeping our families together. I'm a foster parent to my three nieces and I'm raising them as sisters. My late mother was a foster parent, so I learnt. I have a very diverse family as well. We're—we still have—my foster brothers are my brothers and they're—we still consider each other family today. And, with my mother, she installed that valuable goal that we are all brothers and sisters. So, with that, I'm honoured, too, to follow her legacy as a foster parent in our community.

We plan to introduce customary care legislation to ensure children can grow and thrive safely in their

community, strengthening their connection to language, culture and family, something I can really relate to as well.

We know that we have a role in the reconciliation process, and we will be acting on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is our—it is an honour that Manitoba is home to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and as a residential school is a—intergenerational survivor, this is very important to me.

I'm also proud to be part of a government that will promote a more inclusive and celebratory perspective of indigenous culture, and we'll be introducing legislation that ensures all Manitoba students learn about the histories, languages, cultures and traditional knowledge of our indigenous people to build on our shared values of inclusion, diversity and respect.

We will invest more in community schools, early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city and northern Manitoba, which will expand programs that will provide healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks in schools.

Mr. Speaker, I used to be—I used to have the honour of being the chairperson for The Pas family action centre. It was based in the Kelsey Estates in The Pas of—consists of social housing. I had the honour of hosting Minister Melanie Wight, who provided funding—oh, sorry.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to ensure that the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), when she's referencing a minister, it's by the portfolio that the minister might hold or their constituency name, for the information of the honourable member for The Pas.

*(14:40)

Ms. Lathlin: Minister of youth and children opportunities, I was honoured to host her in my community as we visited The Pas action family centre. Many children were there utilizing the after-school programs which provided nutritious snacks and activities, educational activities, and outings such as going boxing, swimming, camping, going out to the lake, many opportunities for these children who come from families that face many, many barriers. So with programs like this, I am absolutely honoured that they're provided in my constituency to help our families there as well.

Also, too, I'm proud of—to be part of a government that will continue to invest in community-based strategies to expand local production of healthy foods across the North and work with producers and the agricultural sector to bring local foods to new markets. Currently, I'm honoured to say that my community, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, is currently working on a project to do that, to provide local production of healthy foods, and I know for a fact their No. 1 goal for this project is to help fight against our diabetic epidemic in our communities, Aboriginal communities.

Also, too, with northern infrastructure, our government knows that highways connect our rural and northern communities and are crucial corridors for business and trade. We will continue to make upgrades, significant upgrades, to highways all over the province, with a focus on building new roads connecting First Nation communities along the east side of Lake Winnipeg. As someone who travels the northern highways a lot, travelling to my constituencies, I just want to thank our Manitoba government for making those travels much safer for me and my family and everyone else who are travelling on there as well.

We will invest in water and sewer infrastructure, as well as recreation centres, with the goal of enhancing our rural and northern communities. I just—it was an honour to, again, to make major announcements in Norway House, Moose Lake and Cormorant that will address improving water and sewer infrastructure in their communities, an announcement that each community was pleased to hear and looking forward to completion.

Our government is committed to broadening the mandate of the East Side Road Authority, which already creates good local jobs, training and business opportunities for indigenous communities, to now include the building of the Shoal Lake's Freedom Road.

Mr. Speaker, it was an honour to participate in the walk that happened over the summer. My daughters were included. They were absolutely amazed and absolutely astonished as to why we were walking; they just couldn't believe that this First Nation community had no good drinking water. So it was an honour to bring my daughters on this huge, very important initiative. And it was amazing to be amongst all these people from all walks of life, with support. It was just amazing walking from the steps of the Legislature, hearing our leadership talk about

how we're going to support this initiative, making our way down past by The Forks. And it was a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon.

The Throne Speech presents an inclusive vision that believes in the potential of every Manitoban, and it specifically mentions newcomers and First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. The history of inclusion that these groups of people have faced makes this promise of inclusion so important. Manitobans who have experienced this exclusion and hardship will take this promise of inclusion very seriously, and I will look forward to our government to follow through.

In closing, the vision for our future provided in the Throne Speech has a sense of belonging. As a woman and as a member of a First Nation, and I have a personal stake in seeing our government to follow through, and together with my colleagues, I will make sure we do.

Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): It is my great honour to be able to follow the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and seconding this Throne Speech, and I want to thank her for her words.

And I just want to reflect for a moment on what a tremendous addition she is to this Legislature. As the first indigenous woman member, that is tremendously historic and something that is long overdue. But she brings to this House a personal experience as a mother, as a foster mother, as somebody who has worked so hard to improve her community and to lead her family by example. I am so honoured to sit next to her in this House and I want her to know that, how much she is appreciated here. And I know she has a long, long career in this House, a long career of service to her community ahead of her.

I want to also just begin for a moment by reflecting on the horrific events that we've all been watching unfold and watching the aftermath unfold that took place in France. And I think one of the things I've been reminded of in the past few days is that as we watched with horror, how something as simple as an evening out at a café or at a concert can be interrupted by those who would make us afraid, who would make us afraid of each other and who would make us afraid of going about our daily lives. That that is a reality in so—an everyday reality in so many places in this world, in so many countries in this world, parents every day live with the fear that

their children on their way to school, that their older children who may be going out shopping, who may be going out to a café, who may be going out to a soccer game, that their loved ones, at any moment, that could be interrupted by the bombs and guns of terrorism.

And so I think it was appropriate yesterday at the beginning of the Throne Speech that we took a moment to remember. I think it's also appropriate that we think about how we can commit to changing the world that we live in.

And last night I was so pleased to be able, as we are watching this horrible act of terrorism unfold and we're watching the aftermath of it and the grief that we share with our brothers and sisters in France, that last night I got to sit with a group of neighbours in a church and talk about how we were going to commit ourselves to bring, to help, to aid refugees from Syria who may come here. And one might expect, and one might even forgive, in the aftermath of such a horrific event that there would be a small turnout, that there would be questions from those in attendance if we still wanted to proceed.

But I was so—my faith was so renewed in the human spirit that there was a large crowd, there was a tremendous turnout, and we heard the stories of someone who's trying to bring his family here from Syria. We heard the stories of Syrians who've come here who are trying to help their sisters and brothers come here, and there was not a moment of hesitation in the people that were gathered there, that it is our call and our duty to help people who are refugees who are fleeing the exact violence that we see playing out in France. There was not a moment of hesitation or a moment of letting that fear and that terrorism divide us from our common cause as humanity.

And I want to at this moment, Mr. Speaker, thank and recognize the efforts of our own Premier (Mr. Selinger) who has been a leader in the country on talking about the need to step up our efforts to bring refugees from Syria and other countries to Manitoba. I think that that has been—his voice has not only been one of leadership in the country but of compassion. And now, as we hear, unfortunately, I think, other voices call out to divide us and call out to inspire fear in their citizens, I want to again express how appreciative I am that our Premier has been steadfast in his commitment to unity and diversity and inclusion.

And so, you know, I look forward to those moments when I can be part of a group in whatever way to help support refugees from Syria and other countries who come here to make their home here, because I know that as much as it is our duty, I believe, to help those in the world who live in fear, I know that the people who come to this province enrich this province, enrich it not only with their spirit and their culture but enrich it economically. That is the truth. When we look at the story of economic growth in our province over the last 10, 15 years, a big part of that story has been our efforts to bring in more newcomers. And every member in this House knows how that has changed their home communities.

* (14:50)

Every member in this House knows that when people come here from other countries, they bring not only their life experiences but they bring new ideas and innovative approaches. They bring the desire to work hard and build a life for themselves and their families, and that enriches us. And so I think anything that we can do with the new federal government to recapture what has been lost in terms of this province's commitment to being a welcoming place for immigrants and refugees, I look forward to us doing that.

There was much in the Throne Speech that I know is going to be helpful to the lives of the families that I represent in Fort Rouge, and I'm going to talk about a few of those things. I'm not going to talk about all of them, but I do want to mention a few of the things that I know will be meaningful in Fort Rouge.

And certainly hearing about our commitment to continue to fund and to extend rapid transit, that has been a significant change in my constituency, which is home to most of that rapid transit line. It means people can get to work, can get to school. And in a city like ours and a climate like ours, having access to transportation is a key part of being able to participate not only in the economy but in the society. Being able to get out to work, to school, to cultural events, to go and see friends, to go see the doctor, to go shopping, that is something that should be accessible to anyone no matter what their income level or their ability.

And so building a strong public transit system is key to that, and I'm very pleased that we were able to increase the funding to the City of Winnipeg so that

we can continue to make transit an accessible option for Manitobans and for Winnipeggers who need it.

Yesterday in the speech we heard a bit about the renaissance that we've all seen play out in downtown Winnipeg. When I moved to the city some 17, 18 years ago now, downtown Winnipeg was a very different place. I worked downtown, I did most of my shopping downtown, I lived close to downtown, but if anybody had told me that someday people would be building and selling condos on Portage Avenue downtown in the heart of the city, I would have thought that a foolish endeavour. But it is happening, Mr. Speaker. People are living downtown, they're buying condominiums, they're putting up hotels, they're starting businesses.

And I know that that is in some way attributed to some of the decisions that this government has made, decisions that were criticized at the time, as all government decisions tend to be, but decisions to help see projects through, like the MTS Centre, decisions to help see through the location of the Hydro tower in downtown Winnipeg, bringing thousands and thousands of people to the downtown. That has helped to fuel the renaissance of the heart of our city. And any city, I think—and the health of any city can be in part judged by the health of its downtown and the health of its neighbourhoods.

And it's not only downtown Winnipeg. We have seen in so many neighbourhoods that when I arrived in Winnipeg we would commonly hear stories, there were houses in these neighbourhoods where you could not get insurance because of the state of the neighbourhood, because the fears about arson and crime. That is no longer a story. There are houses now in those neighbourhoods that are selling, I think, for far more than anybody dreamed possible.

And families are able to build a life and to reinvigorate the neighbourhoods of Winnipeg with new experiences, with new people and with renovated housing. All over my constituency, when I go door to door, I see renovations happening, I see people improving the housing that they've bought, I see tremendous amounts of infill housing going up. And that speaks well, I think, to the renewal that our government, working with others, working with the City of Winnipeg and working with others in the community, has been able to bring about.

Of course, part of the area I represent—I'm very honoured to represent what I think is one of the most fun constituencies in the province. I might get some challenges on that from my colleagues, but I will say

that representing both Osborne Village and the Corydon area, without a doubt I represent the most fun part of the city of Winnipeg. And I know that I represent a part that hundreds of people, thousands of people come to on any night of the week to have a good time, to enjoy the fine restaurants and to enjoy a few beverages. And these are also residential neighbourhoods.

And so I have worked carefully with Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries to make sure that both those things can exist in my constituency, that we can have thriving restaurants, thriving hubs of socializing, but we can also have people who can live in their homes and live in peace.

And that, I think, Mr. Speaker, is something that would be threatened if we were to follow the advice that we hear from the opposition to deregulate liquor, to privatize the Liquor & Lotteries Corporation. I don't think, under a privatized system, I would have been able to get in touch with the regulators, to talk to the liquor inspectors, and to say, you know, come with me to a meeting of residents who are concerned about some of the restaurants and bars in the area. Come and help me talk to both those employers and those business owners and the residents and find out if there is a solution here, where we can have a residential neighbourhood and a thriving commercial area.

We're able to do that but we're able to do that because we have a publicly owned liquor and lotteries system where we have a stake. We, the public, the people of Manitoba, have a stake, not only enjoying what those companies have to offer, but also making sure that we do it in a way that is responsible and where everybody can enjoy what those companies have to offer.

A big part of our Throne Speech, of course, focused on child care, focused on education, and those are issues that, for me, are more and more present in my life. Certainly, when I was first elected in 2007, I was single; I had no children. In fact, in 2011, I still—we still had not yet had our first child. And now, as we head into the next election, I have two children, one who is four and one who is five months old. And so, although I was always interested in child care and education, they take on a more immediate flavour for me these days, and that's why the commitment to—the ambitious commitment to create thousands and thousands of new child-care spaces is so important, and it's so important to the families who live in Fort Rouge.

Today I was honoured, of course, to be able to celebrate the life of Shauna Collins who really was a pillar and a source of strength in the child-care centre on—that used to be on River Avenue that I represent, and it was quite the journey. When I was first elected, one of my first jobs left to me by my predecessor, Tim Sale, was to make sure I got that daycare built, and I think he called me almost weekly to find out what the progress was on doing that. And it is not an easy journey. Oftentimes, when you're dealing with these projects, you're dealing with volunteer boards made up of parents. Executive directors of child-care centres are also becoming construction experts and project managers while they're trying to make sure that all the kids in their care are getting fed and looked after and playing outside. But I have to say that Shauna and her colleagues at River Avenue and the parents there and the architects who worked on it and everybody came together to make that a reality. And now, every time I drive along Donald and I can see the colourful mural that's on the side of the River Avenue daycare, I remember what we were able to accomplish together.

But we would not have been able to accomplish that new child-care centre if it weren't for the work of—I think the minister at the time, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), the Minister of Justice now, and Tim Sale, who had put in place, for the first time, a capital funding mechanism for a child-care centre, so that the government would give money to help build those child-care centres and renovate them. And that—we have seen child-care centres built and renovated all across this province as a result of that. And that means that people are able to offer a higher-quality early childhood education.

I am, every day, amazed at what my son comes home having learned at daycare and now at school, and I know that had we chosen to stay at home with him, hopefully I would have been able to teach him all the things that he's learning. But I think, probably, I would not have done as full a job as I know that he is receiving when he goes to daycare, when he goes to school, because I know that he's learning not only the lessons of the alphabet and his colours and shapes and how to count but I know he's learning how to get along with others, and that is probably the lesson that is going to stand him the best in his future.

And so I am—every day I'm thankful to his child-care providers, and I want that for all Manitobans. We have a saying in this party from one

of our founders, J. S. Woodsworth, that what I want for myself I desire for all, and that is true: I want my kids to get good quality child care, I want them to go to good schools, I want them to have a healthy future. But I want that for all kids, and that's what, for me, motivates me to keep coming to work every day and trying to find ways to continue us on that path.

* (15:00)

None of us in this Legislature are blind to the challenges and the problems that we face in our own constituencies. We know that there are families who still grapple with poverty. We know that there are families who still grapple with abuse and violence in the home. And we know what the results of that are. When you speak to men who end up behind bars, almost to a one they will tell a story of having been exposed to violence in their homes at a young age.

And so that's why it is so important that we continue to move on the issue of preventing domestic violence, and I think as the days unfold we're going to hear a lot more about that in this Chamber and about some innovative approaches that are based on talking to people in the community, victims, people who work with victims, people who do this research, so that they can help us take the next steps to make sure that we are preventing violence and that we're also living in a community and a society that recognizes when domestic violence happens and empowers people to do something about it.

And that's why I think the commitment to bring forth employment leave for people who are dealing with domestic violence is so powerful. It's not only needed—we know that when women experience—and it's mainly women but not only women, of course, men also experience domestic violence—but we know that when women experience domestic violence, they are far more likely to lose their job as a result, because they can't show up to work, because they've used all their sick time, because when they're at work they're not focused on their job, and because there's such, still, a tremendous stigma of being able to talk about what's happening, even though, Mr. Speaker, in most workplaces, I would say, the employer knows that this is happening, co-workers know that this is happening, but we have—still have a challenge in talking about it with each other.

And so I think the commitment to bring forward paid leave, it's not only going to be a practical help to people who are dealing with domestic violence in their life, but it's going to be something that is going

to help us as a society talk about domestic violence and bring it into the light. And, when we bring a problem like domestic violence or sexual assault into the light, it shrinks, it dies, because we're talking about it, we're doing something about it and we're helping each other with it. And so I think that that is going to be a great initiative that we are going to bring forward, and it's going to be the first in the country.

So many times when I've been part of this government we've been part of doing something for the first time, and that is not always easy and it is not always without mistakes when you're the first. But a lot of the things that we have done for the first time are now part of the Manitoba way.

Mr. Speaker, I think about things like The Worker Recruitment and Protection Act that was far before anybody was talking about the difficulties and the challenges with foreign workers and the way that they are so able to be exploited. We brought forward a law to help prevent that, to deal with that, and it was the forward thinking of people like the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), who was then the minister, and her staff in the department who were able to get that done, and now that's something that is seen as a model across the country.

You know, I also think about our ways of dealing with presumptive coverage for illnesses that firefighters face and the workers' compensation, that was something done first here in Manitoba. I know that it was something that you, Mr. Speaker, brought forward as a private member's bill in your time here, and now that is done internationally, it's done across the world.

And all of these things remind us of the tremendous power that we have as legislators to change lives, not only the lives of the people that we represent but the lives of people across the country and across the world, if we but choose to take that power, if we but choose to do that.

I want to also just say for a moment that I think, in hearing about the coverage of the Throne Speech and hearing some of the discussion about it, the Throne Speech has laid out a choice for Manitobans, a choice that they will make in April. And that choice is increasingly between an option to invest in the future, to use the power of government to try to make lives better, to work with the community, to grow the economy, to make sure that people have access to good jobs and good education, or a future that is defined by cuts to those very services.

And increasingly, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the opposition looks all the same on this front. Both opposition parties are going to lead their platforms with promises to take hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars out of the budget. And I think that is regrettable, but it will be a clear choice that Manitobans will have offered to them.

In the final minutes that I'm going to speak, I just want to reflect on the time that I have been able to spend in this House as a member of the Legislature. When I was speaking to my colleague from The Pas before her speech and helping her prepare for some of the arcane procedures that we use in this Chamber, I was reminded of my first speech in this House, and I was honoured to be able to move the Throne Speech right after I was elected in 2007 and I was incredibly nervous that day. I think I shook the entire time I spoke. But it was an honour.

And, when I think about that day, I remember how, after we were elected, the premier at the time, Premier Doer, wanted to make clear that we had just elected a historic number of women. And so he invited us all to come together, all the women that had been elected, and we came together and we proceeded up the Grand Staircase. And I remember that day, there were people lining the halls and lining the staircase and cheering for us. And the day that I got to stand up here and make my first speech, I was filled with so much hope for what we could accomplish.

And we haven't accomplished it all. I don't think anybody would say, in their life, in their career, that they do everything that they hoped to or everything that they set out to, but we've accomplished a great deal. And I want to say that as I stand here today making this speech, I'm still hopeful of what we can accomplish together in the future. That hope is perhaps tempered by some hard-won wisdom but I am hopeful nonetheless. And my hope now, as I was saying, moves from the abstract to the very real, and it is the hope for the future that I can be part of creating for my own children.

Of course, having a daughter, for me, has made it even more pressing to try to make the world a better and safer place for her because I know that as a young woman, she is going to be, unfortunately, still, prone to many more dangers than my son will ever know. I know that even though we have made tremendous progress in electing women, my daughter will not know in her lifetime a Legislature that has the same number of men and women in it if

we don't move at a faster pace than we have so far. I know that she is born into a world where young women are still too often the subject of sexual violence and sexual harassment. And I know that she lives in a world which still would seek to define us and our capabilities based on our gender, based on the colour of our skin, based on our sexual orientation and based on the class that we are born into and inhabit. And so when I think of what we have left to do and accomplish, it becomes very focused on the world that we're leaving our children and the children of those that we represent.

I want to take a moment now to thank the people of Fort Rouge who have sent me here to represent them. I know I haven't done that always perfectly. But I have brought, I hope, every day to this job a desire to live up to my oath. And the oath that we take when we become members is to serve without fear and to serve without favour. And I believe I have done that. But it has not been perfect by any stretch of the imagination.

In my office I keep a few things that keep me inspired and motivated and I want to just share a couple of them with the members gathered here today. One is a card that was given to me, actually, after I had lost an election, and you often learn more from losing than winning. I've always said that, and I just want to share the quote with members. It's a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson and it's about success. It says, to laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, that is to have succeeded.

I also keep in my office a thank-you card from a young woman—I've told this story before—but when I was minister of Immigration—of Labour and Immigration, I was at an event, and a young woman came up to me after and wanted to talk to me about her father who was in a refugee camp and who they were trying to bring here. Her mother and her had been here for some years. And so I took the name and I took the number and I did try to tell her I will do what I can but these things are mostly in the hands of the federal government and they can take a long time, but I will do what I can.

* (15:10)

And so I took that information and I gave it to my officials, and it was found that because of something that happened that his file was in the wrong place at the wrong time, and so they were able to right that mistake and he was able to come here and join his family. And sometime after, I got a thank-you card from her, and all it says is, thank you for reuniting me with my father. And I often feel that if I accomplished nothing else in this job, that will be enough.

And I want to end, as my time is ticking down, I just want to end with another bit of inspiration that I keep that is from Helen Keller that I think hopefully guides all of us in what we try to do in this job: I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a tremendous Throne Speech, a tremendous vision for this province, and I'm honoured to be a small part of it.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) for her comments. I think they were heartfelt and sincere and genuine and I thought that that was a wonderful speech. One of the wonderful things about our job is that we can have great respect for one another and not necessarily agree. And, certainly, when people always agree, it's often the case that, you know, someone isn't doing much thinking. Around here we are a lot of thinkers and we do disagree on issues of fundamental importance sometimes, but I have great appreciation for the words that the member for Fort Rouge just spoke.

And also I wanted to thank the member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), as well, for her words, and as I have welcomed her to the Chamber previously, as have others, I will not add, except to say that is fascinating in our lives in politics how little things can make a difference. And the member for The Pas knows the significance of a coin flip and understands how perilous this career may be in terms of the decisions that others make and how they impact on us.

Of course, here we're all at the mercy of the people of Manitoba, as it should be in our Chamber and as it should be in political life. And so we are very much people who are conscious of the

importance of listening to people, reflecting on their views and their points of view.

And also, of course, we're conscious of the perilous nature and the precious nature of life itself.

Premièrement, j'aimerais prendre un moment pour parler des actes terribles et barbares qui sont déroulés la semaine passée en Paris.

Translation

First of all, I would like to take a moment to talk about the terrible and barbaric attacks that occurred in Paris last week.

English

First of all, I would like to take a moment to speak just briefly about the terrible and barbaric acts that occurred last week in Paris.

C'est des actes qui sont contre nos valeurs manitobaines et occidentales. J'offre mes condoléances aux victimes et aux survivants de ces actes terroristes, et que nos prières touchent tous ceux qui ont été affectés par ces événements.

Translation

These are acts that are contrary to Manitoban and Western values. I offer my condolences to the victims and the survivors of these terrorist acts, and may our prayers reach all those affected by these events.

English

These are acts that are against our Manitoba values. They're against Western values. And I offer our family's condolences, the condolences of our party, to the victims and the survivors of these terrorist actions. And I hope that our prayers reach all those that have been affected by these terrible events.

I also would like to add my personal condolences to the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) on the passing of his dad. I didn't have the privilege of getting to meet him but I know the tribute that was in the Free Press was quite beautiful, and it outlined a life well lived. It reminds me, and it should, I think, bear remembering, that families are a precious thing, and so I would like to add that the appreciation that I feel and I know all of us feel for our families in their support of us here in these responsibilities is very great. It's immeasurable. We couldn't do the jobs that we do without the support of our families.

And it is these families that I bear in mind as I make my comments in respect of the speech yesterday, Mr. Speaker, because it is important to understand the impact that our decisions have on families. The impact that these decisions have is—sometimes lessen in our minds perhaps wrongly because it is incremental in nature because it seems like it's a small impact. For example, when we imposed the raising of the PST, many members opposite responded, it's only 1 per cent. But trust is precious and trust, I was told by my grandmother, is the only thing greater than love, and when you break the trust of someone, that is a meaningful thing and hard to repair.

This election coming up will be about trust; it will be about whether the people of Manitoba believe the things the government said in the Throne Speech, believes there is credibility in the promises being made. There's never been a doubt that the government opposite could make promises; the difficulty they have is in the keeping of those promises, and when words are spoken they should be words that can be trusted.

Yet too numerous, too frequent on occasion there are words that are spoken by members opposite that are not to be trusted. Misrepresentation of our positions is, of course, becoming increasingly common, and that's sad because an honest debate about honest differences is what we should be pursuing in here. But that's not the case when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) rises repeatedly and misrepresents our views in respect of things like export power for Manitoba Hydro and any number of issues—child care—these types of things.

It saddens me that a member of this Legislature would so frequently rise in their place and misrepresent my words or the views of my party.

Last election, all members opposite and candidates for their party went to the doors of the people of this province and asked for support and they knocked or rang the doorbell and they looked the people who lived within those homes or apartments or condominiums and they looked them in the eye and they promised numerous things. They promised they would not raise taxes, promised they would respect the balanced budget law, promised they would, in fact, balance the budget and, in fact, went further in the case of the Premier and said, we're ahead of schedule to balance the budget and the hiking of taxes would be nonsense and ridiculous.

And so it is naturally with great distrust that Manitobans hear the promises that the member opposite makes now and his candidates make now because having come to the door, looked the person in the eye, made a solemn oath to do things which they did not do or not do things which they did, the candidates for the party opposite did, in fact, wreck the trust of the people of Manitoba and, as a consequence, experienced an internal rebellion of historic proportions which was, of course, based on a fundamental distrust within their own organization as well: broken trust, broken government, difficult to repair.

Manitobans naturally are reacting with disbelief to the promises contained in yesterday's Throne Speech, not that the promises were not legitimate promises to make but that there is a difficulty in believing that they will be kept. They've stopped making the penny, Mr. Speaker, but the NDP hasn't stopped making a great number of promises; the difference is you can take a penny to the bank but you can't take these promises to the bank.

In 16 years of broken promises on a variety of files tell us that this is a record the government cannot run on; they run from it. It's a record they cannot run on because it is not a great record: social problems, which the government claimed it would solve years ago, persist or have worsened; education quality, which the government insisted it would raise, has lowered; child care and children waiting for child care is at record line-up lengths. And government promises now in their speech yesterday to solve all those problems. But their speech was less an outline of their targets and much more, Mr. Speaker, a litany of failures over 16 years. Health care is a—waits are at record lengths as well, and when the Grace Hospital, Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface hospital all lead the country in emergent waits, this is not a record that is one the government can be very proud of.

And, of course, all of these broken promises were centred on the fundamental precept that the government could get its finances under control and that it certainly has not. In fact, they've given up, Mr. Speaker, as evidenced by yesterday's speech which made no reference whatsoever to ever balancing the budget, to ever lowering taxes or increasing the economic potential of Manitobans.

* (15:20)

This Premier—it took us 109 years to get our debt to approximately \$18 billion, and this

Premier (Mr. Selinger) just took six years to double it, and that is a record which I pray, Mr. Speaker, can never, ever be broken, but it is one which the Premier cannot run away from. It has led to the downgrading of our credit rating as a province for the first time in 30 years, and this is a serious concern because, of course, in a province that has seen its debt double, interest must be paid.

Now, the government is quick to trumpet forecasts that look good for the province, and we're all hopeful that they're achieved. We like to believe in the optimism that is portrayed by those forecasts, but coming from a farm family myself, I understand that what's in the bin is more important than what's forecast to be in the bin at the end of the season.

And so I hope the forecasts are correct, but I want to make it very clear that what the government does when it repeats the glowing tributes of banks is it reveals a basic misunderstanding of the fact that banks like to make glowing tributes about the people that borrow a lot of money. And, secondarily, they need to understand something else: The reason that we may look better than our neighbours right now—reasons, are, perhaps, threefold: One, the price of crude oil, which we do not depend on to the degree that our neighbours do, has dropped precipitously and historically; secondly, of course, that general borrowing rates have declined to modern-day lows; and, thirdly, as a result of—perhaps of the oil factor and others, the Canadian dollar has declined by a significant amount in the last number of months. And each of these three factors has resulted in other provinces suffering worse than Manitoba.

The Conference Board of Canada, who the Premier, of course, relies on to produce reports of the gross advantages of raising the PST and neglects to ask them to calculate what the net advantage might be, the Conference Board of Canada has admitted that there's nothing that this government did right that caused that forecast to look good.

See, when a government trumpets its performance it should have a reason. The government's reason is that the forecasts are nice, and the forecasts are based on things the government had nothing to do with. The government had nothing to do with lowering the prime borrowing rates. The government had nothing to do with the price of crude oil dropping. The government had absolutely nothing to do with our currency devaluing and helping our net export performance.

So the government's claiming credit using \$2 million of taxpayer funding for steady growth when, in fact, there are few signs of steady growth. There are just lots and lots of steady growth signs.

Now, when you can't run on your record, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) can't run on his, you run on fear instead, and the members opposite need to understand that Manitobans are afraid already. They're afraid already. Susan [*phonetic*] wrote me she's waiting for health care for her mom. She said her mom went into the ER and waited nine and a half hours. Susan's [*phonetic*] already afraid. She doesn't need more fear.

Gerald [*phonetic*] is concerned about crime. He's been victimized in the last year, he told me, six times by vandals and thieves. And Edith [*phonetic*] is a widow who's facing serious challenges and is concerned about those financial challenges made worse incrementally by this government, by increasing her insurance. Her PST is now on her insurance on her house. That's an 8 per cent bill: just a little bill, if you're not the one paying it, but a big bill if you're the one paying it; putting 8 per cent more on her hairdos when she goes to get her hair done; putting taxes on—more fees on her wine and beer if she wants to try to have a little top tittle now and again or her—for various other things, like the cottage that her family has now decided to sell, and the fees that she pays for that have escalated mightily.

These aren't small things, not to her, not to Gerald [*phonetic*], not to Susan [*phonetic*]. They're real things. They're real things that affect their lives and affect the lives of their families in a real way, and the decisions that were made to make life harder for these folks are decisions the government made. And then they went to court to fight so that they could have the right to make those decisions over there, but the million Manitobans around the province didn't get a say. And that is fundamentally a breach of trust.

I would encourage all members of this House to understand that there are real people in our province who do live in fear for many different reasons and that using fear tactics makes that fear magnify and worsen. I would encourage them to understand that when they try to frighten civil servants' children with layoff notices that they aren't serving any useful purpose when our plan has nothing to do with laying off civil servants. They do not help the families of teachers who are threatened with layoffs. They do

not help when they follow the leaders of political parties' wives and children around during election campaigns. These are the types of things that demonstrate an insensitivity and a lack of compassion for real people that is unbecoming to any member of this Chamber, including the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

What is needed is fresh energy. What is needed is new ideas and fresh energy in this province. Because Manitobans value trust, they need a government that they can trust, so we will bring in Manitoba's first open government bill. And it'll establish new and higher standards for transparency, accountability and ethical conduct, and it will also establish open contracting procedures so that things like the Tiger Dams escapades of the member for Thompson won't be repeated ever again.

We'll also give real authority to independent legislative officers to investigate and report so that the decisions that members make in spending taxpayers' money are open and transparent decisions that can be defended as opposed to the member for Thompson who hides his decision, refuses to report it, refuses to disclose it, responds with a FIPPA request with blacked-out documents and then on the other hand claims transparency and ethical conduct. What a sad misrepresentation of the truth, Mr. Speaker.

Manitobans are compassionate people. They like the idea, and we've advanced it, and I'm pleased the government's copied it, of reducing ambulance costs for families. Our ambulance fees are the highest in this country. They want us to establish a physician recruitment and retention program for Winnipeg and the entire province because they're tired of saying goodbye to their doctors or not even getting a doctor in the first place. They're looking forward to seeing the wait reductions task force come into action and actually achieve reduced wait times for them by focusing on solving the problem instead of focusing on talking about solving the problem. And they want us to accelerate the construction of personal-care homes, something the government has promised to do for years on end and has not done. It's lagged the country.

Manitobans have certain values, and the government that best reflects those values will best represent the people of this province. And Manitobans are common-sense people. They shop smart; they expect the government to shop smart when they take money off their kitchen table and put

it on the Cabinet table. That hasn't been happening. Manitobans also expect to see a government that operates effectively and efficiently. We'll reduce the size of Cabinet by one third, and we will save millions of dollars in doing that, and we will create the right frugal tone at the top of the organization so that the whole organization responds in a more effective manner to deliver the services it should to the people of this province.

And we will restore Manitobans' right to vote on tax increases taken away from them undemocratically by the people opposite. And we will reduce barriers to participation in government tendering processes. One of those barriers, it recently has emerged, is the inability of Manitoba companies to participate in tenders in Saskatchewan, eventually in Alberta and BC, as well, because we're not a member of the New West Partnership.

Manitobans expect us to increase the opportunities for prosperity in our province, and this government has decreased those opportunities by creating barriers to participation. It's unfortunate, also, that this government clings to an outdated practice of forcing unionization onto non-union companies to limit the effective participation within government tendering, something which is illegal in every European country and most United States, barely-illegal-illegal, I emphasize, Mr. Speaker, and has not been utilized by other provinces—it is utilized with decreasing frequency by every other province but one, this one, driving up the costs of doing infrastructure as a result.

* (15:30)

This is a government, after all, that claims that the PST was raised to be used for infrastructure after five years, consecutive years, of underspending in the Infrastructure Department, the only department of government that was underspent. Every other department of government overspent. One department underinvested; the member for Thompson was in charge of it, but they pulled the money away from him and maybe in frustration he decided to use it for Tiger Dams, what was left. I'm not sure. But one thing for sure, they underspent in the Infrastructure Department for five consecutive years, revealing that that was a low priority for them, but suddenly—suddenly—decided \$2.4 billion in—for infrastructure money ripped away from the heart and soul of the department, ripped away and used for other priorities.

In 2010, they raided the Infrastructure Department. In 2011, they raided the Infrastructure Department; 2012, they raided the Infrastructure Department. And now the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) likes to parade around. So it's raid, raid, raid and parade. That's the approach, yes. Manitobans value infrastructure. They want it done strategically. They want it done carefully, and they want it done right so there's value for them, not just a promotional exercise for the government.

Manitobans value inclusion, and we'll establish a read-to-succeed initiative with reading labs and mentoring so all children leaving grade 3 can read at the highest possible national level. That's critical to our success. We want to empower teachers so they can evaluate students accurately and fully for their work. And that includes giving a zero where zero work is done, Mr. Speaker. And we want to empower parents as well to be able to get all the information they need so they can be partners in the process of evaluating their own child's progress. We want to see more meaningful reporting mechanisms.

We also want to provide real tax relief for low-income families by increasing the basic personal exemption and eliminating bracket creep.

And we will support urban Aboriginal economic development zones in partnership with First Nations because we believe strongly that creating jobs and economic opportunities together is the way to go. Teamwork is critical to this, Mr. Speaker, not just on the indigenous issues but in every issue of government. Teamwork is key. This is a group opposite that has demonstrated what a team does not look like. We will demonstrate what a team looks like.

Our plan means, Mr. Speaker, protecting front-line services and protecting the jobs of those who deliver those fundamental services. This is key to the success of our province. Cutting waste will allow us to create wealth and jobs. Creating a comprehensive, planned, long-term strategy to get away from the bust and boom kind of approach the government's taken on infrastructure is critical to getting maximum value for every dollar we invest, as we must invest in our critical infrastructure.

And fostering new business and social and community partnerships as certainly the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief) and the member for Fort Richmond (Ms. Irvin-Ross) both support the idea of social inclusion. I know they do, and I know they support the idea, or used to, of using social

innovation bonds as a vehicle for achieving some innovation in preventing social problems rather than simply dealing with them after they've emerged as great problems in our society. I know they used to support that concept because they put their name on a report that endorsed it. So I'm sure that they're strongly supportive of that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, suddenly, however, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has decided that these are a bad idea despite the fact that his friends in Ontario—he—I know he went into the federal election an NDPer, but he's come out of it a Liberal. His friends in Ontario most certainly are using the social innovation bond model, and, of course, the Premier's adversaries in Saskatchewan are as well. But it's time for us—it's time for us—to work together in partnership with altruistic investors, with creative thinking, innovative Manitobans to address the social challenges we must face together as a province.

These are just some of the key issues that we must address, and many others will be, of course, issues that we will speak to as time allows in the future. But I want to conclude by simply saying that it is an honour to serve in this place, an honour I never take lightly, nor should any of us, and I want to say a thank you to you, Mr. Speaker. I think you do an impeccable job. I appreciate the work you do very, very much. And I want you to know that I have worked with Speakers in a number of Chambers, as you're aware. And I would not have said that to every Speaker just to get on their good side. So I want you to be aware of that.

I do want to say a special thank you to the people of Fort Whyte for the honour of representing them. It's an emerging and vibrant part of our city and our province and a place that offers tremendous benefits to the people who choose to live there. Not, however, a high school. The only riding in the province that does not have that benefit and something we need to seriously continue to consider as we move forward.

I want to say thank you to all the people in our province who volunteer, whether they volunteer for other political parties, whether they volunteer for our own, whether they volunteer for charitable causes or community efforts, for—whether it's to work for health care, to fundraise for preventative measures in various areas of health care. We are the leading province in the country for volunteerism, and it's something we should always hold as a special attribute of our province. Just this Sunday, I had the

privilege of attending, along with a number of other colleagues, including the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) who was there and the member for—was it Logan or Burrows was also with us? *[interjection]* Burrows, Melanie—I'm sorry, Burrows—were both at the event as well. It was a wonderful event, and it's a basketball league organized by a number of our friends in the Filipino community originally but now it goes right across the city.

There were over 100 teams this year, and I think it's especially important to acknowledge and thank the volunteers who came from all over the city, actually, to support this. It's a great sport. It's passed hockey now in its participation levels in our country. I have particular affection for the sport and the people involved in it for obvious reasons, Mr. Speaker, one of which is perhaps not so obvious, is the fact that I couldn't—our family couldn't afford to buy hockey equipment for me, not that I was that great anyway. But I got the chance to play a sport, and it was basketball. And so I appreciate very much, and I thank the volunteers who organized that league. It's tremendous.

I want to also say a special thank you to any members who are here or who are absent today who are not continuing, that is to say, they are not running again or have previously resigned, as is the case with the member for Southdale, the member for Gimli. I want to—of course, because of the nature of the resignations, we didn't get the chance to say our goodbyes. I think it's important to express our thanks to all those members who are not running again. In particular, I would like to, of course, pay special attention to the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese), member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), because they have dedicated themselves, as have other members, to this Chamber, but they dedicated themselves in the pursuit of the best interests of the people of their riding and the people of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, one of the funniest things I've ever had the chance to see in politics was when we were role-playing at a communications training workshop and the member for River East was trying to act like she was an NDP member of the Legislature. It was really—it was—it just was—*[interjection]* No, it was bad casting, out of character for sure. It was very difficult for her.

Mr. Speaker, I know, as all members do, that this is a place of disagreement, at times, and conflict. But

I do believe that we all here share a strong desire to see a better province emerge from our deliberations and from the work of all the people of this province. I know there is a level, a fairly high level, of frustration with the current government out there. But I want all members to understand that there is also, all over the province, an incredible level of optimism and determination about where we're going as a province, and it's an optimism that I share, and it's a determination that all of us have, certainly on this side of the House.

* (15:40)

I will conclude by saying that there is nothing wrong with Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that cannot be made right by what is right with Manitobans, and we will work with Manitobans to make sure that everything possible can go right for Manitoba in the future under our leadership.

And so I will move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

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

But this House regrets:

- (a) That the provincial government has refused to listen to Manitobans who are tired of broken promises such as the commitment to balancing the budget by 2014 without raising taxes, failing to respect the right to vote on tax increases and not recognizing that Manitobans want a change for the better; and
- (b) That the provincial government has failed to recognize Manitobans are paying more and getting less due to an average family in Winnipeg having to pay more than \$3,200 in additional provincial taxes than a comparable family living in Regina, yet front-line services like health care and education are being ranked last in the nation; and
- (c) That the provincial government has failed to acknowledge that self-promotion and wasteful government spending has caused the provincial debt to double since 2008, requiring Manitobans to pay more than \$800 million in debt interest charges, which threatens Manitoba's future, as that money cannot be invested to protect essential front-line services, reduce health-care wait times

or improve education results for our children.

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

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition and seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo,

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

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

The amendment is in order.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): And, you know, if you want to see a contrast, Mr. Speaker, of what's going on in this province, you'll see nothing more of a contrast

than you will have seen today. You know, we just saw a tour de force from the Leader of the Opposition. By the way, before members opposite clap, it's not going to be a compliment.

We, right now, had a visionary Throne Speech. We, this morning, announced a major new initiative in terms of core infrastructure investments. We announced we're going to be putting in interchanges in four-count them—four intersections on the Perimeter Highway as part of a \$3.5-billion investment.

Mr. Speaker, we have the economy that has got one of the best economic growth rates and the lowest unemployment rate.

So what did the Leader of the Opposition do? He got up and he said, well—he actually kind of mumbled a bit when he got to this part. He actually couldn't disagree with any of that, that he didn't try—he then tried to say, oh, actually, it was nothing to do with this government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that it didn't just happen. It happened because for the last 16 years we've rejected the Conservative agenda of cuts and austerity and put in place a progressive agenda of smart investments, not just in infrastructure, but in terms of health, education, our future in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I must submit that I could also probably give another speech that's entirely created by quotes from the Leader of the Opposition. And I got to say, well, to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), I'm actually going to read some of that. And I got to—I must admit, by the way, that I know that they've been hard at work, you know, drafting up their negative ads. We have a bit of a difficulty on this side. When I tell people—when I actually quote the Leader of the Opposition, people actually think I'm making it up, and from the Leader of the Opposition you try to, you know, he feigned indignation that somehow we're making things up.

He actually in this House a year ago got up and said he hates Halloween. He actually questioned the integrity of kids going trick or treating on Halloween. Now, Mr. Speaker, in case anybody thinks I'm making that up they could check Hansard. There's actually a good recording on YouTube but this is the Leader of the Opposition.

Now I won't get into how he, you know, wishes people, you know, the best of the season. I mean, infidel atheist—I mean, I'm not making this up,

Mr. Speaker. Actually, with the Leader of the Opposition, you couldn't make it up because no one will believe you if you did, but he actually made reference to that.

But, you know, I want to read—I mean, I could do a top-10 list here but that will be a Leader-of-the-Opposition-esque thing to do. But, in all seriousness, he actually gave a speech today where he talked about trust. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to be the first one to say that on April 19th, people have a choice and— *[interjection]*

Well, I'm glad they're getting in the mood of my speech here because what the Leader of the Opposition is essentially going to be doing is asking the people of Manitoba to give him the keys, to make him the premier. Now, Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]*—I appreciate that I'm engaging members opposite, but I don't think they're going to be applauding the next—the next part of it.

So, Mr. Speaker, apart from the Halloween-hating, you know, infidel-atheist-greeting Leader of the Opposition, let's talk in all seriousness about what the Leader of the Opposition stands for. This is real. This is the person that wants to be premier, and I want to give some picture of what Manitoba would look like if he was the premier of this province.

Now, let's talk about social issues. I know members opposite don't like to talk about social issues, but I want to put on the record—let's start with marriage equality for same-sex couples. Now before anybody thinks that the Leader of the Opposition kind of somehow ducked that, Mr. Speaker, I got to tell you when he was a Member of Parliament, when he had a choice, when he stood in his place, what did he say? He called it a social experiment. Not only that, he said that—he couldn't hide his disdain for same-sex marriage. He said, and this is a quote, I am not making this up, he said, I don't know if it's likely we'll encounter a more important debate in our generation.

So, when he was a Member of Parliament, he didn't just oppose same-sex marriage; he said it was the most important debate of our generation. Well, I got to put on the record I'm proud that New Democrats supported the right of all people, including same-sex couples, for marriage, and his position speaks volumes.

I want to talk about a woman's right to choose. Again, this is 2015. Women for more than 25 years have had a legal right to choose, and I'm proud that

our party, the New Democratic Party, has always supported the right of women to choose. What was his view? Mr. Speaker, he opposed the woman's right to choose. He said he would cut funding and made it harder for women to access the health-care services they need. I can cite time and time again where he said that. This is the Leader of the Opposition's view in terms of that.

* (15:50)

Now, what's his view in terms of women? Mr. Speaker, I am not making this up either. This is the person that wants to be premier of this province. These are quotes. He talked about colleagues being whiny with PMS. This is from debate in the House of Commons. He called the female critic feeble-minded. And when he was asked if he was going to be running for leader 10 years ago—by the way, this is when he was using taxpayers' money to run for leader of the—his party; in fact, it was, I think, Charles Adler who talked about him sponging off the taxpayers—what was his response? He said he was going to give a—and this is a quote—quote, a woman's answer. It's a fickle kind of thing, unquote. So he's not only against a woman's right to choose, I think that raises serious questions about whether in the year 2015 someone with that kind of attitude should be part of leading this province.

Now, okay, you may be saying, that was the House of Commons, that was a different Leader of the Opposition. And I know, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to keep up with the various transformations of the Leader of the Opposition. You know, there was the MLA and Cabinet minister. By the way, he quit as EMO minister going into the '97 flood. He quit and ran federally in the '97 flood, in the middle of it. Didn't get elected, by the way. He then ran for leader of the PC Party nationally. He quit that party as well. He became a Member of Parliament and he put—sent a letter to Stephen Harper saying that he actually didn't want to be included in the Cabinet. Yeah, right.

So it's hard to keep up with the various different versions, but let's not forget it's not just what he said and did when he was a Member of Parliament. When it came to Bill 18, Mr. Speaker, in this House, what did he say? He called it a public relations stunt. Given his record on social issues, was it any surprise that he stood in this place with every single Conservative member and voted against protecting gay and lesbian kids against bullying? Shame on him. Shame on members opposite.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing I've learned with the Leader of the Opposition, it doesn't end there. You know, we know that the Stephen Harper government didn't want to have an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. One of his staff people actually agreed with that. What did he do? He fired that staff person. This is the Leader of the Opposition.

Let's look up what he's done in terms of working people. He's consistently voted against minimum wage increases. He voted against EI benefits for parental leave and giving people the right to refuse unsafe work. This is his voting record.

And today he just got up again, put on the record that he is opposed to having project management agreements, Mr. Speaker. I want to put on the record that it wasn't a socialist that brought that into the province. It was Duff Roblin in the 1960s. And ever since that day, we've had labour peace with Manitoba Hydro because of the project management agreement. Now, by the way, just in case people think this is an esoteric debate, when he was Member of Parliament, he tried to hold up federal funding for the floodway expansion because he didn't agree with project management agreements. That is the record of the Leader of the Opposition.

Now, he's also opposed recognition of Louis Riel as a father of Confederation. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if he goes to the MMF convention and says that. He's on record as opposing recognizing the fact that—what we know now to be historical fact, that this province was brought into Confederation because of the vision of Louis Riel, because of the vision of the Metis. That is the Leader of the Opposition.

But, you know, it gets tougher and tougher, because when you keep talking about who he is and what he is, what you start seeing is his values are not Manitobans' values.

But I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, what's increasingly obvious with the member—Leader of the Opposition—and I'm being kind—he is becoming increasingly a stranger to the truth. And I've got to say, he sure likes to lecture people about integrity. And, you know, coming from someone whose biggest, you know, legacy when he was EMO minister was to hire an EMO director who I believe was—I'm not sure if he was his campaign manager, but came right out of Portage—who ended up being fired for travel expense claim fraud. I mean, I suppose he would have made a good Conservative

senator. That member opposite has no business lecturing anyone in terms of integrity.

Now, I want to put on the record, by the way, to give you some sense of just how twisted the Leader of the Opposition's view when it comes to integrity, Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record I've spent a lot of time with the RCMP recently. I was at the Regimental Ball in Thompson congratulating the RCMP who received an international award for community policing. Now, the Leader of the Opposition, I'm sure he's probably out now, going to have a press conference saying that I've been spending a lot of time with the RCMP recently.

Mr. Speaker, I've got to say this, and I'll be careful how I say it. There's sleazy politics, and what we've seen from the Leader of the Opposition, even the phrase sleazy politics doesn't apply. For him to phone the RCMP and then hold a press conference afterwards and say that the RCMP is having a probe into flood equipment, you know what, I can't even say on the record anything other than the fact that that is despicable on his part. And, if he wants to talk about integrity or lack thereof, look in the mirror because that kind of personal attack on the integrity of others, unfounded, has no place in this Legislature. And that is not the kind of person you want to be premier.

I want to actually put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition, particularly when it comes to flood equipment, I can understand why he wouldn't understand a thing about what you deal with in a flood. And what I find particularly despicable with that leader is for somebody that quit before the '97 flood to dismiss the decisions that were made in three major floods I think shows how little he gets it.

What I noticed, by the way, Mr. Speaker, he started making unfounded attacks about a \$5-million equipment purchase that actually did go to tender; it was not untendered, and no tender was issued. No, never once did he put on the record that he was wrong in terms of that.

He made accusations of conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker. I went to the commissioner. The commissioner said that the key argument proved that there was no conflict of interest in terms of the campaign contribution, not once. He put on the record rather bizarre comments about cracking safes and, you know, he was talking about kickbacks. Again, completely unfounded.

And you know, for members opposite, I've got to tell you one thing. You know what, that Leader of the Opposition may try and hide behind parliamentary privilege, and he's an expert at that, because you notice one thing: he'll say one thing in this House, but when he steps out, he won't say anything else. But I find it particularly galling when what he does, Mr. Speaker, is what he does is he completely distorts the facts.

I want to put on the record, in 2010 there was a purchase he took great offence to. We bought flood equipment, and I want to point out, in 2010 we had a forecast of a potential for a major flood. And we did not have time to go to a tender. That's been clear. So what did we do, Mr. Speaker? The departments involved in procuring phoned the known suppliers. There were three of them—three of them. And one could provide it, cheapest price, actually, on time. One, similar price, would have been provided a couple months later. One was nearly three times the price and would have taken 18 months to provide. So based on that, the shopping around, what did the government do? It purchased the equipment.

And by the way, the equipment it purchased indeed were Tiger Dams, which are used internationally. And at different times we've purchased Aqua Dams, Mr. Speaker, HESCO dams. Why? Because when you're in a flood and Manitobans need the help, you provide it. And that's what we did.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, what would you expect from a Leader of the Opposition who I think is increasingly detached from reality? You know, he is someone that clearly doesn't understand the most important elements. I mentioned the social issues. I mean, I've said this before, you know. He—this is the party of the '90s across the way: 1990s with economic policy and the 1890s on social issues.

* (16:00)

But let's talk about economic policy for a moment, and, Mr. Speaker, you know, he always shows great disdain for people—you know, he goes after people in this House saying, oh, but you know, you don't have an economics degree. Actually, I do, and that kind of arrogance is appalling, because has he ever looked in a mirror? He has no background in economics. You know, you don't need to be an economist to figure out that something is working in Manitoba.

What is working? Well, let's look at it and look at the alternative under the Conservatives. One—

hydro development. Let's understand one thing: We have 98 per cent non-fossil-fuel-based hydro. I don't know if members opposite have noticed, but there is a big issue with climate change, and I know they were doubters, Mr. Speaker, you know, the dinosaurs that they are politically, they doubted that climate change was real. Does anybody not believe that climate change is real now? Is it not one of the biggest challenges we're facing in our generation? What is our biggest advantage in Manitoba? It's our hydroelectric power.

The Keeyask dam, which they've opposed, which their critic said they would jam the breaks on, was just recognized as one of the top 10 green infrastructure projects in the country. Why? Because it's part of the climate change solution. And I know the only green that members opposite have are those Saskatchewan Roughrider T-shirts that they like to pop out, Mr. Speaker, the Rider pride party across the way. But what it means for us: it's green jobs. That's fundamental. It's fundamental because we are actually going to take this new economy, we're going to work on improving the environment; we're going to be leaders in climate change as we have been over the last decade, and we are going to create jobs.

What did we announce in the Throne Speech? Further extensions. We've got the innovative things happening with First Nations, but let's put on the record, what would members opposite do? Since the 1980s, they've opposed building hydro; they would use natural gas-fired plants. That is greenhouse gas producing fossil fuel, which we don't even produce in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, why is the growth happening? It's—[interjection] Why not, says the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer). You know what? He probably personally fired-up the coal plant. You know, they want to get rid of hydro development because they are stuck in the past.

Let's talk about our investments in infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I think one of the—I think that stone hit a few dogs over there, rhetorically speaking. What is their position on infrastructure investment? I love the Leader of the Opposition—he actually mentioned infrastructure in his speech, because I want to put on the record the trick question I ask after I asked what hydro development we saw under the Tories in the last 50 years? Actually, it's a trick question—none. Is what major project did they build when they were in government? You know what the funny part is, even they can't think of one. They didn't build a thing, and

why would they? I want to give you some sense what the construction budget was when we came into office, what we inherited from them; it was about \$90 million. The total budget of the department, including maintenance, totalled about \$170 million.

This past year, what did we hit? I'm talking about highways, roads, bridges, Mr. Speaker—over \$700 million. For members opposite, and this is not a Jim Prentice comment here—do the math. We're investing more in infrastructure.

Now, let's do some more math. The Throne Speech, which they've come out and said they're opposed, we announced yesterday a major increase in funding. Well, and you know, the member for Portage says, oh, you know, we promised. That's—what—you know what? Maybe he should take a drive on Highway 1 when he goes back home and check out the work we've done on the highway system. Maybe take a drive to Saskatchewan border while he's at it—this is the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), and they can get out a little bit and see the difference we're making, but we announced today four new intersections—four intersections that will replace traffic lights with state-of-the-art, you know, interchanges. And I want to put on the record: Why did that happen? Because this government had the guts to take on the infrastructure deficit.

Now, I know it bothers members opposite, but we have—we had the validation today from the truckers association. They see it. They drive on those roads. They see how important it is for driving our economy. We had the Heavy Construction Association. I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, they have been arguing, they wanted a six-point commitment from us, and every time I get together with Chris Lorenc, every time we have a public meeting, he points out we're the only province in Canada that's six out of six in terms of what they have been calling for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members opposite clearly don't get it. When you invest, it's smart. The Leader of the Opposition trotted out the old, you know, debt, you know, one-trick pony. And, you know, that—I want to put aside for a moment what he's really talking about. But, you know, I'll put on the record we backed it up with a revenue source and we have now increased \$3.5 billion. So the real question, members opposite, is the Leader of the Opposition, you know, he's said he'll get rid of the 1 per cent. I think it was—I'm not sure if it's the first year or the—in his first term; it kind of shifts. You know, it's a bit

like when it comes to major flood infrastructure. But the bottom line, members opposite are in government, none of this will happen. For the people living in Winnipeg, the people living Dawson Trail, you want to see improvements in the Perimeter Highway, it's only the NDP will deliver. And it's not just here. My area, northern Manitoba, you want to see major investments that are taking place in terms of Highway 280, 373, 374, 391, access roads into Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, into Tataskweyak Cree Nation. And we're going to be moving on areas like Moose Lake. Stay tuned.

I don't have my crystal ball with me, but I can see that the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), maybe today was actually interchange day. I think there may be another day coming soon where we're going to be having bypass day in terms of announcements, Mr. Speaker. Because for members opposite, especially the, you know, the sort of the faux Leader of the Opposition—and when I say faux, you know, I've got to say that—that sort of oozing of faux sincerity in parts of his speech—we all know he's been just lining up to move into room 203, sizing up the drapes, getting everything moving. But I've got a message for the Leader of the Opposition, and that is this Throne Speech sends a clear message, and that is the NDP in this province, just like our economy, we're alive and well, and we're going to take the fight to you and to every single constituency. We're going to point out—and I mentioned this earlier. You get two choices ahead—well, maybe three. You know, I'm not sure with the Liberals right now if they're really a choice. They seem to be—I was going to mention that they seem to be kind of following the Ontario model: privatize liquor today, hydro tomorrow.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'll put on the record with the Liberals, you know, their big thing seems to be Uber, and maybe they should talk to people who work in the taxi industry, the limousine industry. How about our bus drivers who will tell you that Uber is trying to illegally supplant buses? And, you know, that's the Liberal position. I know the Liberals want to get rid of the payroll tax. I actually remember Gary Filmon wanted to get rid of it too. He said he'd get rid of it in five years, and I guess, as Gary Doer used to point out, he just never said which five years. That'd be a massive cut for the biggest employers in terms of taxes. Where would they make that money up? I mean, seems to me that there's a competition going on between the Conservatives and the Liberals as to who can be most right-wing.

Well, I've got a pretty simple proposition to people in this province. The Leader of the Opposition, I can sum it up in three words the kind of politics he represents. He is a Stephen Harper Conservative. Ran with Stephen Harper, served with Stephen Harper, and I'm not going to get into some of the people who say he's more right-wing than Stephen Harper. I'm not sure that's possible. I actually think a lot of people in this province are going to be asking the question: Why would we vote in the Leader of the Opposition who's a Stephen Harper Conservative when we just voted them out federally?

And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, because I want to conclude on this, I could have given my entire speech—I think I gave about half of it—on what the Leader of the Opposition has said. I want to say that I've actually suggested we get an ad ready, and I think we should go to Ripley's Believe it or Not!, and we should ask if we can actually borrow the, you know, the phraseology, because I actually think if we did any ads—these are not negative ads. These would be ads based on the words and the political views of the Leader of the Opposition.

* (16:10)

The problem in this province is I talk to people who don't believe it. They don't believe me when I say, you know, he hates Halloween. Course, the obvious question's what else he hates. We have a list in our caucus. You know, his comments about infidel atheists, but when it comes to socialists, economic issues, the Leader of the Opposition and the PCs just aren't in tune with the values of Manitoba in 2015 and going into 2016.

So I know the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is a Stephen Harper Conservative. I want to put on the record I've never been more proud to be a New Democrat. And I got to tell you I've seen a few speeches from the throne over the years. This has to rate, to my mind, as the best speech for the throne I've ever seen because it's about smart investments. It's about a progressive agenda, an inclusive agenda, which includes all of our ethnocultural diversity, that's committed to the women of this province in terms of services and equality.

I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, that we are a government that is concerned about equality, that we're not in it, like members opposite, for the now interests of the few. We're there to build the province. I'm proud of the fact that our caucus represents every single region of this province,

represents the ethnocultural diversity, and that was reflected in our Throne Speech. And, you know, always—you never ceases to amaze me. No matter how many years members opposite have been out of government, they still think they have a divine right to rule. They still haven't gotten over '99 and 2003 and 2007 and 2011. And that kind of arrogance was probably no more visible today than in the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition. They still believe they have a divine right to govern in this province, that somehow, the NDP, we're just sort of a historic aberration.

Well, I've got news for them. Take a look at our caucus. Take a look at our agenda, and you see the hopes and aspirations of Manitobans reflected, not just in who and what we are, but the vision we've put forth. And, yes, it's a vision, but it's a vision that's achievable over the next five years. And I know the Leader of the Opposition has said, oh, you know, it's an election document. Absolutely. I look forward to fighting an election on that progressive agenda that speaks for all Manitobans, and, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition and to members opposite, you know what? You could continue with the personal attacks. You continue in terms of, you know, the degree of lack of integrity I've seen, but you know what? Let's make the next election about the vision for the province.

I will say hands down, not only should the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite not count out the New Democratic Party, never count us out. We're going out to every single constituency, and I look forward to the fight, and I have every confidence on April 19th Manitobans will vote for the future, forward, not back, Mr. Speaker, for the NDP, the get-'er-done party against the PCs, the shut-'er-down party.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm very pleased to rise today to speak—[interjection]—pleased, relieved. Well, thank you.

You know, Mr. Speaker, since I was elected in 2011, it's just over four years ago, and I have been very fortunate to represent the 'citizens' of Brandon West and it is humbling every day when the days that I go back to Brandon to speak to people there, to learn about the things that they're going through, to ask them the questions and hear their responses and find out what they're having difficulty with and to represent them here. So it's been a fabulous learning experience for me, and I really would like to thank people in Brandon West for giving me this

opportunity. It is something that I would encourage many people to do, and it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I hope to have this experience again after the next election, but we'll leave that up to the people in Brandon West, and to the volunteers there that help you along the way. It's very—just humbling and interesting and encouraging to see how much the volunteers believe in you and how much they—work they will do for you for 'nittle'—little or no reward, but they want to be part of a team, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we've been working on on this side of the House and what we have here and what we don't see across the way.

Mr. Ted Marcelino, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Because as we've been travelling around Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker—and I've been all over Manitoba, north, south, east, west, Winnipeg, of course, lots of places in Manitoba that I hadn't been before and learning from Manitobans what they need, learning from Manitobans what they would like to see in the future, learning about the opportunities that Manitoba has for the future that has been ignored time and again by this NDP government.

And, you know, in northern areas, I heard of promises made from this government not only in the last election but in the previous election that, yes, we'll fix that road, we'll pave that road, and, yes, we'll replace that bridge, and then the election gets done and you never see the member again and you never see that promise be fulfilled. So again they make—the NDP makes that promise and it doesn't come to fruition.

So we see—we saw that again in the Throne Speech, lots of promises that we know this government isn't going to be able to fulfill. They haven't a hope in fulfilling these promises, lots of opportunity in Manitoba, but unlike the NDP we have actually listened to Manitobans around the province and we can see what they need and what they want to change.

You know, prior to the last election, as we went door knocking and as we listened to what people had to say and as we listened to what the NDP candidates said and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said—at that time he said, it was nonsense that he was going to raise the PST. And, of course, we know now that not only had they planned to raise the PST prior—they knew about that prior to the election. They'd made the promise they weren't going to raise it. They promised not to raise it, but they had also prior to the election

not only researched raising it by 1 per cent they'd also researched raising it by 2 per cent.

And not only that, we subsequently found out in Public Accounts that the Deputy Minister of Finance also knew, so the minister of Finance knew how to bring in the HST. So they'd also researched that, what other tax regime they could impose on Manitobans without consulting, taking the vote away from Manitobans. And that's what I hear time and time again is that Manitobans are not only upset about the broken promise on the sales tax increase; they are also upset that the right to vote on that increase was removed by this NDP government, just taken away from them. Their right to vote on was taken away.

And we saw that today. As I was driving this morning, I listened to CJOB. The Premier was on there with all the promises there, and then there was an opportunity after the Premier had left—I guess he didn't want to take the calls; I'm sure he's a busy man—for people to call in and comment on that. And every single caller, in fact, the staff on the radio station was shocked that it was every single caller opposed what the Premier had said, that did not believe the Premier's promises, that were upset that they lied to Manitobans prior to the last election and raised the PST and that they took away the right to vote. Without a single exception, every caller was opposed to that, and the staff was quite shocked by that.

I think that there was no support out there whatsoever for callers for the Premier that—this morning, and we do see that around the province. It's quite sad to see because one of the things that I found in this job that we do a lot of is we—when we listen to constituents and they call us with their problems, we try to help them navigate the civil service, the bureaucracy. That is really what 90 per cent of the work is out in the constituency, and the questions we get are—range from fairly simple to very complex, and we do our best to help those constituents, and it's very rewarding when you're able to help those constituents. But sometimes you hit the brick wall of this NDP government and you just can't do it.

I had another one this morning that called me, a senior that her daughter had done her taxes and they missed applying for the property tax credit that was promised by this government, promised that it was going to be—come off all the seniors. Education taxes were going to come off the tax rolls. Of course, they didn't fulfill that province—promise. But they had

missed the filing deadline, and her question to me is, you know, what can we do? Can we apply for it on next year's taxes? And, you know, it's not easy to find from this government.

* (16:20)

We've had to actually print out the forms for application off of the Internet and get them to people because they can't find the forms for that application, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, because this government hides everything. So the response, unfortunately, to that poor senior that's trying to make ends meet, from this government, is a big no. Once you miss the deadline, from this government, this government tells that senior, no, you can't have your money. That money belongs to that senior, but the government tells her no.

Isn't that sad? This money belongs to that poor elderly lady, and she can't get it. They kept it in their pockets and they're spending it willy-nilly all over the province as they see fit. But she needs it to make her ends meet, to pay her bills, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. Isn't that sad that this government keeps saying no to seniors? So sad, very sad, when we see how this government treats people.

You know, I do like to watch movies, films, and during one of the movies, there was one of the characters said, you know, the biggest part about—the most important part about a promise is knowing that you can keep it. I thought, yes, that's quite true. And this government knew—they went out in the last election knowing not only that they could not keep their promise but they were lying to each and every Manitoban. So it's about trust, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

We know they're lying now. We know they're lying about pretty much everything that was in the Throne Speech, so pick and choose. Which are the lies? Well, must be all of them, because we just can't believe anything this government says.

And then I listen to the previous speaker, and you know, the personal attacks were quite astounding, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. This from a member who likes to quote the character played by Dan Whitney. He quoted him several times in his speech. It's a redneck term, you know. So Dan Whitney plays Larry the Cable Guy, a sexist, misogynistic, racist character that this member is proud to quote. Isn't that sad, that that's how—who this member from Thompson chooses to quote? But

perhaps he identifies with him. I don't know, but that's the character that that individual plays.

So and then I listened to him, and he said, he referred to taxpayers as a revenue source. I'd never heard it quite put that way. I thought that taxpayers were members of society, members of, you know, citizens of Manitoba, but no, this member and this government only sees them as a revenue source. That is all that that person is good for, revenue source for this government so they can extract as much revenue as possible, turn down seniors like the one I heard about this morning on the tax credits and just spending it however they wish for their favourite pet projects.

You know, they used to talk about lean government. They had, several times, during a budget or Throne Speech, they would talk about a committee they were going to create to investigate lean government to report back. I don't see any of those reports anymore—don't even see a reference to that anymore. They've thrown that away. Not even a consideration that they might have some restraints, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

And then, you know, we saw a rebellion not that long ago. And indeed, now, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wasn't part of the rebellion, but I think he did run in the leadership and he talked about this Throne Speech as being one of the best. So, if he had been leader, would there have been a better or worse Throne Speech? I don't know, but he still loves this one, I guess.

But then we saw some of the other—the members—indeed, the member from Fort Rouge talked about the Premier (Mr. Selinger). And her quote, Mr. Speaker, I quote from her, it says: It is because we can no longer work with a Premier who refuses to hear us, end quote, because that's what the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) said about the Premier.

So, you know, there's other quotes here that I see. The member from Seine River who is leaving the Legislature, she served Manitoba well, the member says, quote, what can I say is that certainly in recent months it's become clear that if you are in position where you support the point of view of the Premier that your priorities and your projects move up the queue ahead of what was once a government plan and what would be indeed the priorities of Manitobans and what Manitobans need, end quote.

Very sad to see, Mr. Speaker. And, again, we have another one from the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) that said, quote, and, unfortunately, our concerns that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has become more concerned about remaining leader than necessarily doing things in the best 'intrinsic'-interest of the province. End quote.

There's many other quotes from members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And, indeed, it does reflect what I hear from Manitobans and it does reflect what I've observed of this NDP government, is that they are not there in Manitoba's best interest. They have long since left that. They are there in the interests of remaining in power, rewarding friends and doing anything they can to remain in power, saying anything they can to remain in power.

And we saw the personal attacks today, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker; sad to watch that that's what that member has lowered himself to, and I'm sure we'll see many more of those as we go closer into the election, whenever that election might be, whenever this government might choose to call the election. I know we have sort of a fixed election date. It's actually more of a moveable—we had a fixed election date in October, but now that's, I guess, a moveable fixed election date because the government changed the law and moved it to another time because they could.

Other provinces—they're in election mode right now. They went right after the federal election. But, no, this government wants to extend their mandate as long as possible, and we know that that's not usually in the best interests of a government, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. We know that that's when problems arise and they have, indeed, arisen for this government.

You know, I—I'm a business person, and Manitobans pride themselves on being smart shoppers. We don't see that in this government. They are not smart shoppers. They have their tender process that they often ignore. They reward contracts without tender, or they extend tenders, again without going back to the market to see if they can get a price—better price. And then some of those contracts, indeed, if they're untendered or tendered, they hide them. They hide those contracts from Manitobans so Manitobans can't see how their money is being spent because Manitobans, according to the member, are a revenue source and maybe they don't, in his mind, deserve to know how their money is spent. But indeed they do.

You know, I look at how I compare businesses, our business that I still operate in once in a while when I am fortunate enough to spend some time there with our great staff, and I compare the things that that business buys to the things that the government buys. And I'm—I was shocked when I met with human resources, and they went through all the government plans and protocols and what was available. And I look at the insurance that's available, the health insurance that's available through the government buying. Of course, you would think with the volume the government buys that that would be the best. And, indeed, what I found is that no, the insurance we have through our company is less expensive and covers more.

How can that be, when the government has this buying volume, that they can't get a better deal than private companies in Manitoba? And I have to have a government cellphone. I'm very fortunate the government provides me with a cellphone, and I look at that plan. And I look at the plan that we have in our company, and I could save \$30 a month with our cellphone plan in the company, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. But the government prides itself on being a good buyer, smart shopper. Obviously, they're not. If I can—if I could—of course, the government won't allow me to use our company plan, but I could save 20 to 30 dollars a month. That's a lot of money over a lot of cellphones over a lot of government employees that this government squanders.

So those are just some of the small things and how much more are they going to draw down from Manitobans for their misguided programs?

The minister talked about PST. Of course, I—as I mentioned, this government lied about increasing the PST and did so even though they knew full well they were going to increase that PST. And they promised—they promised a lot of things with PST, that it was going to go here, it was going to go there. Finally, they settled on, well, maybe we'll spend it on infrastructure, and then when we look back, well, no, they didn't spend it on infrastructure. In fact, they kited it off to other departments and underspent on infrastructure by, you know, billions of dollars and continue to have a problem with that regard.

* (16:30)

And—but there was a pressure, I know, on the government to make sure they could spend infrastructure money, so there's a couple of roads to nowhere that were paved. There's one in Brandon. It's—people are quite shocked by where it is. It's sort

of a frontage road, but it's not a frontage road, it's a back lane, because the frontage road exists on the Trans-Canada Highway, and then this is paved behind the businesses. It'll be—I guess if they ever move the Trans-Canada Highway around Brandon, it might be a frontage road, but it's a mile of paved road that is a back lane. And it ends in a machinery road, road to nowhere.

I know there's another road to nowhere in CentrePort. And you know, you go and you drive around CentrePort, you see a lot of things, and they talked about the rail that they're going to put in there and this rail park they're going to have. Well, there's a paved road in that rail park now that's going to be torn up. It's just paved, it's going to be torn up for the underground that has to go in there. And we know now that they have more plans for that area, so probably more roads will be torn up.

And so here's what we have. We have them spending the PST money, making it look like they're providing infrastructure, but indeed, paving roads to nowhere. Sad to watch, Mr. Speaker, but this was going to be the lean government, right, and apparently they've long since given up that mandate.

So you know, I look back on my brief time in the Legislature here and all the promises that I saw from this government, and seems to me that the first year they broadened the sales tax, put it on a lot of items that it wasn't applied on previously, like insurance. And they promised that that was all going to go to infrastructure. Of course not one penny, not one dime of that broadening of the PST went to infrastructure.

And then there was a minister—that vehicle registration fee; that was going to go up. Highest increase we've seen in Manitoba. All of that increase was going to go to infrastructure was the government's promise. And again, not one single penny, not one single dime went from that vehicle registration fee to infrastructure. Another broken promise by this government.

So then what else did they do? Well, they raised the sales tax by 1 per cent. Isn't that shocking? Fourteen per cent it went up, but you know, Manitobans look at that, we look—I spoke to a friend from Saskatchewan, he goes, how high is your sales tax? That can't be that high, you're not telling me the truth. Well no, it is, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. It's sad. But they promised that that increase was every, every penny, every dime, every nickel, all of it was

going to go to increased spending on infrastructure. Again, another broken promise.

So I guess when I look at this Throne Speech, I have to assume that everything in there is going to be a broken promise from this NDP government. We see their failures on education. We see their failures in child and family services. We see their failures in justice. We see their failures in health care. And it's really quite astounding how often a government can fail, and this one is, I think this is breaking records, this government.

You know, early on, also, we had another strike at Brandon University. It cost a lot of students a lot of money, cost a lot of parents a lot of money, cost a lot of professors a lot of money. It cost the university money. And this government did nothing. They saw it coming, they sat on their hands, they did nothing. We asked and we pleaded for—with them to intervene to do something. But they did nothing.

They left the students out there. Those students lost time in university. They lost education. Some of them never ever returned to university. This was their one shot. This was their one shot at a degree that they could put it together, the time and the money, invest it in Brandon University, which is a great institution, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that this government ignored, allowed to go on strike time and again.

And it's taken many years for that institution to try to recover, I think, from what I see now, with Dr. Fearon and his staff, they are on the road to recovery. I hope so. It's taken some time to restore the confidence of the rural areas that their students can go there and not be denied an education like this government denied education to those students.

So, slowly but surely, it's becoming an institution that we all love and we'll be able to show the love for again, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, but this government ignored Brandon University and ignored the students and ignored the strike and allowed it to go on and on and on, damaged the university and damaged those students. One of the very sad, sad occurrences in this government's last mandate, abandoned those students, just very disgusting to watch. And, you know, it's unfortunate when I see those comments from across the floor. They would not do anything. They wouldn't talk to them, they wouldn't do anything to help those students.

So it's quite sad when I hear the member from Brandon East, I guess he mentioned the word fascist. Is that—is he referring to me? That would be a derogatory term, I would think, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and I'd encourage you to call him on it. *[interjection]* Ah, yes, apparently we've struck a chord there. He understands now.

So, you know, we see evidence time and time again that they were never going to intervene in the Brandon University strike. They had no intent to do so. They were going to leave the students hang there.

We see time and time again that they made promises that they have broken on the sales tax and on what they're going to spend that sales tax on, certainly not on infrastructure, because time and again they underspend in that department and we see that again. But they're saying now—this NDP government is saying, well, trust us—trust us—we may not have quite done what we intended, they said last time, but, you know, we'll promise—we'll promise—we'll do it again. But I—you know, I think Manitobans are probably onto them now, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, that they know that those promises aren't going to be fulfilled by the NDP.

We heard our leader talk about open government, and I'm shocked and astounded by how closed this government is. The—they don't seem to understand that when you tell people about what you're doing, when you provide the evidence in the financials and in the open data that is apparent in other governments, that then you get more trust from the populace, from Manitobans.

But, no, they close down data as much as they can. They black it out. When we ask for information, you get page after page of lines, black lines, through all of the text, redacted, as it's called, and that's what this government provides to its citizens because they don't want them to know the truth.

Other governments are moving to an open-data platform where any taxpayer, any Manitoban, anybody can go online and access government information and see how their tax dollars are spent and learn, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, because there are things that you can learn from governments and there are things you can learn from open data, but this government closes everything down.

And I've spoken about open data in Public Accounts, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, and from the minister that's there at the time and I know the Finance Minister has been there and, with a quizzical

look on his face, doesn't quite understand, and the deputy minister, I know, understands about open data, and I see the deputy ministers and the—acting—or the assistant deputy ministers and the staff nodding their heads, yes, open data, open data, that would be a good thing for this government to do, because other governments are doing it and we see the benefits, but, no, this government is going the other direction, shutting down as much data as they can.

You know, it's quite sad when I hear health-care stories. We've talked about this government's failure in health care. I hear about the problems with enough operating time around the province. We see that this government is throttling down operating-room time, not making it available, and that is one of the key things that we need in Manitoba is that availability, because we have—in some places, anyway—we have the nurses, we have the health-care aides, we have the doctors, we have the surgeons, and they're looking for operating-room time and the patients are looking for operating-room time. They're driving all over the province to try to find that operating-room time, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker.

* (16:40)

And then we see the failures in diagnosis. We've seen some horrific failures that have come to light over the past several months, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker—a woman that had a double mastectomy that was misdiagnosed; other patients whose cancer diagnosis is missed, and to devastating results.

Our own family has experienced such an occurrence from this NDP health-care system—our own daughter. Her diagnosis was missed on a kidney disease. We know now that had they caught that diagnosis, had they, indeed, done a simple test, they could have caught the disease very early on, and we know now that she would not have had to have it. She would not have had to go on dialysis at a cost, I believe, of some \$80,000 a year to this government. We know she would not have had to have a kidney transplant but for the failure of this NDP health-care system.

And we know now that her transplant has failed, so she needs another transplant, but for the failure of this NDP health-care system that could have caught it early. So she has to live for that—she has to live with that for the rest of her life, the failure of the health-care system to catch that diagnosis.

We've had apologies from the health-care system. Apologies don't make her any healthier. I know we can have a kidney immediately, but the operating room time is not available in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

She'll have to wait for a minimum of a year, probably have to go on dialysis, and we know last time she was on dialysis there was a time where she was not healthy enough to receive a kidney transplant. Devastating for a parent to watch, to know that you can't help your child, can't help her become healthy, can't replace her kidney because this health-care system has failed.

And that's our story, Mr. Speaker. It's quite a sad one, and we're going through it again. She's very strong. She's much stronger than I am. And we have a kidney. We have several available to us. We have friends; we have family that have all come forward. I have cousins that have offered, but we can't get the operating room time. She's going to have to wait at least a year with all the possible consequences that that implies. We've seen that from many other families in Manitoba, that this NDP health-care system has failed them. And, yes, they have to live with those consequences if they survive for the rest of their lives, and it's something that we're going to have to live with, and I know I put this at the feet of the NDP government. It is their fault.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my constituents again for letting me have the honour and the privilege of representing them here today. I think that's very important that we recognize the people that brought us to this place.

I also want to recognize the people of Iraq, Syria, and France. My thoughts and prayers are with all of those who lost their loved ones and had injuries by these terrible terrorist acts that we saw over the weekend. It was very hard-hitting and the images really affected me, and it was very upsetting to watch. You know, I thought about my friends and family over there, and I actually had some area students in Paris at the time and I was very relieved to find out they were okay. So it was a very hard weekend to watch that, but I have to say that I'm very proud today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I heard—I was at—a different announcement, but they asked our Premier (Mr. Selinger) about what our stance is on the Syrian refugees, and I'm very proud that Manitoba is going to be a beacon of hope for so many of those who've

had their lives destroyed, from all of those—those orphaned children, to many people who have literally had to just run with only everything on their back, and that's all they had. And they had to run, and their lives have been destroyed by this senseless violence. And I'm very happy that Manitoba is going to be accepting them and bringing them here, and we'll be working with them and, you know, they'll become a great part of our society and the fabric of Manitoba, which has been built on multiculturalism. So I'm really proud of our government for being very accepting and open and bringing in refugees.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is not just a document, but it's a vision for a better province, one that's growing in population and economic activity. The member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) was talking about how, you know, we could leave that 1 cent in everybody's pocket and, you know, they'd be able to spend it, but what good would that penny be when all of Brandon would be under water without the investments that this government has made? What good would that penny be in their pockets if they were underneath water?

We've spent over a billion dollars in flood mitigation and we're spending more. We doubled the floodway, protecting every community south of Winnipeg for one-in-700-year floods. And this is just one example how Manitobans can know that their government is here for them and that we're committed to front-line services that Manitobans have come to expect.

And what the member for Brandon said was a lack of understanding of the whole situation because to leave—the member for Brandon West saying that he would leave 1 cent in the—in people's pockets but ignore flood protection would absolutely destroy the economy of Brandon, and the economy of Manitoba, to be quite frank. Cutting the front-line services to pay for flood protection would have impacted all those Manitobans impacted by floods. That is their vision, Mr. Speaker. We've heard it over and over from them that they want to cut.

Just last week, the Leader of the Opposition had an alternative throne speech, and it was all about cuts. Now I understand he's out in the media today saying that he wants to start spending. I guess he started to see the light that, you know, you've got to start spending a little bit, because maybe he's going to vote for our Throne Speech, because, you know, he's realizing that it's about spending and being able

to protect communities and building for a future instead of all about cuts.

You know, we've chose a different path, Mr. Speaker. We've chosen a path that's about families. We've chosen a path about people, about steady growth, building and investing while protecting. The member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), just a few minutes ago when I was walking out of this Chamber, said, we need to get new material. And you know what I told him? We have new material—four new interchanges on the south end of the city. That's new material. We've got so much new material in our Throne Speech that even the Leader of the Opposition is going out and saying that he's changing his mind about his cuts and he wants to start spending. So the member for Emerson wants to talk about material? We've got lots of it, because this Throne Speech is as good as it gets. And it's a fantastic vision for Manitoba.

As you've heard in the Throne Speech, we're moving forward with projects that help every Manitoban. We will continue to make Manitoba a place for people to come, work, live and play, Mr. Speaker. The federal election was a clear message to—by—from Canadians and Manitobans that they want a plan to build. Their federal counterparts had the same plan that was just laid out last week by the Leader of the Opposition in his alternative throne speech of cuts, cuts, cuts. And you know what, I'm glad to see that they rejected, that Manitobans rejected it and Canadians rejected it. They rejected his extreme social views and they're going reject them again.

In the last election, we saw him with some of his extreme social views. Well, let's see, what does the Leader of the Opposition believe? Well, first of all, he doesn't believe that Louis Riel is one of the Fathers of Confederation, which, representing a huge Metis community in my area, is absolutely ridiculous that he would think that, Mr. Speaker, but you know, we see that he doesn't listen to facts and figures.

But he also has put on record in the House of Commons that he believes that those who support same-sex marriage are advocating for a significant social experiment. Absolutely ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. These are the kind of views that we would expect from a politician maybe 200 or 300 years ago, but this is the man who wants to be the leader of the province and be the Premier. Ad it's absolutely mind-boggling that Manitobans would put their trust in him, and I don't think that they will. I

think they're going to opt for a better vision, a vision of building this province, a vision of inclusiveness and a vision where all of us get lifted up at once, not where one—where some people get left behind underneath the Leader of the Opposition's vision.

The Leader of the Opposition's cuts and stoppage of the building was soundly rejected by Manitobans. We saw it in Winnipeg especially; they lost all their seats. You know, you look at what the Free Press reported, it said that Trudeau took a page from our Finance Minister when he was running in the election. Well, that's the plan that Manitobans voted for, Mr. Speaker. They voted for the plan that Trudeau took from our Finance Minister and from our party.

* (16:50)

I would like say I was shocked by the Leader of the Opposition to lay out the same plan that Harper did that everybody rejected. I would like to say I'm surprised but I'm not, Mr. Speaker. He's the same old leader that he always was and he only believes in cuts, that's all we hear from that side of the House is cut, cut, cut.

The Liberal member and his leader want to cut too. They want to cut \$450 million from the payroll tax. They want to have cab companies lose jobs and create part-time precarious employment for Uber drivers. They want to sell off the Liquor Control Commission, which takes away social responsibility and revenue, and it also will see a price increase, because where it's been privatized, the prices have gone up because the buying power has gone down.

How is the leader—how is the Liberal member going to pay for all of the promises that he's saying with \$450-million tax cut from the payroll tax? He has no—we see no plan from him for building. We see nothing about infrastructure. We see no way of funding anymore health care. It's just a totally different plan than what we've seen from the member opposite to be quite honest in a long time, but he seems to have changed his tune to a plan that actually is pretty much the same as the Leader of the Opposition. The two plans are very close to each other in cutting over half a billion dollars from the economy and from spending on things like health care and education and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Manitoba is a great place to raise a family and we've also been rated the best place in the country to do business, and we can see some of the results with having the lowest unemployment rate in

the country, Mr. Speaker. Things were not always as good as they are right now, and last week we heard the Leader of the Opposition's alternative throne speech. It was—I wasn't invited because it was done behind closed doors, so that's his vision of inclusiveness is to make sure you do it behind closed doors so nobody can question him. But what I did hear from his vision was cuts, cuts and more cuts.

Now he's backpedalling on that today in the media because he obviously realizes how great our plan is and he's saying, oh, no, no, wait, wait, wait, we're going to start spending now, Mr. Speaker. But he had nothing in it about building—nothing—all he talked about was cuts. The Leader of the Opposition as a Cabinet minister, he was part of the health-care cuts when nurses were being laid off, when teachers were cut and laid off, over 700 lost their job, 1,000 nurses were gone, and then, of course, he had a hand in selling MTS, went around telling everybody he wouldn't do it, took us from among the lowest rates to among the highest rates in the province. Unemployment was almost at 10 per cent underneath the Leader of the Opposition. Things were not as positive as they are now. Winnipeg was not building. Brandon was not building, our province was not building. In fact, people were leaving our province in record numbers.

I'm very happy that the Leader of the Opposition laid out his narrow view for Manitoba, because he admits in his own words that we will see the same reckless cuts if he's allowed to take the helm, a Manitoba that is not inclusive and where people are left behind. The Leader of the Opposition likes to talk a big game, but when he was in power he spent less on infrastructure than he took in on gas tax. He raised the gas tax and cut spending on the highways and roads in infrastructure. So his own words and his own actions show that he would rake in the gas tax again and spend less on roads than what we do.

We spent a billion dollars this year on infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and we're ramping it up even more. We've got a plan to continue to build this province, and I'm glad we're not listening to the Leader of the Opposition and his plan of taking us back to the 19—actually the 1800s. I want a better life for my son than I have, obviously I think that's what all of us want, and you know what, we're building to that. My son has a really good job in the construction industry in Manitoba because our industry is booming, our unemployment rate is low, and I'm so hard—I'm so proud that we have put people to work in this province and so many wonderful things have

been happening around this province, and it's been driven by stable growth and it's been also because of a caring and stable government that has done great things to make Manitoba a better place.

Our government has now pledged to start the process of moving rail lines outside the city. Just last year in my constituency a train derailed dangerously close to a house, landed in their backyard, luckily the oil tanker that was two cars away didn't come off the rails and it was just some construction material that spilled and the cleanup happened and then they had to replace the rail.

We're looking at a plan to remove the rail lines from the city. We would not see that under the Leader of the Opposition because his plans wouldn't have included CentrePort, which is going to allow us to move the railways out of the city. His plans would not see underpasses, which we've partnered with the city to build, that help us get around the trains and underneath the trains. But we wouldn't have that, we'd have longer wait-times waiting for trains because his plan has no money for building, no vision; it's all about cuts, Mr. Speaker.

It's not only a safety issue these—the rail lines being moved. I mean, you just look at Lac-Mégantic. It's not a far stretch. I live close enough to the tracks that under a tragedy like Lac-Mégantic it would have happened to my house. I live that close to the tracks. I cross them every day. And I'm very excited about the proposal that we have where we're going to look at moving the tracks outside of the city, taking oil tankers outside the city of Winnipeg for safety of all people in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

We're building thousands more child-care spaces in this Throne Speech. We've already built thousands for young families across the province, and we're going to build 12,000 more over the next seven years, Mr. Speaker, 12,000, taking everybody who wants a child-care space, allowing them to have child care. This is like universal health care, and this is what our government stands for, and that's what we're going to do. We're not going to freeze funding like they did. We're not going to cut spaces like they did, the opposition did, when they had the chance at the helm. That's what they decided to do when they were at the helm. And then they actually raised the parent—the fees that parents paid for child care. We have the second lowest rate outside of Quebec, and we're going to add spaces, and those spaces are going to be available to people at a very reasonable rate compared to anywhere else in this country. You can

pay double if you go to provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan and BC. We have a very reasonable plan.

What would the Leader of the Opposition do? He wants to privatize daycare. He said that he would privatize child care. You cannot build on the cuts that he's calling for, so my guess would be the same old, same old. We would see freezing and cuts. We would see less daycare spaces.

By extending Manitoba's province-wide infrastructure to more than \$10 billion through 2020, we're going to continue to build this province. And that's going to include having a lot of people at work, Mr. Speaker. Every project I saw this summer, people were working at that—at those construction sites: Pembina Highway being redone, bypass included; the Perimeter bridge being redone; the Perimeter being repaved. We're going to be doing four interchanges on the Perimeter Highway. That is going to be thousands of jobs just in that one area alone in the south end of the city.

By extending the infrastructure program, we're going to see a growing Manitoba that's going to secure us for the future. We're going to make sure that infrastructure for flood protection is also built. That's going to make sure that we don't end up with a disaster of epic proportions that the member opposite would surely see happen because he said he would take that 1 cent and give it back to people but allow them to go underwater because there's no flood mitigation plans from the members opposite.

We're not going to be cutting like the PCs and the Liberals call for. So we're going to be able to fund a new CancerCare facility in Manitoba, and we're going to be able to fund a new Pan Am Clinic, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be looking after families and expanding the fertility tax credit because we know that some people need some help on that, and we know that that's a good—a very good cause to help families in Manitoba, and we're going to expand that tax credit.

We also know that someone—that we all know someone who has had mental health issues in our lives. It's touched every one of our lives. And you cannot build the supports for mental health with the

cuts that the PCs and the Liberals are calling for. We are expanding mental health for youth in this province. During the last days of life, when my mother was sick and she was in the last days of her life, what you want for your loved one is to be comfortable, and that's why our government is investing in new hospice beds at Jocelyn House, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to invest in good health-care system.

We continue to invest in hospitals and the staffing at the hospitals, and those people that took care of my mother in her last days were fantastic to her. And that's what we want. It's a very different vision from when they were in and people were fleeing the province: less doctors, less nurses. People were leaving because there wasn't a vision for Manitoba. Nobody wanted to be—people were ready to leave. Over two Steinbachs left the province. And now we have people coming to the province. You look at my area. My area is actually going to be three Steinbachs in the next few years because of the growth that's going on in my area.

Mr. Speaker, I lost a dear friend to domestic violence, and our government is taking action with new legislation to ensure that people who need time away during that critical period when things are not going well that they can take that without losing their job. And, you know, giving them protections that they need. And the same goes for the caregivers of loved ones. We're going to make sure that they can take the time away, spend that time with their loved one and not be financially hit by that.

You know, we all in this House, I think every side will agree, that we owe our freedoms to the men and women who fought before us in all the wars. And we are going to remember the Armed Forces. Just—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

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