

Fifth Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

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<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	
<i>Vacant</i>	Lac du Bonnet	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 12, 2011

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 38—The Regional Health Authorities
Amendment Act (Accountability
and Transparency)**

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 38, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act (Accountability and Transparency) [*interjection*] seems to be a winner, Mr. Speaker; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé (responsabilisation et transparence), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Oswald: In the Throne Speech and budget speech, we confirmed that we will build on years of administrative streamlining and directing resources to front-line care, not creating regional health authorities that later need to be reduced in size, by introducing legislation to cap corporate spending in regional health authorities.

This bill will introduce these caps, along with several requirements to make regional health authorities even more accountable and open to the patients and communities they serve, by developing a declaration of patient values, ensuring a patient concern resolution process is in place, mandating accreditation, developing quality and safety indicators for facilities, Mr. Speaker, and posting publicly several key regional health authority reports, including annual reports, audited financial statements, strategic plans, community health assessments, corporate costs, CEO expenses, accreditation reports and quality and safety indicators, the most comprehensive approach of this nature.

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

PETITIONS

PTH 5—Reducing Speed Limit

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

These—this is the reasons for this petition:

Concerns continue to be raised about the number of motor vehicle accidents at the intersection of PTH No. 5 and PR 276 at the intersection of PETH No. 5 and PR 68.

The Rural Municipality of Ste. Rose and the town of Ste. Rose have both raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about the current speed limits on this portion of PTH No. 5 in the vicinity of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Other stakeholders include the Ste. Rose General Hospital, Ste. Rose and Laurier fire departments, East Parkland Medical Group and the Ste. Rose and District Community Resource Council. They have all suggested that lowering the current 100-kilometre-per-hour speed limit on the portion of PTH No. 5 may help reduce the potential for collisions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider the importance of reducing the speed limit on PTH No. 5 to 80 kilometres an hour in the vicinity of the town of Ste. Rose from the west side of the Turtle River Bridge to the south side of the access to the Ste. Rose Auction Mart to help better protect motorists' safety.

And this petition is signed by D. Houle, K. Geenen, G. Janssen and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Auto Theft–Court Order Breaches

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

On December 11th, in 2009, in Winnipeg, Zdzislaw Andrzejczak was killed when the car that he was driving collided with a stolen vehicle.

The death of Mr. Andrzejczak, a husband and a father, along with too many other deaths and injuries involving stolen vehicles, was a preventable tragedy.

Many of those accused in fatalities involving stolen vehicles were previously known to police and identified as chronic and high-risk car thieves who had court orders against them.

Chronic car thieves pose a risk to the safety of all Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all court orders for car thieves are vigorously monitored and enforced.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider ensuring that all breaches of court orders on car thieves are reported to police and vigorously prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Mitchell, D. Peters, C. Deveau and thousands of other concerned Manitobans.

Convicted Auto Thieves–Denial of MPI Benefits

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In Manitoba, a car thief convicted of stealing a vehicle involved in a car accident is eligible to receive compensation and assistance for personal injury from Manitoba Public Insurance.

Too many Manitoba families have had their lives tragically altered by motor vehicle accidents involving car thieves and stolen vehicles.

It is an injustice to victims, their families and law-abiding Manitobans that MPI premiums are used to benefit car thieves involved in those accidents.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Justice deny all MPI benefits to a person for injuries received in an accident if he or she is convicted of stealing a motor vehicle involved in the accident.

And this petition is signed by S. Nussey, B. Worden, R. Skelton and many, many more fine Manitobans.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding and Ice Jams Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Today is Manitoba Day, and the nation's focus is on our province as we face a natural disaster of unprecedented proportions.

The enhanced capacity that has been achieved on the Portage Diversion has allowed us to hold off the controlled release so far. Our officials are assessing the expected inflows and capacity of the diversion system hour to hour to determine when a controlled release will be required. Our objective is to delay the controlled release as long as is safely possible to allow us for as much time as possible for people to prepare. An update on the newest information is expected very shortly.

In the meantime, crews and Canadian Forces continue to work to shore up the Assiniboine dikes and protect vulnerable homes. In total, there are approximately 1,000 Canadian Forces soldiers and reservists assisting with the floodfighting efforts across the province.

Mobilization of all available equipment and resources for deployment to priority areas continues. All provincial sandbags are operating at full capacity and producing about 80,000 sandbags per day for each machine. In addition, the City of Winnipeg is running two machines to support efforts to protect homes.

Forecasters have assessed the impacts of this week's significant rain in western Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan, and yesterday revised upwards the forecast for the Assiniboine and some of its tributaries. This rainfall is directly contributing to crests on the Assiniboine and would prompt another higher crest on the Qu'Appelle River at St-Lazare. Since yesterday, provincial and municipal crews have been working to raise their dikes by another foot to ensure adequate freeboard. The rain will also mean another higher crest in Brandon, which is

expected to be below the height of the newly raised dikes.

* (13:40)

I would like to acknowledge that we recognize the understandable stress and worry that people are feeling in the areas around the Assiniboine River because of the lack of certainty on what will happen. I want to assure them and the House that we will continue to provide the best and most recent information available as quickly as possible.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I know this is not in the statement; I do want to indicate, as events progress today, I would like to indicate that I will endeavour to keep the House updated and also to brief, obviously, both government caucus members and opposition caucus members. So I would ask if the members could be available, potentially, for a briefing as events develop later today.

I realize that's not in the statement, so I do thank the House for its indulgence on that.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for the latest update and also thank him for the offer he just made to give us briefings as the day proceeds.

Manitobans who could be affected by the deliberate breach of the Assiniboine River dike east of Portage la Prairie continue to monitor the situation very closely. They are making last-minute preparations should they be forced to leave their homes, farms and businesses for an undetermined length of time.

We would like to acknowledge the countless volunteers, along with the military personnel and the government staff, who have worked so tirelessly the past few days to try and help people in the projected flood zone get ready for this breach. Your efforts—their efforts will not soon be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, floodfighting efforts and flood-related disruptions continue in many other areas of our province right now. As of yesterday afternoon, 2,906 Manitobans had been evacuated from communities like Brandon, Lake St. Martin First Nation, Long Plains First Nation and others.

Mr. Speaker, loss of road access is creating serious problems in many regions—some 2,700 kilometres alone of municipal roads are closed. This will create tremendous challenges for livestock producers who may be required to move their livestock out of flood zones on short notice.

Those affected by the rising Shoal Lake are also keeping a very close eye on the situation. It'll be a few days before this House sits again and there could be significant developments on the flood front, particularly if the Assiniboine River dike is breached.

We encourage the provincial government to convey as much information as it can about the evolving flood situation in as timely a fashion as it possibly can so Manitobans can prepare accordingly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes. Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for the update on this natural disaster of unprecedented proportions along the Assiniboine River in particular.

I want also to thank all those who are helping in one way or another, the thousands of volunteers, the many government officials, the members of the Armed Forces and those who have come from outside the province as well as those working from here.

We certainly recognize the stress that the whole situation is providing and watching with expectation and hope for good results from the cut in the dike on the Assiniboine River which is expected shortly.

I note that the increased flow on the Portage Diversion is creating a lot of problems on Lake Manitoba and that communities like St. Laurent and Delta Beach certainly need some organizational support in a fairly urgent matter.

And, of course, there are considerable looming problems further downstream at the outflow of Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin and other places as that water moves into Lake Winnipeg.

So this is a tense time. We certainly hope for the best and hope that the rainfall which is coming is at a minimum and that the dikes will hold and that the cut in the dike along the Assiniboine River works as expected. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public

gallery where we have with us from Angus McKay School, we have 18 grade 4 students under the direction of Ms. Carla Froese. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister for Conservation (Mr. Blaikie).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Decisions

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to, again, just acknowledge and thank all of those people who are involved in fighting this very significant flood along the Assiniboine River, in particular the volunteers, the municipal officials at every level, provincial and federal officials and leaders as well. Also, just to acknowledge the City of Winnipeg's contribution of over 500 staff to sandbagging operations to help protect those properties that are being impacted and, finally, the Armed Forces.

In light of the very significant and very understandable anxiety being felt by those people who may be in the path of the water that would flow in the event of a deliberate breach and in light of the conflicting and changing information that is coming out, can the Premier just provide some clarity in terms of the criteria that will be used to make the decision around the deliberate breach, who makes that decision and how and when it will be communicated to those who will be impacted?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): As the member knows, the overriding goal or objective in the exercise for managing the Assiniboine River, which has unprecedented flows, flows never before seen in history along that river, there will be a review of what the dikes can withstand reasonably. There are some pressure points there that are being examined by the professionals who know what the dikes can hold and where the pressure points are.

There is work that has been done to increase the flow through the Portage Diversion. It's very close to 32,000 cubic feet a second. It was originally designed for 25,000 cubic feet a second. There's been additional work done along the dikes on each side of the Portage Diversion so they can handle more flows, and there's been flood proofing of the 40 homes that are within the vicinity of the dikes along the Portage Diversion.

So, as they examine what the pressure points are, the last resort, being a controlled release, is one that remains a real option when they think there may be an undue risk of one of these existing structures breaching.

Mr. McFadyen: I would just note that the comments made this morning were that there was a virtual certainty that the deliberate breach would take place. Is the Premier now indicating that the likelihood of this occurring is now being reduced as a result of new information?

Mr. Selinger: I am not, Mr. Speaker, I am simply updating the member on what the current capacity of our existing infrastructure is and how it's being strengthened. Actually, they've reduced, by 1,000 cubic feet a second, the amount of flow on the Assiniboine River as they've been able to increase the amount of flow going through the Portage Diversion. But there's every expectation that the water will continue to increase the flows into the Portage Diversion and east of the Portage Diversion. There will be continued flows coming down the Assiniboine River.

Recent forecasts show more water coming into the Qu'Appelle system, which goes into the Assiniboine around St-Lazare. There's already a recommendation—and St-Lazare is following this—to lift their dikes another foot. There's also a clear understanding now that the peak in Brandon may not occur this week. It may occur next week and be somewhat higher than what they had originally forecast.

So there's constant monitoring going on of the amount of precipitation and water in the system and what concomitant—what adjustments need to be made to respond to that. There is a strong view that the controlled release will be necessitated. The issue is when will it be necessitated, and that is under constant review by our technical officials.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has already indicated four different times at which it was expected to occur. We are now on our fifth, and we are getting contradictory information coming out of the government with virtually every statement that's made.

Mr. Speaker, it's the people who are living in the region west of Winnipeg, east of Portage la Prairie, who are waiting anxiously to know what is going to happen to their homes, to their property, to their livelihood, to all those things that many of them have

spent a lifetime building. Those people are the ones who are looking for clarity, who are looking for candour, and I wonder if the Premier can just indicate again the basis upon which he will make this decision, when he expects that decision to be made in light of the rolling timelines that seem to be out there right now, and how that will be communicated.

* (13:50)

It doesn't need to be done for the satisfaction of members of the House; it's got to be done for the people of Manitoba in the area that is impacted. These people are anxious, Mr. Speaker, they're concerned, they're working hard; many of them are showing incredible grace. He owes it to them to be candid.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, being candid is exactly what we wish to do with the most accurate information we have available, and the reality is is that there are changing conditions. There has been a great deal of additional rain in Saskatchewan, up to 50 millimetres, which is now entering the Qu'Appelle River system, which is entering into the Assiniboine River. There has been additional rain in Brandon in the last two days. The reality is is that there are a variety of changing conditions that are being monitored on an hour-by-hour basis, and the alerts have gone out; there has been a door-to-door program in the area that could be affected by a controlled release. People do expect a controlled release will be necessary given the amount of water coming down the Assiniboine. The specific timing of that is something that we get advice from, from our technical officials.

When they achieve a consensus on what they think a controlled release date should be and a time for that, they will notify us, and we will act accordingly, based on the best advice we get. But the reality is is we're doing everything we can to protect people, to minimize harm to people, families, their properties and their homes, and we will continue to do that very vigilantly.

Controlled Dike Breaches Home Loss

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

Mr. McFadyen: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the anxiety is very, very—the anxiety of the people in the area that could be impacted is very, very significant and very understandable, and the concern over getting information that is timely and accurate is very real, particularly when different information is

provided to those individuals as the situation evolves.

One of the issues that has—is a key part of the decision-making process, and we acknowledge that this is not an easy decision for any government to make, Mr. Speaker, and nobody is suggesting otherwise, but one of the key pieces of information is the number of homes that would be impacted in the event of a deliberate breach of the dike. The Premier, to date, has been indicating that it's 150 homes. Can he just indicate, upon review, whether that continues to be the number that they believe would be impacted in the event of a deliberate breach?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the best information that our officials have provided to us was in the area where the controlled release could occur there could be up to 150 homes. Fourteen of those homes, in the immediate vicinity of where the controlled release point would be, have been sandbagged and protected. Those people have been evacuated. In addition, along the Portage Diversion there are up to 40 homes that have been protected as well with sandbagging.

So this procedure of bringing in additional support to provide sandbagging protection of property in the area where the controlled release could occur is one that's ongoing, which is why we called up additional military personnel to help us with that. The local emergency operations committees, of course, are seized of this matter as well, which is why people are being very careful before they decide to proceed with the controlled release and how much they will release because every hour, every minute gives additional time for people to prepare to these rapidly changing circumstances.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is indicating that it would be up to 150 homes that would be impacted within the region that would be impacted by a deliberate breach. The concern is that that is at odds with what people on the ground are saying currently. It's reported in the CBC today, one municipal official saying that their belief is that it would be upwards of 300 homes that would be impacted within the region that's been identified by the Province, and *The Globe and Mail* is reporting, as of this morning, that local people are saying that the region that has been identified would put that estimate as high as 500 houses.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the contradiction between what the Premier is saying, what local officials are saying, can the Premier just indicate

whether they are working to try to get a precise estimate because—[*interjection*] they would—whether they're working to get a precise estimate because obviously that's a very important criteria, an important piece of information before any decision is made?

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the original information came to us from our officials who had reviewed the assessment rolls in the area where the controlled release is likely to occur. They have provided that information. Surveys are going on as we speak in the area. We're very pleased to receive additional information from local people. They may have very good information that will help us further add clarity to what the risk factors are for property and people in that area. This information will be happily received by our Emergency Measures officials as well as the local emergency operations committees. It will provide additional detail and texture to the response that we're providing in the area with volunteers and with military personnel.

This is a rapidly developing situation. The best information is always well received by people that are doing the emergency response, and if that information is available, it will go along with the surveys that are being done and the original review of the assessment rolls. And the phone lines are open, and the emergency operations committees are located in these communities and the Emergency Measures people at the top of the Woodsworth Building. There is points of contact to add further information to any risk factors that exist in the area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, in light of what is being conveyed through the media and elsewhere by municipal leaders who know very well what is happening within their own communities and what's happening on the ground, and with that estimate being as high as 500 houses that could be impacted, and the—everybody would hope that that would not be the case, but with local people saying that it could be as high as 500, will the Premier ask his officials to immediately undertake that review, gather that information and provide updated information to Manitobans about the number that could be impacted and how that factors into whatever decision is going to be made, recognizing that it is a difficult decision?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we greatly appreciate the leadership role that local officials have taken all across this province in providing flood protection for people within their jurisdictions and the volunteers

that have helped them to do that and the people that have participated in the emergency operations committees. They've done yeoman's work all across the province.

And, yes, as I said in my previous question, surveys are going on as we speak on the ground to identify all the specific geographic features of where people live, the residences and other structures that are at potential risk here. And as that information refines itself, it will be useful in providing additional protection from all the additional resources that we've mobilized to respond to the potential risks in that area. And that's why nobody's taking any decision like this lightly. The uncontrolled nature of a catastrophic breach in the dikes would affect these very same people with up to five times more water. Up to 15,000 cubic feet per second could flow into this area that is the area of the controlled release if there is not these proper measures taken and preventive measures taken. And that's exactly why we're doing it: to protect rural people and property.

Assiniboine River Flood Contingency Plans for School Divisions

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): I want to recognize all of the efforts of municipal officials and provincial employees and the military and specifically the many, many volunteers that are sandbagging even as we speak today in towns like Elie and Sanford and Starbuck.

Mr. Speaker, we have already seen schools in Brandon and Wawanesa evacuated as a result of impact of flooding or potential flooding. Can the Minister of Education advise what the contingency plan is for students in Elie and St. François Xavier specifically?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I'm pleased to inform members of the House that this is a very difficult time across our province and we are—we want to commend the school divisions that are affected by this unique situation that we have here in Manitoba. They have been responding all across this province where we have problems with schools that might be involved in the nature of this flooding.

They have different responses in regards to how they are approaching it in regards to their unique circumstances. In some situations, they're getting immediately in touch with the parents in regards to whether or not those students are going to be moved to schools, whether or not they're going to be

provided with homework situations. They are dealing with them in regards to bus routes, and they are doing a remarkable job in light of the circumstances they're facing, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:00)

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, Red River Valley School Division's superintendent, Kelly Barkman, is trying to find out just how much the water has to rise for Sanford Collegiate, which is on the banks of the La Salle River, to be affected. He's been working to get that information from provincial officials.

Would the Minister of Education be able to help him find the answers he's looking for?

Ms. Allan: Well, we have been working with superintendents, and officials in my department have been working with officials in school divisions all across this province. And officials know, in school divisions as well, that they can get in touch with the local municipality in regards to those kinds of issues that they need to get involved with. There was a problem in Wawanesa and we had the Emergency Measures co-ordinator talk to the municipality as well as the local MLA. So it is my understanding that if they want to get information they can certainly get in touch with the local municipality and that information will be—they will work with the local superintendents.

Mrs. Taillieu: Mr. Speaker, at least a dozen public schools in the Portage la Prairie, Prairie Rose and Red River school divisions are on the potential path of direct or diverted Assiniboine River flood waters.

Can the Minister of Education please indicate what the short- and long-term contingency plans are for schools in the path of flood waters and has she communicated that plan to the EMO offices?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of responsible for Emergency Measures): I think the member knows that every municipality in this province—it's a statutory requirement—but every municipality has an emergency plan.

We've been dealing with a rapidly developing situation over the last number of days. I can't say enough, by the way, about how much the municipal staff, emergency co-ordinators, the reeves and councillors have been working around the clock, along with our officials, and, I think, it's important to note that they are getting the information that is available out as soon as it becomes available. It has been rapidly evolving.

I want to stress again, in Brandon, it's a one-in-300-year flood; you add in after that the flows of the Souris River. We're seeing unprecedented flooding, but we're working with every stakeholder and that includes, by the way, any of the school districts impacted. The emergency officials are working on that and providing the best information that is available, Mr. Speaker.

Assiniboine River

Water Flow Management Plan (Saskatchewan)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, having toured the area around the Shellmouth Dam and stood on the—above the spillway at the Shellmouth Dam, and the tributary creeks and rivers that are feeding the Assiniboine and the Qu'Appelle River, one could not help but feel shivers run up your spine at the volumes of water that are coming into the Assiniboine. Much of the water that comes into the Assiniboine originates in the Saskatchewan area.

And I want to ask the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) if she could tell the House if she has had discussions with the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority about the flooding, and how, with the Province of Saskatchewan, discussions could probably take place and what solutions could be found to the situation as it occurs today.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): You know, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we'd put aside some of the, you know, the normal dynamic of question period.

The reason I'm rising to answer this question is that I do think it's something that crosses over certain Water Stewardship and also in terms of EMO.

One of the concerns that we've been hearing, and our members raised this as well, is about potential inflows in from Saskatchewan. I often get asked, the Minister of Water Stewardship gets asked in terms of Rafferty-Alameda Dam. One of the challenges we're facing here, quite frankly, is the overwhelming nature of the flooding coming in from Saskatchewan. And just as we have maximized the capacity of the Shellmouth Dam with Rafferty-Alameda, for example, you're seeing inflows.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Water Stewardship has worked on Fishing Lake and other issues to make sure that there's no artificial elevation of this. But I do want to assure the member that we are dealing in this particular case with flows of historic—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter and it's one that, you know, collaborative efforts have to be put together in order for the right solution to be found. And so, I'm asking the Minister of Water Stewardship: When did she have discussions with the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan water authority and can she tell us what the response from the minister was?

Mr. Ashton: Again, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we work collaboratively on this, and I want to stress, in an emergency situation, one thing that's important, quite frankly, is to get the job done. And I want to stress, by the way, the key role the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) has played, not just in this flood situation but going into this flood situation, because it was this Minister of Water Stewardship, and with the leadership of our Premier (Mr. Selinger) the Saskatchewan–joint Saskatchewan Cabinet meeting which did, pre-emptively, work on an agreement in terms of Fishing Lake because the key thing here is to put aside jurisdictional differences and work co-operatively.

Saskatchewan has faced hugely challenging situations in all her river flows and what we've worked to do, and what this Minister of Water Stewardship has done, is to ensure there's no additional flows that are controlled or adding to the crest.

Right now we're dealing with unprecedented flows coming from Saskatchewan. They're natural flows—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I have no qualms about whether the minister of—responsible for EMO is working or not, I'm asking the Minister of Water Stewardship. Apparently she has not had those discussions with the minister responsible for water in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting with the minister in February and raised the issue. I want to know what collaborative efforts she has entered into with the minister from Saskatchewan, responsible for water in Saskatchewan, on how a collaborative and a joint solution could perhaps be found to ease the flooding that we are experiencing right now in Manitoba.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, what's important to understand here is that this government had the first ever joint Cabinet meeting with the

Cabinet of Saskatchewan. The first meeting was in Yorkton. The second one was in Brandon. Water issues were one of the key items discussed in that meeting and as a result of that meeting there was an agreement that Saskatchewan would not do anything to put excess water into our system at a time that it would harm Manitoba. That was a very significant achievement, the first time that has ever been achieved in the history of those two provinces.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I have been in discussion with the Premier of Saskatchewan and we both have made representations to the Prime Minister of Canada about the value of investing in mitigation works, the very items that the member from Russell is talking about, mitigation works that in the future can prevent damage to people and property anywhere in Canada including Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Decisions

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is planning to breach the Assiniboine River dikes at the Hoop and Holler Bend and some Manitobans have questioned about whether other strategies to manage large volumes of water flowing through the Assiniboine have been explored.

And so, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Water Stewardship, whose department is responsible for the river flow readings, believe the proposed deliberate breach is the only alternative to prevent the Assiniboine River from breaking out along the dike further east?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, we're not into, I think, a situation where we should revert to the normal exchange here. We're dealing with a critical situation right now. I thought we had a high point a few days ago where we avoided some of the heckling, et cetera, and I would suggest in this particular case it's not about one minister or another minister, it's about Manitobans standing together to deal with a historic challenge.

Mr. Maguire: And, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with this minister more. This is clearly what I'm doing for the people that have responded to me over the last number of days in regards to the situation, the crisis that's out there in Manitoba all over the province.

So as the government has found, in these recent days, flows have been increased on the Portage

Diversion by the process of building up the banks and reinforcing the diversion banks, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) tell us whether her department's flow readings showing that continuing to build up the Portage Diversion, and the dikes east of Portage, would be enough to sustain flows without having to do a deliberate man-made breach?

*(14:10)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I addressed this issue in my first set of responses to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen). Every single hour new information is being assessed by our officials about what the flows will be, and they have continued to rise as weather conditions have continued to change in the last few weeks. On April 29th to May 3rd, we had a blizzard. Last week, we had very serious—up to 50 centimetres, in some places higher, of rainfall in Saskatchewan and in parts of Manitoba. Those conditions add more water to our waterways. Those conditions require us to respond. The tributaries are continuing to add more water. There's melting going on in some of the mountain regions in northwestern Manitoba. All of these factors are changing the reality on a daily basis, and as those factors come into focus, we look at them and decide what capacity we can handle, including increased capacity for the diversion and what the limit—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, we also realize that there are a number of variables at play regarding the Assiniboine River, and one of the primary ones is weather. Precipitation levels could make the crest of the river more prolonged.

And, so, based on the latest information available, which is all I was asking before, will the Minister of Water Stewardship tell the House at what cfs level that a deliberate breach will be triggered on the Assiniboine River at Hoop and Holler Bend, or is the government considering a second deliberate breach elsewhere?

Mr. Selinger: The reality is that we have found that up to now, with the additional protection we put on the Portage Diversion, raising the dikes and with the electronics that have been improved there, that it has been—and with the early brush clearing that was done well into the winter before these events started on the river, and with the additional diking that we've put out there—\$25 million of additional

diking—raising it to the 1976 flood event of record plus two—all of those measures have allowed greater capacity in the system. But they have to be monitored on a 24-7 basis. Pressure points occur on the dikes. Things could change rapidly on the diversion dikes. The flow-through in the Portage Diversion could change for reasons we don't even—aren't even aware of at this very point.

So, as those factors change, that's where the possibility of a controlled release has to remain a very live option in order to make sure we do not have a catastrophic event affect—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Cattle Producers Flooding Information

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it may be necessary to move up to a hundred thousand head of cattle due to flooding. This is a major undertaking that will certainly tax our livestock producers as they try to find places to move their animals and to organize transportation to get them there. Strong coordination and communications between government departments and with industry will be essential as this evacuation of cattle takes place.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House if the Minister of Water Stewardship is providing his department with daily updates about flood levels around the province, especially as the water levels rise in the key livestock production area such as Lake Manitoba?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister for Conservation—I mean for Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Yes, Mr. Speaker, our department is getting all the information that we need, and we are conveying that information in daily phone calls, daily conference calls with the Manitoba beef producers, cattle—Manitoba beef producers, the Keystone Agricultural Producers, Manitoba Pork, the chicken growers, egg farmers.

There's a long list that join in every day, and we relay that information on to them. And I want to say, they've been doing a yeoman's job in working with us to make sure that everyone, whether they're—whatever region of this province they're in, including around Lake Manitoba, are up-do-date. And we're working to make sure that, first of all, we protect the people and their livestock in these areas, and then to work on compensation down the road.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, as we've seen throughout this flood fight, strong lines of communications with those that are affected are essential.

The Manitoba beef producers, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and other stakeholders are doing their very best to try to get the word out about this serious situation involving the relocation of a hundred thousand head of cattle. But producers also need to know that the provincial government is in their corner helping to coordinate and to provide information as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister today provide a list of municipalities where cattle will need to be relocated from first, and what his department is doing to assist those—this process? Producers need to be prepared.

Mr. Struthers: I couldn't agree with my friend across the way more.

We—we're working with Manitoba beef producers to make sure that all beef producers in every RM surrounding Lake Manitoba are up to date with the most up-to-date information. We've been working with these very same organizations and the RMs in the area to make sure that that information gets to them. We've been looking for some very practical ways in which we can be helpful. Just yesterday, I told the House that we had declared a livestock emergency, which made it more accessible, made easier locating land that's high and dry for these farmers to be moving cattle and equipment and other things. We're looking for very practical ways to work with these groups and with—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, again, evacuating up to 100,000 head of cattle is a massive undertaking requiring a lot of co-ordination. Temporary placements of the animals are needed. Getting feed in is an issue if animals can't be moved and transportation has to be arranged. Producers expect leadership from this provincial government in this serious issue and, particularly, when it comes to communications and co-ordinations. I know producers that are calling their GO offices and they're not getting any response.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture advise this House what process his government is putting in place so that producers can get the information they so vitally need?

Mr. Struthers: We're working very well with the exact producer groups that the member is talking about. We're working very well with the RMs in the area, each of which have their emergency response plans in place. We have our GO offices and our GO centres in place with people who are there staffing, working late into the evenings to make sure that they're in contact with farmers and ranchers in the area. Mr. Speaker, we are—we have already eased restrictions in terms of highways and transportation networks to make it easier to move cattle out of harm's way and where the higher and drier land is. That kind of leadership is here on this side of the House.

Assiniboine River Controlled Dike Breaches Consultations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to emphasize a big thank you to all Manitobans and, indeed, those who have come from elsewhere to help with the very severe flooding that we've had this year. Yesterday the Minister for Infrastructure indicated that the cut in the dike along the Assiniboine River was, in some fashion, in the government's contingency plans before last weekend. Mr. Speaker, as the week rolls on, it becomes more and more apparent that improved planning and improved and better discussion ahead of time of this contingency would certainly have helped.

I ask the minister, when it was first known that there was a potential for such a large flood along the Assiniboine River earlier this year, whether he'd ever considered holding such discussions in February or March of this year?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I think it's important to recognize that right from the start we, with our first flood forecast, which was brought out actually in January a month ahead of schedule, recognized there were significant preconditions for flooding. I want to stress that we shared this with all the municipalities. We shared this with the people of Manitoba, and, at that time, the best advice was that we should be planning for the flood of record, which was 1976. We now are planning for the flood of record in terms of levels that were anticipated. We put in work on our dikes, and I want to stress, by the way, that, prior to the work this past weekend, we had invested \$25 million on the Assiniboine dikes to bring it into the level of a 1976 flood. What has happened since then is absolutely unprecedented—a one-in-300-year flood in Brandon, record levels on the Souris and,

even just in the last 24 hours, the Qu'Appelle River record levels. So we have—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Delta Beach Flooding

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister. Planning and discussion ahead of time can be very important in ensuring that resources are optimized and that costs to people and homes and farms and other businesses are minimized. You know, I suspect each of us has been surprised this year, as I have, to talk to people who are all of a sudden and very surprised to find themselves drastically affected by the flood. And last night, for example, I was getting calls from people at the Delta Beach and St. Laurent communities around Lake Manitoba about the poor level of organization and support at a very critical time when they're getting huge flows through the Portage Diversion and affecting Lake Manitoba.

* (14:20)

Now I know the minister's been working very hard, but I wanted to give him an opportunity to talk about what the government is doing to support communities like Delta Beach and St. Laurent.

Mr. Ashton: Well, I thank the member and I want to indicate I know the member raised this directly with my office. I know the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou) also raised concerns about the Delta Research Station at a briefing that we had with the opposition just a matter of days ago.

Mr. Speaker, we are working on obviously the very immediate challenge in and around the Assiniboine River and the Portage Diversion. We also concurrently are working on the real challenges ahead in terms of Lake Manitoba. In fact, Monday of this week, we had a meeting with nine municipalities, two First Nations that are impacted in and around Lake Manitoba, and I don't want to underestimate the challenges that they are going to be facing and the lengthy period of time in which we're going to see high water levels. And that's on top of Lake St. Martin, and I want to indicate again, our minister of northern and Aboriginal affairs, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) met with the two communities affected in that area.

One of the real challenges we're dealing with here is not just the scale in terms of flows but the geographic scale, and we are working—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, yes, it's very important, even as we plan for the people who may be affected by the cut in the dike, to be looking at the people who are already being affected by these huge flows on the Portage Diversion, and I appreciate the efforts and the hard work of the minister.

At the same time, I must admit I was rather concerned to hear from homeowners in the approximately 150 homes in the community of Delta Beach, who were indicating to me that, for some, their road access may be in jeopardy, the sandbags were only available by travelling some distance to Portage la Prairie and weren't working very well with the huge waves they were encountering, and that there were major concerns that people were not going to be able to protect their property in the very high water levels in Lake Manitoba.

So I give the minister an additional opportunity to provide more detail about what is being done specifically in the Delta Beach community and to help them.

Mr. Ashton: Well, what I want to indicate is that one of the first steps we've done in the Department of Water Stewardship, release the most up-to-date information in potentially impacted areas.

It is going to impact all over Lake Manitoba, and I appreciate the member identifying the particular area and areas, and it does have a number of implications. We're looking at the impact in terms of cattle, and I know the Department of Agriculture is working on that, because there's a lot of cattle in that area. We're looking at impacts in terms of road access. We're going to be seeing the need to work to protect homes and cottages over the next period of time, because, again, this is something that is particularly going to be problematic—not immediately only. It is a problem right now, but with wind conditions and storm conditions that are not unusual in the summer and fall. So we're preparing a comprehensive plan, and we will be there working hand in hand with those municipalities and First Nations and the homeowners and Delta Research Station in around Lake Manitoba. It is a priority.

EMS Personnel Flood Response

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans from all walks of life have dedicated their efforts to fighting the rising waters of the flood, and, of course, EMS personnel are no exception.

Can the Minister of Health please provide an update on the important role that EMS personnel are playing in this effort?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to inform the House that in this severe situation, our EMS personnel have been performing in an extraordinary manner in concert with the Office of Disaster Management in Manitoba Health and EMO. We know that there are efforts being made to deal with roads that have become inaccessible. Ambulances are being geo-posted in places; it's enabling emergency response to remain within benchmark, and we thank the Medical Transportation Co-ordination Centre for that work. We also want to not underestimate how important this interface with the STARS helicopter has been; 22 patients have been flown on that helicopter, and quite literally, Mr. Speaker, lives have been saved. So I want to say to our EMS personnel that we all owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Lake Manitoba Water Levels

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, Lake Manitoba waters are now well above regulated levels. The lake has reached its highest level in over 50 years and the waters continue to rise.

A week ago today, the Province quit including the levels of Lake Manitoba in their flood reports. Those reports are very critical to the people that are living around the lake. They need to know on a daily basis what the levels are going to be and when they're going to have to make some responses to those rising levels.

Could the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) tell the House today what the levels that Lake Manitoba are today and will they commit to putting those levels back into the daily flood bulletins immediately?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I want to stress, as part of the flood response, the No. 1 concern coming out of Lake Manitoba was to determine what impacts we could be looking at in terms of inundation levels. That was the information that the Department of Water Stewardship spent a lot of time and effort in the middle of a geographically extensive and unprecedented flood in many other areas because we recognize it is of that importance.

That information was shared with the nine municipalities and two First Nations as of Monday. I

agree with the member; this is going to be a real challenge and there's a need, obviously, for information. The key issue there again, though, was people wanted to know not just what the levels were but what areas could be impacted. That's critical to our planning. We are not only planning; we're acting, and we will act to support the residents around Lake Manitoba, based on that information.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Grievances. Oh, I'm sorry. We got to do members' statements first. I'm jumping the gun here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Nursing Week

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Nursing Week, the theme of which is "Nursing: The Health of our Nation."

This week celebrates Canadian nurses and their dedication to patient care. In Manitoba, statistics released this week show we now have 17,118 active practising nurses working hard to improve the health and well-being of our citizens. That is a net increase of 3,026 more nurses than in 1999.

Nurses are a remarkable people. They are often there when we come into this world and as we leave it. They are compassionate, caring, dedicated, supportive and patient. They care for us when we are most vulnerable and weak and often when we are unable to care for ourselves.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

They work in our hospitals, nursing homes, schools, in rural and remote communities, and even come to our homes to offer us care. They provide us with comfort, kindness and relief when we need it most. As in all parts of the province, many nurses are working in facilities in my constituency and throughout northeast Winnipeg, meeting the needs of patients and families every single day.

Our government has long recognized the outstanding contribution of nurses to our health-care system. That is why we have expanded nursing training, invested in nursing recruitment and retention grants to help see a net increase of more than 3,000 nurses across Manitoba since 1999.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I ask all my fellow members to join me in offering a heartfelt thank you to all the nurses in our province and,

indeed, throughout Canada, for their invaluable contributions. They are part of the reason why Canada's health-care system is the envy of many.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Manitoba Day

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Acting Speaker, as a very proud Manitoban, it is my honour to rise today on May 12th, 2011, to commemorate Manitoba's 141st anniversary as a Canadian province, something this NDP government seems to have forgotten or just neglected to recognize. Due to the special importance of May 12th to Manitoba's history, on May 12th, 1986, the government of Manitoba officially recognized today as Manitoba Day.

This year to celebrate Manitoba Day a citizenship court ceremony will take place in Portage la Prairie to welcome 25 new Canadian citizens to Manitoba. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the MLA for Portage la Prairie to get a citizenship court in Portage la Prairie. Manitoba Day is the perfect day to welcome new citizens and celebrate the contributions to Manitoba by all of our province's multicultural and multilingual communities.

Manitoba has a unique legacy of cultural diversity of which all Manitobans should be proud. Mutual, beneficial trade relationships between First Nations and fur-trading Europeans led to the birth of the Métis. The Métis placed tremendous value on linguistic and religious diversity, which ensured that equal status was given to French and English and the Catholic and Protestant religions in The Manitoba Act.

On May 12th, in 1870, Mr. Acting Speaker, The Manitoba Act, which laid the foundation for cross-cultural understanding in the province, was given royal assent and Manitoba became the fifth Canadian province. Since 1870, hundreds of thousands of people from various national and ethnic backgrounds desiring fair treatment and economic opportunity have immigrated to Manitoba. The growth and success of Manitoba is the result of this province's multicultural and multilingual communities working together, and I am proud to be from a province where over 100 languages spoken with 300 ethnocultural organizations.

To celebrate Manitoba Day, many events will be held at the Forks, the traditional meeting place for First Nations. The events include a pancake breakfast

from 7:30 to 10 a.m. at the Beachcomber patio that was free with a donation to Winnipeg Harvest. There was also entertainment all morning with a birthday cake served at noon.

* (14:30)

I encourage all Manitobans to explore the special Manitoba Day events, hosted by the province's museums and heritage organizations that celebrate Manitoba's heritage and cultural diversity.

I would like to thank the Western Aviation Museum, Commonwealth Air Training Museum, new island heritage museum, Mennonite Heritage Village, the Manitoba Historical Society, and the Manitoba Genealogical Society for hosting events.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to conclude on this critical day in the flood fight, by acknowledging those who have helped their friends, neighbours and perfect strangers, to fend their homes and farms from the flood waters, and demonstrated the true meaning of being a Manitoban.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Acting Speaker, the Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation has been hard at work spearheading a whole new host of initiatives in Selkirk and I'd like to draw attention to their important work here today.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, after opening their doors in 2008, they began by conducting community consultations and creating a five-year community plan. Only a few months later, Selkirk's Community Renewal Corporation was in full operation focusing on youth, safety, housing, transportation, downtown and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, the renewal corporation is rooted in the community and has been busy forming partnerships with different community organizations. It manages a small grants program to improve community assets. Just a small sample of the different projects that have been going on in Selkirk include: the skateboard park which was completed last year, a new stage for the Selkirk waterfront, new play structures in schools and parks throughout the city, the Imagination Library, the local food bank, and the Community Living Program and others, have also received support. The corporation also

administers a housing improvement program and residents can apply for grants for exterior home improvements that contribute to the value, safety, longevity and quality of homes, while building community pride.

Mr. Speaker, the renewal corporation receives core funding from the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and Selkirk was included when the program was expanded in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for the dedication of the folks from the renewal corporation. I want thank the hardworking board of directors and special thanks to the executive director, Darlene Swiderski for all her work. And I know we can look forward to hearing more great things from them in the future.

Thank you.

National Nursing Week

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): It is an honour for me to rise in the House today to recognize National Nursing Week and to applaud the overwhelming dedication, compassion and personal sacrifice demonstrated on a daily basis by Manitoba's hardworking nurses.

It is a time to thank them for the dedication and services and also a time to highlight the many contributions nurses make to the wellbeing of Manitobans. Ever since Florence Nightingale laid its foundations during the Crimean War, the nursing profession has evolved to become a critical part of the health-care system.

The theme for this year's week is the "Health of Our Nation", which is most fitting at a time when many are concerned about rising health costs, doctor, nurse shortages, increases in chronic disease, and the health of our next generation.

As a former nurse, I am all too familiar with the personal sacrifices made by every health-care provider in order to maintain the high professional standards and commitment to healing that have come to be expected from nurses and all other health-care professionals. I am very proud of my profession and what it has taught me. Nobody has to convince me about the immeasurable value of nurses' work and the knowledge and skill it takes to be a nurse. I know, I've been there; I've walked in their shoes.

Mr. Speaker, the world of nursing has changed. Nurses are being required to have more training and more expertise to deal with the increasing challenges they face in the workplace. We know that making

full use of the range of care that all nurses and nurses practitioners are educated to provide increased access to health care, the capacity of the health system to provide care, and is in the best interest of the public. Their knowledge is key to patient care and safety, prevention of disease, public health education, and the hands-on care provided in hospitals, clinics, personal care homes and communities.

Mr. Speaker, we must ensure that this highly skilled profession can participate as full partners in shaping health services in Manitoba.

I think Florence Nightingale would be proud of how the nursing profession has evolved and met today's challenges and are prepared to meet the future challenges of dealing with the health of our nation and province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this House to join me in congratulating all our nurses in the province of Manitoba who have helped save countless lives and made a difference in so many. They deserve our thanks and our appreciation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Deborah Olukoju

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, last week, the YM-YWCA celebrated the 35th Annual Women of Distinction Awards. I was pleased to be in attendance to see the winner of this year's award for Volunteerism, Advocacy and Community Enhancement be Dr. Deborah Olukoju. She was nominated by the Women's Fellowship of the Immanuel Fellowship Church in my constituency of St. Norbert for all of the incredible work she has done over many years.

Pastor Olukoju is described by many as a modern-day pioneer as she has many firsts to her name. These include being the first woman to receive a doctoral degree from Providence theology seminary; the first woman ordained in the Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada; the first and only Nigerian community-government liaison person for Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program's Community Stream; and the first Manitoban community facilitator for the National Organization of Immigrant Visible Minority Women of Canada.

She has managed to put her education, training and faith to very good use by helping others as much as she can, especially those in the immigrant community. Among her many activities,

Pastor Olukoju oversees a thriving multicultural Christian community while also providing therapy to children, families and couples. She has also assisted more than 100 families to immigrate and settle in Manitoba. She is particularly passionate about seeing immigrant women succeed as they deal with the challenges of helping their families integrate into Canadian society.

In her role as pastor, she has also found time to organize and host weekend women's retreats which help women maintain their courage and their community engagement. Youth also look to her as a role model as they pursue their education.

In addition to all of her work at the community level, Pastor Olukoju has served as an ambassador for the Nigerian community through her involvement with the Nigeria Canada Congress of Manitoba. She was also selected by the Government of Canada to be a team leader for Manitoba for the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada pilot program in 2008.

I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to Pastor Deborah Olukoju on receiving the Women of Distinction Award for Volunteerism, Advocacy and Community Enhancement. She is an amazing woman and mentor to all of the members of her church and the larger community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

House Business

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, we will now move into—to do condolences.

The honourable Government House Leader, on—orders of the day.

The honourable Government House Leader, on House business?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business.

We're preparing to move into condolence motions. I wonder if we could ask the House for a brief recess while we complete those preparations.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreeable for the House to have a short recess? *[Agreed]*

And we will return?

An Honourable Member: In five minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, is it the will of the House to recess for five minutes? *[Agreed]*

The House recessed at 2:38 p.m.

The House resumed at 2:40 p.m.

MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Time now is expired, so we will now continue on into, as previously agreed, we will do the motions of condolence, the condolence motion.

Duff Roblin

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen),

THAT this House convey to the family of the late Duff Roblin, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincere sympathy in their bereavement and its appreciation of his devotion to duty in a useful life of active community and public service and that Mr. Speaker be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the family.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of the greatest Manitobans, the Honourable Duff Roblin.

Duff Roblin served his constituents and all Manitobans with integrity and great distinction, beginning in 1949 when he's first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and throughout his tenure as the premier of Manitoba from 1958 to 1967. Taken together, his accomplishments are credited with modernizing this province and laying the groundwork for a resilient and prosperous future.

Duff Roblin's first act of public service came when he answered the call to duty by enlisting in the army as a private in 1939 when the Second World War broke out. By the time he was demobilized in 1946 he had the rank of wing commander in the Royal Canadian Air Force. A few years after his military service, Duff Roblin ran for public office in the constituency of Winnipeg South. He was first elected in 1949 and then re-elected in 1953. In 1954, Duff Roblin became the leader of the provincial Progressive Conservative Party before being elected

as premier of a minority government in 1958 while representing the constituency of Wolseley.

Under his leadership, the government quickly enacted a series of progressive reforms which were supported by the social democratic Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. And while Duff Roblin is best known for the creation of the Red River Floodway around Winnipeg, popularly known as Duff's Ditch, he left an indelible mark on Manitoba's highways, schools, hospitals and universities. Among all of the reforms Duff Roblin wanted to make when he first took office, reforming Manitoba's educational system was his priority. When he began his tenure as Manitoba's 14th premier in 1958 he was noted to have said: Education is not a cost or a bill or expense but a wholesome investment in human life, growth and comprehension.

With his vision firmly established, the reform, improvement and expansion of the educational system was his first priority. It was under his leadership the French language instruction was introduced and school boards were created. It was also during his tenure that Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg went from being colleges to full-fledged universities.

In addition to modernizing Manitoba's educational system, Duff Roblin's government also oversaw the consolidation of Winnipeg's many municipalities into one metropolitan area. Other progressive measures undertaken under his leadership include crop insurance for farmers, new highways to access the north and a social allowance program to help the province's most needy.

Grand Beach and Birds Hill provincial parks were also created during Roblin's term as premier and remain two of the most popular parks in the province.

In 1967, after a dedicated career serving the people of Manitoba, Duff Roblin resigned as premier. In recognition of his distinguished career of public service and his contributions to Canada and Manitoba, he was made a Companion of the Order of Canada in 1970. Duff Roblin was, once again, drawn into public service in 1978, when he was appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to represent the Manitoba region of Red River. He proudly served as a senator until he retired at the age of 75 in 1992. In recognition of the impact of Duff Roblin's contributions to the province, he was voted the Greatest Manitoban in 2008.

Aujourd'hui, Monsieur le Président, nous rendons hommage à un grand Manitobain, Monsieur Duff Roblin, et nous offrons nos plus sincères condoléances à sa famille et ses amis.

Translation

Today, Mr. Speaker, we pay homage to a great Manitoban, Mr. Duff Roblin, and offer our most sincere condolences to his family and friends.

English

Duff Roblin's vision, integrity and dedication to the people of Manitoba will always remain an inspiring example of what can be accomplished in the name of public service. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

And, Mr. Speaker, we all note that when it comes to Duff Roblin in this House, there's been wide support for his accomplishments and his vision for the province from all sides, regardless of people's political stripe, and we have gone ahead and named the downtown building of the Red River campus the Duff Roblin Building in recognition of his priority on education. And I note there are many other awards named on behalf of the former premier, such as the Duff Roblin Award given by the University of Winnipeg, the Duff Roblin Political Studies Fellowship at the University of Manitoba, the Duff Roblin Building at the University of Manitoba, and the western part of Roblin Boulevard and, of course, Duff Roblin Provincial Park, which has been located contiguous to the floodway structure south of Winnipeg.

All of these accomplishments go to show what people can achieve when they enter public life, and Duff Roblin has been an example for us all over these many decades, and we look forward to him to serving as a beacon to attract people into public life into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to second the motion brought by the First Minister and to thank him for these comments today, Manitoba Day, also a day when our province faces great challenges as a result of rising waters. We could not have had a more appropriate day to recognize this incredible Manitoban and to convey our condolences to his family and his close friends.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge some individuals who have joined us in the gallery today. His impressive daughter

Jennifer Roblin; I believe Rod Roblin, his brother, is with us as well; his close friend and adviser, Bill Neville, as well as Jim Carr, a close family friend and somebody who has been closely connected to Duff Roblin and his family over many years. I just want to personally extend to each of you my own condolences and certainly convey, on behalf of our caucus, the condolences of all of us to those of you who knew him very well on a personal basis.

For me, Duff Roblin was somebody that I met on a few occasions personally, but for me, he is somebody who is in the realm of legends as former leaders of our province. I have had the great honour and privilege of meeting him personally on a number of occasions and at quite wide intervals, with the first occasion happening in 1990 and, most recently, in about 2008, having had the opportunity to spend some time with him and talk about current matters under debate in the province and his thoughts about politics and where we stand today as a province.

* (14:50)

I want to just go back to that original first encounter, for me, with Duff Roblin in 1990. At the time, I was a student volunteer in the 1990 provincial election campaign. That was a campaign that was chaired by Duff Roblin in terms of the oversight of the Progressive Conservative campaign team and the campaign that was then led by Premier Gary Filmon. As a student volunteer, I was involved in doing some organizing and some campaigning in that election, and we organized one event, in particular, for Mr. Filmon at the University of Manitoba. We had a good turnout of students there. It was a good event, and following that, I received a very kind and gracious handwritten note on Senate letterhead from Duff Roblin. For me, this was something to cherish, and it's a letter that I continue to keep in a special place and something that was just very much appreciated and a real indication of how closely he was paying attention to what was taking place in the campaign and making that effort to thank everybody who was involved in one way or another.

I had the opportunity, shortly after that event, to meet him in person, and, at that stage in my life—I was about 23 years old; I grew up thinking of him as just an incredible larger-than-life figure. He was somebody who was greatly admired by members of my family, and, indeed, all Manitobans. And so I was given the opportunity to meet him in person at campaign headquarters. I arrived for that discussion and I had assumed, prior to my arrival, that he would

be at least seven feet tall, Mr. Speaker, given his incredible, larger-than-life presence in our province. And I was quite surprised to find that he wasn't anything close to seven feet tall, in fact, quite—not a large man in terms of physical stature, but it became immediately clear to me why he was and is as large as he is in terms of the imaginations of Manitobans. He was engaging, brilliantly articulate and incredibly gracious, and I was absolutely just moved by that encounter. And it was certainly a great inspiration for me and I know for many of the other young people who were active in our party at that time.

Subsequent to that, I had occasion to speak with him on and off around 1998 and 1999, working as a member of staff here in this building, when the government was dealing with various challenges, to seek his advice and was always granted lengthy telephone calls with him and benefited greatly from his perspective and his wisdom.

As I was pursuing the leadership of our party in 2005, I had the occasion to sit down and have coffee with him. He was an active member at the Squash Club, was a regular there as a squash player and a regular on the exercise machines around the Squash Club, even at that age just showing incredible physical vigour. And we sat down to have coffee. He was dressed quite formally, a crisp white dress shirt, striped tie, blue blazer, and very formal and very direct and cogent in all of the discussions and comments that he made, and he offered really greatly appreciated advice and perspective and was very alive to the issues and debates that were then taking place in the province of Manitoba.

In the last discussion that I had with him, which was around—and I stand to be corrected; it would have been in 2007 or 2008—he said to me, make sure you're paying attention to what's happening at Hydro. I think the government may be making some mistakes there, and be—pay close attention and be sure that you appreciate the importance of hydro as a resource for Manitobans. And we have had vigorous debates on Hydro, honestly held positions by all in this House, but it was Duff Roblin who initially said that this was an important matter to pay attention to.

He was always modest about the perspective he provided. He was wise enough to know that even though positions could be taken today on these issues that by their nature were forward-looking, that over time one would be proven either right or wrong in terms of your positions, and there was no way of

knowing with absolute certainty at the time whether history would be kind to you or not.

And that was really such a profound insight into the political courage of Duff Roblin, who made decisions and took actions during his time in office that at the time were not accepted as being common wisdom, that they were the right things to do. They were controversial things to do, they were forward looking, they involved change and they involved political courage of a very, very significant degree.

Bill Neville has noted that, if you were to ask Duff Roblin what his greatest accomplishment was, that Duff would say it was in education, and I think it would be very difficult to argue that that wasn't one of his greatest accomplishments. Certainly, the modernization of Manitoba's public education system, the construction of public schools, reorganization of the governance and a focus on ensuring that all Manitobans, regardless of background, had access to a high-quality education was something he was absolutely passionate about.

He subscribed to the Enlightenment views that the dissemination of knowledge about science, about the arts, about civics and history were things that were necessary parts of creating good, active citizens and a healthy, forward-looking society. So those were remarkable achievements in education.

The floodway, as we stand here today, we just marvel, Mr. Speaker, at the wisdom of that undertaking, a massive undertaking at the time in engineering terms; more earth moved than the Panama Canal. It was something that was expensive; it was controversial. Not everybody thought that it was necessary, but he did plough ahead in the face of criticism, and he got it done on time and under budget. And, as we stand here today, we marvel at the ability of Mr. Roblin to have the foresight to know that this was going to be an asset that was going to protect Manitobans for many years to come, as it does at this very moment in time.

And we owe him a great debt of gratitude for not only conceiving, along with the advice of the engineers of this brilliant plan, but having the fortitude and the courage to see it through. And so we—we're immensely grateful to him for that.

The other achievements of the Roblin era have been noted. The construction of highways and infrastructure, the work done in post-secondary education, in addition to primary education, advancements in health care and other social

services, as well as the very visionary and pro-growth attitude toward our public Manitoba Hydro were just remarkable achievements. And one considers that this was done over a period of nine years, it makes it that much more remarkable, the level of activity and the incredible achievements over that relatively short period of time in our history.

The great historian W.L. Morton said, and I quote: "The Roblin government, as thoroughly as it tried to embody the will and aspiration of a new and dynamic society, was in fact a *tour de force*, attempted by one . . . devoted man."

Mr. Speaker, this idea of one devoted man achieving so much is something that is really the—perhaps the best description of Duff Roblin as a man devoted to his province, devoted to public service, honourable to all who dealt with him, a dedicated man to his family, and we know the comments that were made by his daughter, Jennifer, about his dedication to Mary, which is absolutely touching and extremely indicative of what a fine couple they were and what a fine man he was in every sense.

Mr. Speaker, the decision by Manitobans to vote Duff Roblin the Greatest Manitoban was perhaps the best indication very recently of his incredible contributions to our province, contributions that we are grateful for, and a label that I know he found embarrassing personally, because he wasn't a man who sought publicity or accolades, but absolutely fitting for this leader who was humble and modest, who was courageous and who, as W.L. Morton said, was one devoted man who led a government that was, by any definition, a *tour de force*.

* (15:00)

A lot of the personal reflections that have been made since Duff Roblin passed away have provided further insight into what an interesting and remarkable man he was. His propensity for playing the bagpipes in his office late at night to relieve stress is one such anecdote. He joked that the cleaning staff soon got used to it, and he was just somebody who had a variety of interests, was well-read, had a great background of success in business, and was somebody who just dedicated himself thoroughly to any task that he undertook, and he undertook those tasks with energy, with focus and with remarkable perseverance.

Mr. Speaker, the other fact about the political philosophy of Duff Roblin is that he was also of the view that inasmuch as the investments in these

public assets were important, that we also had to adopt a philosophy, as Manitobans, that we would pay as we go. As we made these investments, he made the decision that he would have to set taxes at a level to be able to ensure that the investments were made in a way that didn't leave a legacy of debt to the next generation of Manitobans. Those are hard decisions to make, as anybody knows: the decision to impose a tax or to raise a tax to ensure that the current generation is not undertaking activities that come at the expense of subsequent generations

And for that courage, as happens in politics from time to time, he was thoroughly punished at the polls in his initial attempts to run for federal office after leaving a government as premier. Many, I think, would have a hard time imagining that by the time he left office in 1967, he wasn't as popular through the province as he is today, and that was because he believed that it was important to make hard decisions, to keep the budget in balance. And one of those measures that he brought in, and it came into force on June the 1st, 1967, was a provincial sales tax.

The reason that date is one that I tend to remember is that I was—happened to be born the day before that, and my dad often joked that my birth announcement was the first thing that he paid the sales tax on, and it stuck out in his mind as quite a significant thing in Manitoba, not popular, by any means, but something that was introduced at a time to ensure that the legacy of Duff Roblin was one of genuine progress made, not just for the current generation but for future generations as well.

So I just want to conclude again by saying to the family of Duff Roblin that I am personally indebted to him. We are all inspired by the sort of leadership he provided, and we know that he is missed by all those who were close to him. And so, with that, I'm very, very honoured to second the motion brought by the First Minister to extend our condolences to the family and friends of Duff Roblin and to say that we, as Manitobans, are greatly indebted to him for the very bold leadership that he provided to our province; as William—or as W.L. Morton said, "a *tour de force*, attempted by one . . . devoted man."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my voice to those of the others in this Chamber in paying a tribute, a salute to Duff Roblin for his incredible contributions to our province. I also

want to offer condolences to family and friends, his daughter, Jennifer, who's here, friends like Bill Neville and Jim Carr. I want to mention Jim Carr in particular because he put together—wrote a really excellent biography of Duff Roblin, and Jim told me afterwards what an extraordinary experience that was and the respect that he held for Duff Roblin for all the conversations and the learning and the experience that he gained from that time that he spent with Duff Roblin preparing to write the biography.

Clearly, Duff Roblin, who was premier from 1958 to 1967, made a number of extraordinary contributions to our life and well-being as Manitobans, and the one which stands out more than any other is the building of the floodway, Duff's Ditch, as many have called it. And that floodway, the Winnipeg floodway, has provided tremendous benefit over the years to Winnipeg and to Manitoba. It was an act of foresight of excellent engineering, and it has been used time and time again. And, of course, again, this year, even as we are now in the middle of the flood season, that floodway is being used and protecting Winnipeg as we speak, and we can all be very grateful to Duff Roblin for that foresight and for ensuring that the floodway was built.

I also want to pay tribute to his efforts in the area of education. Education is of the utmost importance to Manitobans, to the well-being of our society, to our future, and putting the time, the effort and the investments into education, primary, secondary and post-secondary was very important, and it came at a very important time in the late '50s and the early '60s when there was a big need for expanded education and when there were big developments in knowledge and in learning, and it was vital that Manitobans were able to share in those opportunities and have been able to share in those opportunities in the time since then.

I noticed—Jim told me and wrote about in the biography—that one of the things that Duff Roblin did when he was in opposition and preparing for the election of 1958 and then, of course, 1959, was to go around the province and meet with people around the province and make sure that he had the very best possible candidates in every constituency in the province, and he put a lot of work and effort in to that. It's something that I've tried to emulate, as the Liberal leader, recognizing that it was a successful formula. I'm still working at getting good candidates and—because, you know, I think that the quality of the discussion, the quality of the laws that we bring

here depend fundamentally on the quality of the MLAs and the quality of the candidates that we have and the quality of the debate that we have not only here, but the debate at the time of elections. And this was clearly important to Duff Roblin, and it was one of the things that he did very, very successfully.

I thought it was interesting, you know, in 1959, I came across a Liberal brochure about that election, and I thought it might be worth just, as a reference point, reading that the emphasis in the Liberal brochure was about expanding opportunities without increasing taxation. And the reference here is, and I'll quote: It is reckless overspending, the inevitable consequence of reckless promising that brings about tax increases and which will likely lead to sales tax if the people give Roblin free rein.

Well, I think that, you know, we can acknowledge the major investments that Duff Roblin made, and, of course, Duff Roblin, at the time, said that the concept of a sales tax was as dead as a dodo, and that, of course, phrase maybe came back to haunt him a little bit afterwards, the sales tax was implemented.

But I think it also tells us something about, over time, the importance of being forward-thinking not only in terms of investment, but in terms of taxation. And across the country we recognize that the sales tax is an important and a sensible way of bringing in government revenue and making sure that the expenditures that we make are made, you know, with the resources in the public Treasury. And, of course, we have, as elected public officials, a responsibility to make sure those investments are made wisely.

* (15:10)

And, certainly, maybe with the one exception in The Pas, the investments that Duff Roblin made, that the large majority of those were very wisely made, and we can be very thankful to him and for all that he contributed to this province. Thank you.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, it's a great honour to be able to speak to this motion of condolence and to extend my condolences to those in the gallery here on behalf of Mr. Roblin and to just share a few personal reminiscences and comments with members of the Legislature here today.

It seems that this week is a week to mark the passing of a particular generation of provincial leadership—this morning, of course, talking about the Honourable Sterling Lyon. And I'm reminded that

just this last Saturday, people were gathered in Regina at the funeral of the Honourable Allan Blakeney and, of course, Allan Blakeney and Sterling Lyon together—apropos of the conversation this morning about the notwithstanding clause—together sought to have that particular clause put into the Constitution and succeeded in doing so. And they were part of that generation of premiers that were gathered around the table in 1980-81 in the patriation process that I was also a part of, as a member of Parliament, at the time.

But Duff Roblin was part of an earlier, an even earlier generation, of provincial leadership, and it's only because of his personal longevity that he was able to be around to be with this other generation of leaders, and I had—also had an opportunity to experience them. And I say them because at one time in 1981, I was on a Special Parliamentary Task Force on Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements, and we thought it would be useful to gather together a bunch of former premiers.

And so in the Parliamentary Restaurant one night, we had around the table Duff Roblin, John Robarts, Tommy Douglas, Louis Robichaud, Robert Bourassa, who was then the former premier of Québec but would later become the premier of Québec again, Robert Stanfield and I'm not sure, I think perhaps even Senator Ernest Manning was there at the time. So you can imagine all these political legends gathered around the table to share their perspective with us on federal-provincial relations and, particularly, federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. But, of course, the evening wore on and many things were discussed, and those who know their political history will not find it surprising to know that by the end of the evening, Tommy Douglas and John Robarts were arguing about medicare.

But certainly Duff Roblin will be known for the things that people have already mentioned, the way in which his government and him—and he, in particular, led Manitoba basically into the modern era in terms of infrastructure and education and the creation of provincial parks, Birds Hill Park, Grand Beach—the creation of the provincial park system itself, period, was—happened during the Roblin administration.

So all these things have been dealt with, but I first met Mr. Roblin when I had the pleasure of piping him in at a couple of different occasions because, like Duff Roblin, I also play the bagpipes,

and so I was called upon from time to time in—to pipe Duff Roblin in at various events, mostly Conservative events because my mother was an active Progressive Conservative at the time, and I would get recruited to do these things and, of course, I had occasion to pipe John Diefenbaker in a couple of times too.

And, of course, John Diefenbaker and Duff Roblin had a very special relationship. And you might even say a relationship that wasn't all that helpful at a certain point because it was because out of loyalty to John Diefenbaker, or so the story goes, that Duff Roblin was reluctant to enter the leadership race in 1967. And it was that hesitation that caused Robert Stanfield to kind of get of—a head start on him—a head start that he was never able to overcome.

And one can only imagine, regardless of one's political perspective, what kind of—how history may have turned out differently had Duff Roblin become the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada at that time. He was bilingual, unlike Mr. Stanfield, and the story that I take particular note of today, because it's one of those things where, you know, a number of occasions over the course of a political lifetime where if something had just happened a little differently, all kinds of things would have happened differently.

And people used to speculate back then that if Duff Roblin had been the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party when the Liberals were defeated on a budget motion, I think in February 1968, when Lester Pearson was still the prime minister and before the leadership convention that brought Pierre Trudeau to the leadership of the Liberal Party, that Duff Roblin probably would have been tough enough not to be charmed by Allan MacEachen into allowing another vote to take place the next day. And the Pearson government would have fallen in February, 1968, and there would have been an election where you would have had Duff Roblin versus Lester Pearson, and Canadian history might have unfolded in an entirely different way. I'm not making any judgments about how it would have unfolded, but we can certainly reflect on how these things play out or don't.

Now, some people misspend their youth in pool halls. I misspent mine, Mr. Speaker, in the YPCs and the—so it was in that context that I had an opportunity, also, to know Duff Roblin, and the misfortune of knocking on doors for him in the 1968 federal election, only for one day. We sent a troop

over from what was then the federal riding of St. Boniface. Transcona was in the federal riding of St. Boniface then, before it was liberated, and became the—part of the riding of Winnipeg-Birds Hill, which went on to be represented by a certain rookie NDP MP.

So I was knocking on doors for Mr. Roblin and, as was already mentioned, sales tax was still very fresh in people's mind, and all the canvassing that I've done ever since has always been better than that day I spent, I think it was in Wolseley, knocking on doors for Duff Roblin. I had a hard time getting onto the property most of the time, when they saw the button or the pamphlet. And I would sometimes kid the then-Senator Roblin about this, because the next time I encountered him was when I went to Ottawa in 1979, and he was a senator.

Now, both of us being fiscally responsible, we often shared a cab from the Ottawa airport to the Hill. And it was on those occasions, I spent actually many, many occasions, many trips from the Ottawa airport to the Hill with Senator Roblin, and we would have occasion to discuss many, many things. And it was a great opportunity to get to know him a bit better, and to get the benefit of his commentary on all the things that were going on at any particular time. And, of course, I would kid him from time to time about some of the earlier political lessons that I had acquired as a result of—at his expense, or as a result of his candidacy at that time.

So I kept up that relationship. Of course, he was the government House leader for the Mulroney government in the first two years, from '84 to '86 and, of course, would see him, not just in, you know, riding from the airport, but in the hallways of the Centre Block, and in the Parliamentary Restaurant, and in many other venues.

And I went—I had an occasion to go see him when he published his memoirs which are entitled *Speaking for Myself*. And I went to see him—by that time I think he was no longer a senator but he was associated with Metropolitan Securities. He had an office; I went and visited him. We talked about his memoirs and a number of other things. And then I saw him last on the 60th anniversary of D-Day on Juno Beach in 2004, and he was with Jim Carr, who's in the gallery, and courtesy of Jim, I have this great picture of Duff Roblin and myself on the—on Juno Beach.

And it was a credit, I think, to the former Premier Doer, that he asked Premier Roblin to

represent Manitoba, to represent the citizens of Manitoba and to represent all the veterans of Manitoba at that particular occasion, celebrating the 60th anniversary of Juno Beach. And it was great day, and it was a great day to be with someone from that generation. And so we pay respect also to his military service, which has been already noted, Mr. Speaker.

* (15:20)

So, a true gentleman, someone who always had a good word to say about his—even about his political opponents. I remember him being very complimentary about Russ Paulley, the former MLA for Transcona, leader of the CCF, who was the leader of the CCF and NDP when Mr. Roblin was the premier. He valued someone who kept his word and that's what he always said about Russ Paulley. He didn't agree with him most of the time, but he always kept his word. If he said he would do something, he did. If he made an agreement here on the floor of the Chamber, it was kept, a true gentleman and someone I think who truly deserves, for all the reasons that I've mentioned and all the reasons that everyone else has mentioned, to have been voted the Greatest Manitoban.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It's indeed an honour and a privilege to rise today and say a few words about our former premier, Duff Roblin, and I'd like to welcome his daughter, Jennifer, here today and his good friends, Bill Neville and Jim Carr.

I think it's fitting, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize and honour one of Manitoban's greatest, and he was voted as one of Manitoba's greatest people not so long ago, but it's fitting that we do this on Manitoba Day, today.

Duff Roblin is, of course, always remembered for his commitment to building the Red River Floodway, affectionately known as Duff's Ditch, and even though critics continuously questioned the need for the floodway, saying that it was unnecessary; it wouldn't work; and it would cost too much, it was Duff's persistence, hard work and vision that obviously has paid off many, many times for our province.

Now, flood-threatened communities from across North America come to Manitoba to study the floodway which saved countless Manitobans from tremendous devastation over the years.

Although Duff will always be remembered for the floodway, according to his memoirs, speaking for myself, he said that he felt his greatest accomplishment in Manitoba was in the area of education reforms and reforms to the social welfare and health-care systems.

Mr. Speaker, I personally remember Duff and Mary, and it's difficult to talk about Duff without mentioning Mary because they were inseparable and they were just a wonderful, wonderful couple. I personally remember Duff and Mary as good friends of my parents, Diane and Hugh McDonald. My mom was a huge fan of Duff's and she always referred to him and introduced him to people as Duff Roblin, the best prime minister Canada never had, and I remember that fondly and she did that often and she introduced him that way.

My parents actually met working on one of Duff Roblin's campaigns. My mom always talked about how she was going up a ladder, climbing a ladder to fasten a banner, and when she came down, my dad was holding the ladder for her, so I guess we can say in some small way, we can thank Duff that I'm here today so—but he was just a remarkable person, and my parents spent many a night together with Duff and Mary discussing politics and public policy, and I learned a lot from listening in on some of those discussions as a young child. And for that, Mr. Speaker, I'm truly grateful. I did learn a lot from those discussions.

Above all else, Mr. Speaker, I remember Duff as a kind and caring person, and I'll never forget when he and Mary visited my mother in the hospital. Duff had heard that mom had taken a turn for the worse in her battle for—her battle with ovarian cancer, and he and Mary didn't hesitate to come down to the hospital and see my mother. Unfortunately, they were too late. They didn't quite get there in time, but I know that she would have appreciated that visit very much, and that's the kind of person Duff Roblin was and Mary.

And so, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my husband, Jason, and my family, the McDonald clan and the extended Stefanson family, I want to extend my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Duff Roblin. He was a great Manitoban and a great Canadian.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): It certainly is an honour to be in this Legislature today and participate in the condolence motion for the Honourable Duff Roblin. I always find these days so

interesting because all of us in this House drop our partisanship, and we actually get to enjoy stories from one another and listen to incredible history in this province in regards to the people that have paved the way before us and have provided us with the opportunity to be politicians.

And, certainly, Duff Roblin, as my colleague said, the MLA for Elmwood, he referred to Duff Roblin as a political legend, and he's certainly, I think, coined exactly who our former premier was here in the province of Manitoba.

The MLA for Elmwood also referred to the time—the political time that he ran for office in the 1950s and the 1960s, and Russ Paulley, at the time, was the leader of the CCF and the NDP, and one of the women that ran in those days for the CCF and the NDP was my mother, Hazel Allan. She ran in the constituency of Lakeside. And this might come as a huge surprise to you, but she didn't get as many votes as some of the other people under—yes—under Duff Roblin's party.

She ran in Lakeside in 1953 and she got 342 votes, but I'm sure that she was pleased to be part of a very, very exciting time when women were just starting to run in the province of Manitoba. And I can actually remember some of the days when she was talking about her early years and how there were great things happening in the province of that—in the province at the time, and it was because of the incredible leadership that Duff Roblin showed during those times.

We all know him, of course, as the incredible visionary behind Duff's Ditch, but he was also a visionary in regards to education, and, Jennifer, thank you for being here today. She said, at her father's funeral, that none of his accomplishments meant much to him. He found satisfaction in making life better for others. Well, he definitely did that. He believed that public education was not a cost but a wholesome investment in human life, growth and comprehension, and that it is on the foundation of an educated populace that successful societies are built. And we believe that as well, Mr. Speaker. We believe that education is the equalizer, regardless of your prior learning, your economic status, your lot in life. If an individual has an education, they can participate in our society.

When Duff came to power in 1958, Manitoba's education system was badly behind the times. Duff said that the best that could be said of the state of education in Manitoba at that time was that it met the

needs of students in the 1930s. Per capita spending on education was the lowest of all of the provinces. There were no community colleges, local school taxes were highly unequal in different areas of the province. Duff set to work immediately to reform the education system. His first priority was to enlarge rural high schools and bring them to urban standards in terms of quality, variety and opportunities. A substantial bus transportation system was established to get students to the new schools and, subsequently, there was a dramatic increase in the number of students attending the new schools.

In 1965, he introduced an amendment to The School Attendance Act that raised the age of mandatory school attendance to 16 from 15. And here we are today in the House with a piece of legislation that will now raise that age from 16 to 18. He established free textbooks for students, improved working conditions for teachers, increased the Province's contribution to funding public education by 60 per cent, established the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, and the Faculty of Education was created.

* (15:30)

He instituted a system of shared services so that students outside the public system could have access to public education services that they wanted, such as busing and textbooks. Duff did away with a 1916 law that made English the sole language of instruction. As a result, French was restored as a teaching language.

He made great contributions to post-secondary education as well. He expanded and modernized universities to meet growing needs of the time. He established scholarships and increased aid to students requiring financial assistance. He promoted the Brandon College and United College to university status, creating Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg. He recognized that community colleges were essential to the economic structure of the province, supplying skilled workers to keep the economy moving. He established the post-secondary community college system in Manitoba, which had not existed previously. Three community colleges were created, Red River in Winnipeg, Assiniboine in Brandon and Keewatin in The Pas. Education in northern Manitoba was a priority. He united schools in desperate settlements of the north to create the Frontier School Division.

Years after leaving public life, he continued to contribute to improving Manitoba's education

system. In 1993 he was appointed the head-to head a commission that would examine the position of higher education in Manitoba. The commission made two principal recommendations: double the size of our community colleges and strengthen the growth and development of distance-education technology to allow Manitobans access to education services to all, regardless of location, age or previous qualification.

And one of the bold measures that the premier tried to implement was merit pay for teachers, and it's interesting because we're having that discussion today. Internationally, education reform and all across this world is discussing merit pay for teachers. And, in fact, my last meeting with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, they asked me about it, and, of course, I said, well, you know, I would consult with you first and I want to have consensus. But maybe what I should've said was, well, Duff tried it and it didn't work, so maybe I shouldn't.

Beyond education, he reformed hospital and Medicare and he brought in our flag. He definitely made his mark on Manitoba and left a legacy that will benefit our province for many years to come.

And I have my own personal story about Duff. I was privileged to sit with Duff Roblin at the Manitoba Business Council's 10th anniversary dinner. There was a table of eight, and I was sitting there with Hartley and Heather Richardson and some business people, and I was so excited because I was there by myself and I had the opportunity to sit beside Duff Roblin, and I'd never really known him or had an opportunity to speak with him before. He was kind and he was dignified. We had a wonderful conversation. He was the same age as my mother, I realized from reading his obituary. And, at about 7:30 at night, Jim, I looked over and realized he had been—we were all saying yes to the wine, of course, but he wasn't, and I thought, you know, I bet he's getting hungry, because I know when my mother was at my house for dinner, if I wasn't in the kitchen rattling those pots and pans by six o'clock, she'd come in and go, so, how's supper moving along here tonight, Nancy? And so I looked at him and I said, Mr. Roblin, are you hungry? And he said, well, yes, I wouldn't mind something to eat. And I said, oh, okay. So I just kind of had an opportunity to signal to the server that was serving our table. I said, do you think you could just sneak out a little food for Mr. Roblin, while, you know, the ceremony's still going on, because I think he's getting a little hungry. So they brought him a little bit of food ahead of time, and he leaned over and he said, thank you so much,

that was so kind of you. And he was just, absolutely, a peach.

I do want to say that he really was an incredible, incredible legend in this province, and I fully appreciate the opportunity to have—to say a few words and to thank him. I'd like to thank the family for sharing him with us and thank you for supporting him all those years. I know how hard premiers work and how they're hardly ever at home. Thank you, Jennifer, thank you to your family and thank you for his legacy.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And I, too, am honoured and humbled to stand here today and put a few words on the public record in recognition of Duff Roblin, who served our province so well for so many years.

And, at the outset, I'd like to say to Jennifer, to Bill Neville and Jim Carr, thank you for being here to share this day and some of the stories that people have shared with this Legislature.

We've heard, over and over again, this afternoon, of the legacy that he has left to the province. And I don't know how many Manitobans could, 44 years after they left public office here in the province of Manitoba, still be talked about on almost a daily basis, especially at this time of year, when we're experiencing some of the worst waters and devastation by those waters in our province.

And we all know of the legacy of Duff Roblin and Duff's Ditch, and all of the other things that he did to contribute in such a positive and significant way to the life of many, many Manitobans, whether it be in the education system that he modernized at the time, whether it be the infrastructure and roads that get us from point A to point B, or whether it be the social services that he had the foresight and the vision to move forward, so many, many years ago.

And I didn't know Duff Roblin before 1988, when we were first elected to government and I had the honour and the privilege of being appointed to Gary Filmon's first Cabinet. And the very next morning, bright and early the next morning, there was a command performance breakfast, and at that breakfast, Duff Roblin came to speak to us. And it was my first opportunity to meet him first-hand, and I have to just indicate what a gentleman he was, how much he stressed upon us that it was so very important that we had chosen the field of public service, that all of us, and there are very few of us that have—in—as Manitobans—that have the

opportunity to sit in this Legislature and participate in the democratic process, and it's an honour for each and every one of us to be here and that we should all, whether in government or in opposition, take our jobs very seriously and look at, you know, what we've been entrusted with by the people and the electorate of the province of Manitoba.

And he talked too about our responsibility as Cabinet ministers, that we'd be making decision in the province of Manitoba over the coming years and how it was something that we should take very seriously. Something that we—a position that we should honour and ensure that we were making the right decisions for the right reasons, and that we should take our responsibilities very seriously, knowing that Manitobans had entrusted us to govern the province. And so we had many wise words of wisdom from him that morning and I was a bit in awe at the time.

And I think some of us—many of us would know, in this House, what a responsibility it is to make decisions and have to live by those decisions and know that, from time to time, not everyone is going to be terribly excited about the decisions that you make; some people may be very unhappy. But that is what the democratic process is all about, and he felt very strongly and believed very strongly in the roles of everyone that sat in this Legislature. And so I just want to say that that was my first encounter.

We had several opportunities to meet over the years. I was honoured to have been present when we named Duff Roblin Park and know that the work that was done behind the scenes to establish that park was—it was not an easy undertaking or task, because he was a very humble man. He didn't want a lot of publicity and any major, big fanfare. Everything that was done that surrounded any decisions around Duff Roblin were decisions that had to be made, respecting his desire not to have a lot of public fanfare.

* (15:40)

He—after—left—he left public office and the Senate, lived a life that—a private life. He cared very much for his family and his friends, and he just wanted the province to move on. There's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that Manitobans, in 2008, voted him the most important man in the province of Manitoba, gave him that recognition, well deserved. And we know that his legacy will live on and there will be many, many days in the future where Duff Roblin's

name will be used in a very positive way as a result of the legacy that he's left to all of us as Manitobans.

So I want to say, on behalf of the constituents of River East constituency, my condolences to the family, but let's celebrate the life and the legacy of Duff Roblin. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): It is, indeed, a great honour to get up today and put a few reflections on the record.

I know this is a condolence motion, but I would like to make this a moment of celebration. I will make this a very personal reflection, so I ask the House to bear with me.

And, back in the first few days of 1997, the Schuler household was starting to get ready for a new addition to the family. We, at that time, had Brigitta, who was about 15 months old, and we were expecting No. 2, and he—found out it was going to be a he—and he was slowly making himself known in the family. And as the months moved into spring, we started to hear rumblings about this great flood that was going to be coming and, you know, you don't give it a lot of heed until all of a sudden it was upon us. You know, you're a young family, very busy with all the activities and a growing family, and all of a sudden the flood of the century was upon us.

And I know that on the night of the 25th, we were still busy sandbagging all over North Kildonan and East St. Paul, and Tanya, who was nine months pregnant, decided she was going to sandbag as well. And on the 25th that night, driving home, we realized that we were going to have an addition to the family. And, sure enough, Stefan was born April 26th at 6 o'clock—actually, 6:09 in the morning. So two days later we brought him home. We lived in Fraser's Grove in beautiful community, and we brought him home that morning, and by that night the military was on Kildonan Drive sandbagging. And for the next day and a half, Kildonan Drive had to be sandbagged.

And that is, in itself, not significant, only that if you compare Fraser's Grove to Fargo, or east—I think it was East Grand Forks, that neighbourhood is the equivalent of Fraser's Grove. It would have been the same elevation. And if anybody after the flood of the century drove through East Grand Forks, and we did that after the flood of the century, we actually went off the highway and drove through, it was probably one of the most appalling things you could have seen. The water was so powerful and came so

quickly that houses—like ours—were actually lifted off their foundations and moved several feet. You could see the water lines. The higher houses had them halfway through the picture window in the front of the house, others it was over the roof.

So, in the case of our home, where we were in Fraser's Grove, it probably would have been over the tip of the house. Probably the only thing standing would have been the chimney sticking out of the water.

So to say that Duff's Ditch saved our family is accurate, and we had already moved a lot of our stuff out of the basement. We had moved the piano into storage. But, again, waters tend to come quickly. There would have been no way to have saved all of our belongings. It was a beautifully renovated house. It would have been destroyed, as was East Grand Forks.

So, clearly, we were very thankful to former Premier Duff Roblin. And time sort of went on, and I thought, you know, I would pick up a little book for Stefan. And the *Free Press* put out the *A Red Sea Rising*. I thought, you know, how appropriate if I would maybe approach Duff Roblin and see if he would sign the book. So I called him up and said, you know, who I was. I was a school trustee at the time and, you know, would he entertain the thought of signing this book for my family. He said, you know, why don't you come down and we'll talk about it. So I took a piece of paper with a former business I owned, I put Stefan's name on it. And I was very nervous because, you know, he's just a hero amongst all of us. And I took a nice picture of Brigitta and Stefan, both smiling, and I dropped it off for him. And he said: So, tell me a little bit about it. And I explained to him where we lived, and I said, you know, if you hadn't done what you did, if you wouldn't have, you know, fought the tough fight and had division, we would've lost everything. It would've all have been gone.

It was very emotional at that time. You know, I remember calling family in Edmonton, and I—like, I thought maybe we'd lose it all. If anything would've gone wrong along Kildonan Drive, we, where we lived, we would've gotten all the water.

So I explained it all to him, and he said, well, you know, why don't you just leave this with me and I'll call you when I'm—I've signed the book? So a couple of weeks later, I went and I picked it up, and I just picked it up from the desk as he was busy. And he put a really nice note in the book, and he put: For

Stefan—With all good wishes, Duff Roblin. I thought that was very nice, and then he put another little note on the piece of paper that I'd left, and he said on the note: Thank you for the picture of the two beautiful and charming children. Best wishes, Duff Roblin, December 18th, 1997. And I looked through the book and he kept the picture.

So I—Jennifer, I just want you to know if there's a photo somewhere of two little blond children, a boy and a girl, they're mine, and, you know, I'm sure you go through some of the stuff, and you got to wonder what in heaven's name is this picture doing in the memoirs.

You know what? He was really touched and he kept looking at that picture, and I'd only given it to him so that, you know when you kind of write a little something in a book you give, you know, a reference point, you know, and I really stressed upon him that, you know, they had no idea what was going on.

I mean, there was a lot excitement—there were, you know, military vehicles that Brigitta and Stefan knew nothing at that time, but, you know, Brigitta was excited, but, you know, they went to bed in very safe, warm beds and got up in the morning and had breakfast, not knowing, not having an inclination of any kind what danger stood outside their door, and that someone somewhere said: You know, I have this great idea. Let's dig a ditch around the city. And, for that, you know, they would mock him, you know, Duff's Ditch.

And, because he went through all that, nothing ever happened to our home. So he looked at the picture and the whole time I talked to him he kept saying, my, they are nice-looking children, he said, and I will forever cherish that moment of Duff Roblin and the time I had. In fact, periodically, I pull out the book and, you know, times like these, you pull them out, and you show the kids, and you say, you know, this former premier, you know, he signed the book and he kept your picture.

And so somewhere in your memoirs, the family in the picture, and, you know, perhaps they will symbolize all the thousands and tens of thousands and probably hundreds of thousands of other children, who since then went to bed, warm, comfortable homes, got up in the morning, had a great breakfast, never knowing that because of Duff Roblin their homes and they were safe.

So to the family, to the friends, to this Chamber, to a man who just is the greatest Manitoban, we've

heard a lot of other things—I thank him, personally, on behalf of all the families who he saved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'd like to take a moment to welcome to the Legislature, Duff Roblin's daughter, Jennifer, and good friends, Jim Carr and Bill Neville. And I'm sure like I am, they're probably finding a lot of these stories very interesting because this personalizes somebody that has become quite the legend in Manitoba, and yet, on the other side, you also get to hear about not just the political legend about—but about the man as well.

I do feel so very privileged and humbled to be able to rise today to speak to this condolence motion about Duff Roblin, Manitoba's Greatest Manitoban. And I have to say, standing here listening to, you know, what people are saying, I am so very proud to be a Progressive Conservative because of the great legacy of Duff Roblin, and hearing what he stood for and what he did has made me so proud that I am part of the same party that he was part of.

* (15:50)

It's also intriguing, I think, that we're doing this on Manitoba Day, to have a condolence motion on Manitoba Day, because it's a historic date and it's a meaningful date to put a lot of these comments forward.

I did meet with Duff Roblin once, and it was quite accidentally, actually. I'd spoken to him on a few occasions as we were at events, and I had the opportunity, a few times, to speak with him on the phone. But I did meet him once and it was actually at a time when we were both leaving a funeral at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue and we met in the parking lot and, as we were in the parking lot, he also introduced me to his wife, and I have to say that we stood there for quite a while. A lot of the cars had already left, and this man was so gracious in standing there, giving me his time to just talk. And he introduced me to Mary, and you could visibly see and feel the bond that existed between this man and this woman. And you could actually see his concern for her and his devotion to her and, you know, certainly, a reciprocal feeling was there too.

It was quite an experience for me, I have to say, because, in my mind, you know, you grow up and you get involved in politics and you have this view and vision of who Duff Roblin was, and then I get to stand in a parking lot and have a conversation with him about Manitoba and, you know, about people,

and just to hear his views on it. I found him to be very gracious, very humble. He gave me his full attention. I can remember, it was quite windy that day too, and, you know, everything was blowing around, but he never made a, you know, a move to hurry up and let's go, we don't have time for you. He was very engaging and I was really so appreciative of that.

We know he had a larger-than-life presence, but we also know that he wasn't very tall. But it does show you that you can't measure a man by his height or, you know, by anything in terms of physical appearance. A person's level of measure is certainly built on many other things. Obviously, Duff Roblin was a man of great tenacity, determination and courage. I think we all realize what it took to get that floodway built and that he had to have all of those qualities in order to make that happen. It was actually hard to imagine the kind of fight that he might have had in order to move that project forward. But it certainly showed his persistence, his hard work and his determination and how that personified itself.

In reading his book, it was very obvious about how passionate he was about education. In fact, I think I've read that section on education at least twice. I didn't want to miss anything in there because I felt that I never had much of a chance to talk to him about the education system, but I knew how passionate he felt about it and I thought I'm sure I'm going to be able to learn more about it by reading what he had put into the book. And, you know, it's remarkable, in his period of time of being premier, that he built 225 new schools. That really is quite a phenomenal feat. But he also moved forward on policies to modernize Manitoba in many way, whether it was welfare, hydro, roads, provincial parks. I think we need to be so grateful for what he's done in terms of provincial parks.

He also had a profound optimism about Manitoba. I think our leader has commented on that. And it was that optimism, I think, that, you know, gave him the ability to do a lot of the things which he did. And I think it was that optimism that also inspired many Manitobans then. And, I think, even now, for many of us, to learn more about the man is very inspiring and continues to inspire us now.

I got to know a little bit more about Duff's grandpa, Sir Rodmond Roblin, when I brought forward a private member's bill to create the Nelly McClung Foundation. And, from that private

member's bill, we now have a wonderful monument on the grounds of the Legislature dedicated to Nelly McClung. But it was certainly interesting to hear about her dynamic in her day as she dealt with Sir Rodmond Roblin. And it was a really interesting learning experience.

So, on behalf of my family and on behalf of the people of Charleswood, I would just like to indicate to the family and the friends our condolences, and to thank you also for sharing this incredible person with all of us and for allowing us, past and present, to have him in our lives.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured and proud to rise today, along with my wife, Gail and the residents of the people of Lakeside, to pass on our deepest condolences to the family and friends here today, in particular, Jennifer, who come from Toronto; his long-time friend Bill Neville; and, of course, Jim Carr, who've I gotten to know since I was elected. In talking to his brother, Rod, I know he wanted to be here today, but I know he couldn't make it for other reasons. But I know he would have loved to have been here.

I realize that each of you had a role to play in the life of such a great man. And here on Manitoba Day, celebrating its 141st anniversary, I also think it's important to recognize the fact that with the Winnipeg floodway, known as Duff's Ditch, has been used time and time again, and it's been reflected here in this Chamber today. And it'll be recognized for years and years to come to protect those, not only property but lives in years to come.

I also think it would be remiss if we didn't remember him, besides just building the ditch, but the other side of him that had to do with the education. In my previous life as an education administrator for the Interlake School Division, we went through a huge building time as well. And as the member from Charleswood pointed out, building some 225 schools and, of course, restoring French as a teaching language in Manitoba schools, was a significant achievement as well.

And I noticed the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) must have been reading my notes over here, because I had the same quote that I wanted to read out as well, that he said in 1958, and I quote: "Education is not a cost or a bill or expense but a wholesome investment in human life, growth and comprehension." And that was in the *Winnipeg Free*

Press, May 31st, 2010. And then also immediately after taking office, Mr. Roblin rebuilt and upgraded the highway system in the north which led to more prospects for economic possibilities, lowering transfer cost and possible growth in the tourism sector as well. It was Duff Roblin who helped developed hydro production in the north.

Also one of the other things I wanted to just put on the record that was on CJOB quoting Duff Roblin: If I was to list the things that I was responsible for, I wouldn't put the ditch at No. 1. Mind you, it would be on the list all right, but it wouldn't be No. 1. I would put on reforms to education, reforms to social welfare, health care, but I'm not going to complain because I am favourably remembered on account of a dike. That suits me just fine. End of quote.

However, Mr. Speaker, we know that Duff Roblin family and friends, can be very proud of the accomplishments of this great Manitoban and one that I know, each and every member in this House. And those Manitobans can be very proud and honoured to have time today to pay the respects to such a wonderful Manitoban. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): And I'm also proud and honoured to be able to speak today to the condolence motion and offer my condolences from my family and from my constituency of Morris to Jennifer, daughter of Duff Roblin, and Jim Carr and Bill Neville, friends.

I often stand in this Chamber and reflect on the importance of being here and just the beauty of this room and thinking about the number of people that have actually been privileged to be seated in this room. There's very few people really in this province, and having the opportunity to share this room and this building with legends like Duff Roblin, is certainly a very humbling experience.

* (16:00)

I want to also just say that we are experiencing a horrendous flood right now. I have the great fortune of representing a constituency which has both the Red River and the Assiniboine River, and we have just, again, operated the floodway this spring to alleviate flooding around the city of Winnipeg from the Red River, and now we are looking to the west and experiencing a great deluge coming from the west as well, Mr. Speaker. So it's something that is very top of mind this spring when you talk about Duff's Ditch, the Red River Floodway.

It was such a visionary thing to do. Not a popular thing at the time, and I know that, for a period of time, it was referred to as Duff's folly. Not a popular thing at the time. People ridiculed this big, expensive project to take water around the city of Winnipeg and alleviate flooding from many, many homes in the city.

And it was operated many times before the great flood of 1997 and to a lesser extent, but it really did come into its own in the great Flood of the Century in 1997, and, since that time, I think there has barely—barely—been a year that it has not been operated either in spring or summer to save homes in the city of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

I was speaking to my husband about Duff Roblin. He knew Duff Roblin, as did my father-in-law, Marcel Taillieu, and asking him about building the floodway because, as a young teenager, he was employed by his father, Marcel, and their company, a brand-new, fledgling construction company, was actually going to do some work on the Red River Floodway expansion—or I should say, the original, original floodway around Winnipeg. And I don't know what the labour laws were at that point, but he probably wasn't old enough to be working on construction equipment. But, at that time, it was—he was working for his dad and they didn't have many people, but they had actually subbed a job from Northern Construction, who was one of several—Northern Construction was the large firm that was contracted to build the floodway, and Taillieu Construction was one of several smaller companies who actually got some subcontracts to do some of the work. And what our company did was did the excavation for the control structure at the floodway inlet, Mr. Speaker.

Marcel, my father-in-law, knew Duff Roblin very well through initial contact, I think, way back then, but also Marcel was a city councillor for Charleswood, and at that point, Headingley was a part of Charleswood. So Marcel was the councillor for the area and really wanted to upgrade the gravel road running through Charleswood known as Roblin Boulevard, and Duff Roblin's government did provide that upgrading to Roblin Boulevard. And that basically opened up Charleswood and Headingley for development.

Since that time, Mr. Speaker, in 1992, of course, Headingley seceded from the city of Winnipeg. But Roblin Boulevard does run right by my house. In fact, I have—I used to have an address on Roblin

Boulevard; 7221 Roblin Boulevard was my address. I haven't moved. I live at the same house, but I got a new address because I had a different street now running—I had to close off my driveway off of Roblin Boulevard because they put in a paved street beside that driveway. So now I had to change my address to One Hermitage Road, but I didn't move. So try explaining that one when you're getting your driver's licence.

Our construction company is located at 7400 Roblin Boulevard, and certainly every day I drive on Roblin Boulevard. So I'm always reminded of the name of Duff Roblin.

I also phoned Wilf De Graves, former Judge Wilf De Graves, who is my father-in-law's brother and my husband's uncle, Uncle Wilf, and spoke to him because he also knew Duff Roblin and he offered some insights to me.

He told me that in his youth he was, for a time, Duff Roblin's driver, and one day, he and his friend, Murdoch MacKay [*phonetic*], decided that they would bring Murdoch's sports car to pick up Duff to take him out campaigning, and when they arrived at Duff's house, Duff took one look at the car and went, not a good idea, and sent them to get a different car because the sports car, Murdoch's sports car, wasn't going to do what he needed to be done for his campaign tour.

He also, Wilf De Graves also told me that he was also a great friend of Art Mauro, and, at a party one night, I guess some remarks were made about municipal councillors, and Duff was very, very quick to defend anybody who represented people at a very basic level as a municipal councillor because they were the best representatives of democracy, with little pay and less recognition.

I had the opportunity to meet Duff on three occasions. The first time I met him, it was with Marcel, and it was at an event at The Forks. And I'm trying to remember the year, but I think it was around 2004, and it was a ceremony commemorating the—well, there was a pillar at The Forks and the levels of all the floods, the great floods are marked on that pillar, from 1826 all the way up to '97 at that point, and so there was a bit of a ceremony there and Duff Roblin was there.

And, of course, Marcel, never the shy person, says to me, come on. I'm going to introduce you to Duff Roblin. And I was a little nervous. Here was a great statesman before me. I was a newly elected

MLA and a little nervous to meet such a great person, but Marcel dragged me along. Come along, we have to meet him, and then he said, well, you have to have your picture taken with him too. So, what could I say? I was so pleased to have that opportunity.

The second time I met Duff was less fortunate circumstances. It was at the funeral for Warner Jorgensen, former MLA for Morris, in Morris, and I walked into the church and there, sitting together, was Duff Roblin, Sterling Lyon and Gary Filmon. So that was quite a humbling experience to see three great premiers sitting in a row in the church, all together. And later at that day at the lunch provided afterwards, I had the opportunity to speak to him again.

And the last time that I had the opportunity to speak to Duff Roblin was a social setting at a Christmas party at Brian and Ruth Hastings's about, I think it would have been three, maybe four years ago, and ever the engaging gentleman, speaking about any topic, certainly, politics was one thing he did want to give me some advice on, but he was happy to speak just about anything, Mr. Speaker.

I—again, I just want to say that the vision of Duff Roblin—we know that he—he's most, I guess, mostly remembered for the floodway and how that has changed the life here in Manitoba and Winnipeg and, certainly, other things that he has done. We've heard about his great contributions in education, in opening up the north and many, many other things, Mr. Speaker.

He'll always be remembered. Every spring, we're going to have—we call them high water events in Morris, we don't like to use the "flood" word, and—but every spring, when there's high water, we will always remember Duff Roblin and, as I say, every day I drive home on Roblin Boulevard.

* (16:10)

And I just would like to conclude by saying my condolences to the family. Thank you for being here, and from my family and from my constituency, best wishes. And, just on one further note, on the day of Duff Roblin's death, the floodway was put into operation following a heavy rainfall on the weekend, and that was on May 30th of 2010.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House and

speak to the condolence motion that has been put forward in honour of former Premier Duff Roblin of the Province of Manitoba. I want to speak to his daughter, Jennifer, who's here with us today, and Mr. Carr and Mr. Neville as well, and just to make sure that I rise as a member of Arthur-Virden, who happens to have the privilege of holding that position today, to let the family know that, of all of the traditions of rural Manitoba, we respect and—the views and the good things that Mr. Roblin did for not only the city of Winnipeg here in—and work that he did in the city but throughout Manitoba. And it's expressly interesting to me that when I look at—the—of course, we all know the Duff's Ditch and the education areas, but it's of particular of interest to me that I speak of how he built northern roads, because my wife came from Flin Flon. And, without having the opportunity to have perhaps got there a little easier on some of the roads that were—that he had the opportunity to build, we may not have met either.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also found it interesting that on Manitoba Day, May the 12th, that we're doing these condolence motions, that we speak of Mr. Roblin this afternoon, but this morning we spoke of Mr. Sterling Lyon, who was the premier. And I noticed that Mr. Roblin was first elected to the Manitoba Legislature at the age of 31. He—I noted this morning that Mr. Lyon was appointed Attorney General at the young age of 31 by Premier Roblin. And I just find it interesting that two young men of such interest in political life and in devoting themselves to the commitment to their province and to making life better, both got into it at such a young age. And, obviously, they were very involved in it before that or they wouldn't have both been present in the Legislature.

Of course, we know that Mr. Roblin comes from a long family of politicians in Manitoba as well, and that he served overseas in the Royal Canadian Air Force, retiring in 1946 as wing commander after the Second World War. And I note as well that he had a—I would call it perhaps a diversified education. I think it helped him with his background to be educated in Winnipeg schools, studied here at the University of Manitoba, and then went on to the University of Chicago, before being elected here in the Legislature.

And in 1958, Mr. Speaker, he led the Progressive Conservatives here in the province of Manitoba to a minority government, perhaps following around on the, you know, the other man at that time in Canada that had a minority government

was Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, in those areas. And I've heard that they've worked closely together on other areas before, and that's certainly, I think, what probably inspired Mr. Roblin to seek political office in a national campaign back in 1967, of which as a youth in rural Manitoba, I've—in Canada's centennial year, I followed very closely in regards to the—I'll never forget watching the national convention unfolding on television at that time and looked upon it with interest—more than interest because, of course, our fellow Manitoban was seeking that leadership role for a responsible activity in the country of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, others have said the importance of the ditch and the floodway diversion around the city of Winnipeg and how important it is to history of Manitoba and how difficult it was to perhaps put down some of the naysayers at that time that thought it was too expensive or didn't think it would ever get fully used. And, when I look at the expansion of it today and how it is helping us in our present crisis, it's—you don't have to look very far to know how important these decisions can be.

And Mr. Roblin had a great knack, it seemed, for being able to find the future vision for the province of Manitoba, being able to put it forward, whether it was in the form of Duff's Ditch, the changes in the school system that I remember hearing around our kitchen table as well, because my father was a school trustee in those early '60s. And, when some of these changes were made, there were some difficult debates across the whole province, Mr. Speaker, but his foresight and vision persevered, and we have a much better system of education in Manitoba today because of his efforts.

But the—one of the things that drove the importance of the floodway home to me was as the now the Conservation and Water Stewardship, climate change critic, I had the opportunity in mid-January to be in Fargo, North Dakota, at the Red River Basin Commission annual general meeting there, and to—they normally get about a hundred or so, 150 people to that meeting. There was about 300 this year and, I think, because everyone knew of the presence of all of the snow and the saturated soils and the oncoming conditions that were leading to what might be a flood of greater proportion than a century, Mr. Speaker, that we are now faced with, there was a great deal of interest in Fargo by our American neighbours in regards to the importance of how they could protect cities like Fargo in particular. They've done a pretty decent job of Grand Forks

since the '97 flood, but Fargo is still very concerned, and they asked the presence of Manitobans to come to Fargo to explain how Duff's Ditch works.

And there was a good presentation made by our Province at that particular meeting, and many, many Americans came to those of us from Manitoba to say how simply they found this operation to be and if, Mr. Speaker, it's anything but simple, but it shows the foresight that, all these years later, people are still trying to emulate the work that was done, put forward by Mr. Roblin's vision at that time. And I think that'll stay with me for the rest of my life, just in regards to some of the concerns and questions that were provided to us at that time.

Having restored French as a teaching language in Manitoba schools was very important, Mr. Speaker. Education was obviously—policy was a key to Mr. Roblin, and I guess I would say that I find that some of the other areas of importance through the nine-year period that he was premier of this province, apart from the one I mentioned about regional government in Winnipeg, was of most importance to farmers was in the area of crop insurance and the work done in that area to provide a decent crop insurance program for the farming community in the rural—made many rural lives much better because of his efforts.

The highways of the north, and I don't—you know, you may—we may have the Golden Boy on top of the building that has the vision of pointing north. He might have been the golden man that actually made it happen and put some of these roads into the north and opened up some of the north to make it a much better opportunity.

And, I think, his vision of conservation and making places for Manitobans to visit in a natural setting showed through in the development of the two parks, but they're not just two parks, they're Grand Beach and Birds Hill, and they are very prominent parks in the province of Manitoba, were then, have been now and always will be, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

And so, with that, I just want to say, again, on behalf of the citizens of south-west Manitoba, in particular the constituency that I represent in Arthur-Virden, how privileged we are to be able to offer condolences through myself today, or I am privileged to be able to offer condolences on behalf of all of my constituents in Arthur-Virden and pay a tribute to the life of Duff Roblin and the

development that he took part in in making Manitoba such a great province.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): It is, indeed, a great honour and privilege to have this opportunity to express our own experiences and share them with the Chamber and to live on in legacy in *Hansard* our reflections upon what I do, indeed, believe is the greatest Manitoban.

* (16:20)

To the family, thank you for being here today to share this moment with us. And, in my presence today, I have a very cherished possession that the memoirs of Duff Roblin contained in the book, *Speaking for Myself*, first-run issue that he presented to me with an autograph: With the warmest regard to David Faurshou, Duff Roblin. I will always cherish this book. It is a collection of memories. Some are shared with our family, as I remember some of the campaigns that were mapped on our living room floor with Walter Weir and my father and with Duff's leadership. And it is with great warmth that I think of those memories. And, too, contained in this book, most fittingly, is a picture because today we are honouring with condolence motions two gentlemen who are in a picture together as the inaugural Cabinet of Duff Roblin's, and it was Sterling Lyon, and the picture is contained within this book.

It is also very fitting, being on Manitoba Day, that we have these motions. As well, there's been lots spoken of the many accomplishments in education and certainly infrastructure that are attributed to Duff's tenure as premier.

I will mention, though, that the structures within the flood proofing of southern Manitoba, and most certainly Winnipeg, had two other elements not yet mentioned in today's discussion, and that being the Shellmouth Dam and the Assiniboine Diversion in Portage la Prairie. And we know that, as we speak, that the Assiniboine Diversion is, indeed, being pushed to the absolute max capacity to continue on saving from flood waters southern Manitoba.

It is a real privilege, as I say, to have shared memories of Duff Roblin on a personal nature, and we have spoken of his involvement on the provincial level and, but—just peripherally on the federal level. And I have very strong memories of sharing thoughts with Mr. Roblin on his life in the Senate. And we chuckled at a moment when he said that the Senate, indeed, was a chamber of value—a chamber where sobering second thoughts were shared. And we

started to laugh because the—both of us thought about Sir John A. Macdonald and, indeed, no truer words were spoken because of our memories in—that contained in our history books of Sir John A.'s consumption, shall I say, of spirits.

But it was in those discussions that I gained a great deal of appreciation for not only his wisdom and experience at the provincial level, but that on the federal level in the Upper Chamber, and how important that Chamber is to our democratic process. And so when I had the opportunity, along with other members of the Assembly, to participate in a committee that travelled the province in search of persons' thoughts on the continuation of the senatorial process at the federal level, I carried with me a lot of thoughts that Duff Roblin had shared with me. And, hence, many questions that I posed to presenters came directly from those discussions with Duff Roblin, and I truly appreciate those discussions.

And we went on, and I think of the very last, intensive discussion I had with Duff Roblin, and he was always warm and accommodating and made time. He maintained an office and office hours for anyone that wanted to talk with him at the top floor, corner office, at Kenaston and Grant. And I listened because I asked the question, what do you see Manitoba greatest challenges in the future? I never got another word in edgewise.

He spoke upwards to two hours without any prodding as he went through the health-care challenges and the infrastructure challenges that he saw in front of Manitoba, those in justice as well. And all of those were spoken very passionately. And some of the ideas he shared with me, I hope that we will have an opportunity to bring into place because it is important to Manitobans.

And Mr. Roblin spoke in his book about the—his family history and how R.P., as his grandfather was known, Sir Rodmond Roblin, the premier of our province, earlier in—earliest—in the 1900s, as we brought Manitoba into a new era. And of—within that new era, we had to showcase what Manitoba was all about, and with the construction of this absolutely phenomenal facility, he took great pride in what his grandfather was able to accomplish, and today we can be so very, very proud. Although he did temper those thoughts of pride with some of the activities, shall I say, of Cabinet ministers that went on without his grandfather's knowing, and led to, perhaps, an element of reason for the defeat of his grandfather in 1917. I think it had something to do with the

women's vote and Nellie McClugg. And those are some of the thoughts that were there, but those were very, very strong in Duff and the pride and commitment to Manitoba.

As the representative from Portage la Prairie, I will say, though, that the construction of the flood-proofing structures that are in use today led to a change in representation in Portage la Prairie. We were very proudly Conservative at that time; however, the loss of business to the downtown merchants with the construction of the new Trans-Canada Highway bypass around Portage la Prairie left disdain amongst those in business on the main avenue in Portage la Prairie. So that brought out that particular vote.

And then, coincidentally, the farmland that was going to be used for the construction of the Assiniboine River Diversion just happened to be owned by the family of the sitting member, John Christianson. And then Portage la Prairie did not continue as—on the sitting—on the side of the government with the election of a Liberal member who stayed on for—on 18 years here in Portage la Prairie, Mr. Johnson.

But I don't think that there is any doubt in anyone's mind that the foresight that was shown by Duff Roblin was not the right move for all Manitobans. And, indeed, I stand with great pride today, representing Portage la Prairie, and to have this very personal opportunity to thank the family and to thank Mr. Roblin for his service to all Manitobans. He, indeed, in my mind, is the greatest Manitoban.

* (16:30)

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

Will honourable members please rise and remain standing to indicate their support for the motion.

A moment of silence was observed.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if it's the will to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The time now being 5 p.m., we will—the House will now recess, and we will reconvene at 10 a.m. tomorrow in the Committee of Supply.

CORRIGENDUM

On Monday, May 2, 2011, page 1346, first column, fourth paragraph, should have read:

Mr. Acting Chairperson, \$11.25 million has been expended—or has been allocated to the Berens River First Nation; \$7.75 million with Bloodvein and the Hollow Water First Nations; \$2.2 million each with St. Theresa Point, Red Sucker Lake, Manto Sipi, Pauingassi, Bunibonibee, otherwise known as Oxford House; Poplar River and Garden Hill, and almost \$5 million of these community benefits agreements are under way. With provincial environmental approval received from Provincial Road 303 to Berens River on August 16th, 2010, more work and training is happening and 56 people have received training.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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