

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

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

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

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

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 16—The Department of Justice Amendment Act

**Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Justice, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Swan:** There are two key provisions of this bill. First, it'll provide a procedure to retain and compensate lawyers who are appointed by the courts for people who are not eligible for legal aid. Second, it'll provide a procedure to retain and compensate lawyers who are appointed by the courts to perform certain functions in a trial. For example, a judge may order that an unrepresented accused in a domestic assault case be provided with a lawyer to cross-examine the victim so that the accused cannot question the victim directly.

These amendments will clarify the practical and financial aspects of court-ordered lawyers.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on with petitions.

### PETITIONS

#### Coulter Bridge—Provincial Road 251

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

And these are the background—this is the background for this petition:

Number 1, the flood of 2011 caused the Coulter bridge in—on Provincial Road 251 west of Waskada to collapse.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by D. Lee, J. Williams, M. Préfontaine and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This is the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this signed by S. Twist, G. Leblanc and J. Baker and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by E. Loeppky, K. Hassard, R. Alexiuk and many more fine Manitobans.

### **Provincial Road 520**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition is signed by B. Hallmuth, M. Hallmuth, N. Berard and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

### **Personal Care Homes and Long-Term Care—Steinbach**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The city of Steinbach is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and one of the largest cities in the province.

This growth has resulted in pressure on a number of important services, including personal care homes and long-term care space in the city.

Many long-time residents of the city of Steinbach have been forced to live out their final years outside of Steinbach because of the shortage of personal care homes and long-term care facilities.

Individuals who have lived in, worked in and contributed to the city of Steinbach their entire lives should not be forced to spend their final years in a place far from friends and from family.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Health ensure additional personal care homes and long-term care spaces are made available in the city of Steinbach on a priority basis.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by G. Wiens, J.M. Wiebe, N. Wiebe and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

\*(13:40)

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Standing Committee on Human Resources

#### First Report

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Chairperson):** I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources. I'm seconded by the honourable member—

**Mr. Speaker:** Oh, hold on, hold on. One moment, please.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Human Resources presents the—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Mr. Speaker:** Dispense? Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on HUMAN RESOURCES presents the following as its First Report.*

#### Meetings

*Your Committee met on December 4, 2012 at 11:00 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.*

### Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 3) – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés en cas de maladie grave, de décès ou de disparition d'enfants)**

### Committee Membership

- Ms. BLADY
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. HELWER
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Mr. KOSTYSHYN
- Mr. MARCELINO
- Mrs. MITCHELSON
- Mr. PETERSEN
- Mrs. ROWAT
- Mr. SARAN (VICE-CHAIR)

*Your Committee elected Mr. PETERSEN as the Chairperson.*

### Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 3) – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés en cas de maladie grave, de décès ou de disparition d'enfants)**:*

*Trudy Lavallee, Private Citizen*

*Janelle Sutherland, Private Citizen*

### Bill Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 3) – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave Related to the Critical Illness, Death or Disappearance of a Child)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés en cas de maladie grave, de décès ou de disparition d'enfants)**

*Your Committee agreed to report this Bill, with the following amendment:*

*THAT Clause 3 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed subsection 59.9(3):*

**Exception**

**59.9(3.1)** *An employee is not entitled to a leave of absence under this section if he or she is charged with the crime.*

**Mr. Pettersen:** I move, seconded by the honourable member from St. Norbert, that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Any more committee reports? Seeing none—

**TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** I rise today to table the Civil Service Superannuation Fund Actuarial Report as at December 31st, 2011.

**Mr. Speaker:** Ministerial statements? Oh, pardon me, reverting back to tabling of reports.

**Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the quarterly financial report for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the six months ended September 30th, 2012.

**Mr. Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none.

**Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I wish to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Neelin High School 22 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kerri Malazdrewicz. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you this—here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today Dustin Hoft, Robert Hoft, Dalcyce Percy, Melissa Hoft and Guilia Severini, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

**ORAL QUESTIONS****Homicide Rate  
Reduction Strategies**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Last week, the national news media again referred to Winnipeg as the murder capital of Canada. This embarrassment was presented to the entire nation.

Winnipeg has the dubious distinction of now being the murder capital of Canada for five consecutive years, and it is getting worse. The NDP continually talks on this file but is clearly making no progress on the most important thing that a government can do, Mr. Speaker, protect its citizens.

Now, can the Premier stand today before this House and explain how he intends to start making some progress, or are we destined to see the same painful and embarrassing headline again next year?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite, because it does allow us to focus on the things that we have done.

He will note that in the last budget that members opposite voted against, we had an additional number of officers for community policing in Manitoba, and those officers have been made available in areas where there is a great need.

He will notice that we have made it a major announcement just in the last week on an After School Leaders program that will provide recreation opportunities and learning opportunities and mentoring opportunities for young people in schools throughout Manitoba, starting with four high schools right now, and learning, ensuring that those folks get the opportunities they need to become productive citizens.

He may have missed We Day, which was a major event throughout Manitoba where young people are getting engaged, not only in their communities locally but looking around the world at how they can be global citizens.

**Mr. Speaker:** I'm pleased to note that the homicide rate for 2012 is significantly lower than it was last year.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I would say that voting against measures that don't work is a sign of intelligence in the opposition [*inaudible*]

**Mr. Speaker:** NDP mismanagement ensures that year over year Winnipeg remains the murder capital of Canada, and it does not have to be that way. Other cities, other provinces have found ways to reduce crime. Cities of Hamilton and Québec, for example, are comparable in size to us, yet they rank 21st and 29th respectively. Both cities also saw their rates drop substantially—in the case of Québec City, dropping by 50 per cent in just one year—while Winnipeg's murder rate rose by 81 per cent.

Now, the Manitoba statistics are terrible. The victims are real people, and the pain that their families suffer is real as well. When will the Premier start to get real and take crime seriously and make some genuine progress to reduce violent crime in our city?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question, because we have noted in Manitoba that, since 1999 when the members opposite were in office, that aggravated sexual assault is down 67 per cent; sexual assault causing bodily harm or with a weapon is down 45 per cent.

So if the Leader of the Opposition was intelligent, as he claims he is all the time, and the arrogance that comes behind that, why did he make a statement that he will get the people the time they need to discuss his ideas, embrace them, and make people feel that his ideas are their ideas? That's the height of lack of intelligence in this House, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** You know, we just got started here, and I was really optimistic that this was going to be proceeding very smoothly, but I must rise at this point and caution all honourable members, please, to remember that we have many guests visiting us. We have the public who is watching on their televisions at home across our province. And I want to ensure that all our members here are acting with the appropriate level of decorum that goes with this particular place that we're happy to be in.

So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Please remember the rules and the respect that we should show for each other in this Chamber.

**Mr. Pallister:** And, sadly, the Premier, who should be looking for ideas and making them his own, is not looking. Sadly, Manitoba and Canada's murder capital has been Winnipeg for five years now, and this surpasses even the largest urban centres in the country, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

Petulance doesn't cut it, Mr. Speaker. The statistics show that this NDP Premier has failed Manitobans. Every year we hear about another youth gang strategy, yet gangs continue to grow in both numbers and strengths. Every year there are promises made to tackle crime and make our streets safer, yet violent crime rates increase. Every year the NDP trumpets another plan to combat the root causes of crime, and we remain the poverty capital of

Canada, and every session we sit here, he blames 1999 for the problems.

Now, after five years, two elections, numerous press releases and ineffective programs, as well as innumerable amounts of spin, we still have the same problems.

Does the Premier have a violent crime plan or not?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I just simply remind the member opposite that there was only one political party in the election that did prevent an anti-present an anticrime strategy. The members opposite were completely missing in action when it came to addressing crime with any concrete recommendations.

We said we would put more police officers into the community, as we have already done in the schools. We said we would have an After School Leaders program, which has now been implemented, along with our first instalment on community policing. We said we would have an—opportunities for people to get jobs in Manitoba and we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

And the member opposite—the members opposite continues to put misinformation on the record every single time—every single time—he steps up in the House.

The affordability measures for people in Manitoba ensure that Manitobans of all income levels have one of the most affordable cost of living in the country, Mr. Speaker. That's how we address poverty. We create jobs for people, we educate people, we keep their cost of living affordable. The member opposite wants to—

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

#### **Provincial Nominee Program Business Immigration Investment Rate**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** We're pleased the Provincial Nominee Program has been a successful initiative, started back in the '90s, that—and continues to grow and provide for much needed immigration in the province of Manitoba.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have significant concerns when the Immigrant Investor Program only has a 20 per cent success rate, and only 20 per cent fulfill their obligations when they apply to come to the program.

Can this minister indicate, or this government indicate, to the House today why he would possibly call a 20 per cent success rate a success?

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade):** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a hundred per cent success rate for members opposite putting false information on the record.

The 20 per cent is a bogus number; it's a fake number. And members opposite should know that the way that they system works, you know, they've taken a non-partisan program and they're trying to make partisan politics out of this, Mr. Speaker. We should all be proud of the program.

In fact, we just heard the member stand up from Lac du Bonnet talking about unprecedented growth. We heard the member from Steinbach stand up and talk about growth. That is the pattern in this province, Mr. Speaker. There's incredible growth in this province.

Twenty per cent is a bogus number. The members opposite should do their homework.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, only NDP math could conclude anything different.

When we have 404 successful applicants out of 2,029, Mr. Speaker, what does the minister call that? Does he call that success?

**Mr. Bjornson:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the members are talking about a number that includes all nominees regardless of whether or not they successfully make it through the federal approval process. That's what they're talking about. They're talking about a number that compares the number of nominees in a given year to the number of investments in the same year.

Members opposite should know that it can take two, four or six years for the individuals once they've been approved to be coming to Manitoba, locating and investing here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Of the ones that are approved, we have a 60 per cent success rate. That 60 per cent success rate has resulted in almost \$200 million in investment in the province, over 521 initial investments in business. It doesn't include investments in homes and cars that these immigrants are making to Manitoba in helping to grow our economy.

They should get with the program—

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

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I would ask that the minister get with the program and try to ensure his program is more than 20 per cent successful, Mr. Speaker.

I, again, would like to ask this minister and this government whether they call a program that is 20 per cent successful a success and a great accomplishment. How can they stand in this House, Mr. Speaker, and brag about a program that provides a 20 per cent success rate? He can try to manipulate the numbers, but 400 out of 2,000, in most people's math, is 20 per cent. Why is he trying to mislead Manitobans?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Mr. Speaker, 521 initial business investments in the province of Manitoba, almost \$200 million in investment in Manitoba, 100,000 more people in Manitoba today than there were 10 years ago; those are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, 67 per cent of the initial business investments were in the Winnipeg area; 33 per cent are outside the city. This year alone, our immigrant investors have created 53 new jobs over and above the applicant and the family working in the business. The success rate is 60 per cent. The member should look at the ones that are approved, the ones that receive federal approval, the ones that have been approved and will take a couple, four or six years before they arrive here. That's the dynamics of this program. We're ensuring quality and integrity in the process, and we're verifying the applications.

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

### **Phoenix Sinclair Trial Missing Documentation**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Over the last several days, I've asked the Minister of Family Services a very simple question regarding the missing notes from CFS staff who were involved with Phoenix Sinclair case. The minister failed to answer my questions.

It is my understanding that the Department of Justice may have required all documents related to Phoenix Sinclair's short life and tragic murder.

Can the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) set the record straight? Did the Crown or defence receive copies of Phoenix Sinclair's case notes during the murder trial?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** I think, as I've said on previous days in this House, and I'll say again today,



we have been working very hard, of course, to co-operate fully with the commission, with the commission of inquiry that we called, to take a full look at the death of Phoenix Sinclair, to take a full look at what happened leading up to that death, so that we can all learn from that so we can all do a better job to protect children in Manitoba.

Part of that co-operation has been turning over information. We have looked for the notes that are in question, and we continue to be ready to work with the commission to look for any additional information that they would require.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice; the Minister of Family Services doesn't want to answer it. The Minister of Family Services and her departmental staff have showed an awful lapse in memory with regard to the missing case notes within her department. She indicated she doesn't recall when she was—knew the notes were missing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Justice: Were the important notes and files shared as evidence with the murder trial, or were the files already missing at the time of Phoenix Sinclair's murder trial?

**Ms. Howard:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think, as I said previously, the policy that was in place to govern the collection of records and the keeping of those records was a policy that was put in place in 1997, became law in 1999—March of 1999—was brought in by the members opposite. That was the policy that continued to be followed. But in addition to that we also built on that policy by developing a standard to be even more clear about what should be done in terms of record keeping, and we've invested new resources and training for front-line staff and supervisors and case managers.

We are ready, willing and able to co-operate fully with the commission to make information available. There has been a search for the information in question, and we stand ready to continue that search if the commission thinks there is more to be gained by doing that.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure this NDP government actually realizes the significance of this—of their mismanagement of the Phoenix Sinclair's case notes. This is total incompetence.

Gordon McKinnon, a lawyer of Manitoba Family Services Department, said the missing notes will not have a big impact on the inquiry because the

information may show up in other files. Even their lawyer doesn't feel that this is a significant issue.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Justice today commit to checking court documents to determine if Phoenix Sinclair's case files may have been shared with the Crown or the defence during the murder trial? A simple question.

**Ms. Howard:** Well, Mr. Speaker, nobody on this side of the House doubts the significance of the inquiry that's going on. Nobody on this side of the House, me included, doubts the significance of the life and the tragic death of Phoenix Sinclair. I have to say, one of the first things that I did when I became minister was to look at the material that was available to me in terms of the reviews of that, and I didn't sleep very well at all after looking at that because of all of the opportunities that were missed to protect her.

So we take it very seriously. That's why we called the commission of inquiry, so that we can learn from what happened here, so that we can move forward, so we can make the changes that are necessary to make sure we're in a position to protect children.

#### **Provincial Sales Tax Home and Mortgage Insurance**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP can't control their spending, and they're scrounging around everywhere looking for money. In the election a year ago they promised no new taxes, and right after that they brought in the biggest tax grab in 25 years.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell Manitoba homeowners why he added the PST to home and mortgage insurance.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** Well, let me point out, Mr. Speaker, that these same homeowners that this member purports to represent now today in the House, these same homeowners have benefited to the tune of \$1.2 billion in tax savings. That's tax savings for individuals. That's tax savings for property owners. That's tax savings on the business side.

We've also, over the years, the last number of years, introduced a number of property tax credits that have worked in the same favour for those folks as what the member's bringing forward today. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue a balanced approach towards budgeting. We're going to continue

to work hard to control the spending that we do as you've seen in a number of announcements that we—

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

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, according to Stats Canada, since the NDP hit Manitobans with this new tax, inflation on home and mortgage insurance has skyrocketed in Manitoba. In fact, Manitoba now has the highest inflation rate increase in Canada.

So I'd like the Minister of Finance to tell Manitoba homeowners why he hit them with that tax grab.

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Struthers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you can look at everything from the elimination of education support levy that we put in place that there are benefits for these same folks, and Manitobans know that they live in a—in one heck of a province. They live in a province with—that is the most affordable of any province in the country. We've come forward with legislation that underscores the fact that we're going to have the lowest—as a bundle—the lowest home heating costs. We're now the lowest Autopac costs. We're going to have the lowest hydro rates. Those are real benefits that we've provided for homeowners here in the province of Manitoba.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance doesn't seem to get it. In Saskatchewan, inflation on home insurance increased by only 0.9 per cent in September. In Manitoba it was 9.9 per cent, 10 times worse than in Saskatchewan, and it's worse than the Canadian average, which is 3.4 per cent. We have the highest inflation in insurance rates for home and mortgage in the whole country.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Finance to tell Manitoba homeowners why he has stuck them with paying for his spending addiction. Why should they have to pay for his spending problems?

**Mr. Struthers:** You know, since the member for Charleswood is so interested in what Saskatchewan says, why doesn't she talk about Saskatchewan listing Manitoba as one of the most—in the top two of the most affordable provinces in the whole country?

Mr. Speaker, I will put up this government's record, on balance, on providing tax credits, on supporting Manitobans, on protecting health care and education and investing in our economy. I'll put that up against any jurisdiction in this country. But more

than anything—more than anything—I'll put our record up against their record any day of the week.

### Health-Care Services Treatment Wait Times

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Fraser Institute released its annual report on wait times for health care in Canada, and the study measures the time that people have to wait for surgical and other therapeutic services, and, once again, the news is not good for Manitoba. Manitoba scores second worst of all 10 provinces when it comes to people who have been seen by a specialist and are now waiting to begin treatment. Manitobans have to wait on average 15.4 weeks compared to the national average of 9.3 weeks.

How could the Minister of Health have allowed these wait times to get so bad?

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** It's quite interesting to note that the member neglected to mention that the Fraser Institute notes that Manitoba has one of the shortest waiting periods from consult to specialist. In fact, they single out Manitoba as having done extraordinary work in ensuring that individuals have access to a family doctor they can refer to a specialist. And, Mr. Speaker, again, in all seriousness, we do think that hearing from doctors is very instructive.

We also know that the Fraser Institute report is a survey of a few doctors. For example, only four ophthalmologists in Manitoba responded to the survey about cataract surgery.

The CIHI report actually reflects upon data collected in evidence—

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

**Mr. Friesen:** Mr. Speaker, what the minister conveniently neglects to tell you is that with Manitobans it might be one thing for them to see their doctor a little sooner than before, but they still have to wait that whole leg of the journey to get seen and get treatment.

Mr. Speaker, nowhere in this NDP Throne Speech is there an acknowledgement of the wait time issues for Manitoba nor a promise to reduce those wait times. This same report shows that when you measure the total wait time between an appointment with your GP to the actual point in time when you begin to receive treatment, that wait time in

Manitoba is 23.2 weeks; the national average is 17.7 weeks. We are behind Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC and Ontario. For Manitobans waiting for treatment, it's unacceptable

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

**Ms. Oswald:** Well, on the subject of conveniently neglecting to include facts, I would suggest that the member neglects entirely to mention that when we took office the wait for radiation therapy was dangerously long at six weeks, and today, Mr. Speaker, according to CIHI and valid data, Manitoba has the shortest wait time in the nation for lifesaving surgery.

But we won't stop there, Mr. Speaker. Today, the wait time for an MRI is 11 weeks, down from a high of 32 weeks in 1998. The wait for a pediatric MRI with anesthesia is seven weeks, down from 38 weeks in 1999. The wait for a CT scan is five weeks in Manitoba, down from 16 weeks in 1998.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I thought we were doing pretty good. I'm asking for your co-operation again.

#### **Remembrance Day School Services Student Attendance Options**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, the waiting lists were even longer in the '30s when my dad had polio. The fact is he had polio when he was 12 years old. He had to learn how to walk again and he did and when he was 16 he walked into an enlistment office. Other young people from across Manitoba were doing the same thing; they were doing their duty. My dad wanted to do his, but due to his polio he was rejected for general service. But he was no shirker. A shirker is someone who neglects their responsibilities.

This November, when the Premier announced that Manitoba students would no longer be required to attend Remembrance Day services, many Manitobans believed he was shirking. We understand Remembrance Day, we all understand Remembrance Day, is not a celebration of war; it's a day of respect for Canadians who fought for peace.

Out of respect for those people, will the Premier today clarify why he wants to make attendance at Remembrance Day services optional?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to do an announcement this fall which identified Highway No. 1 between Winnipeg and Brandon as a Highway of Heroes to recognize the service of our veterans in Manitoba, and, indeed, all across the country, for the tremendous service that they have provided across the country.

The member might be aware of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that allows people to have religious freedom in how they practise. But in Manitoba we require all young people to learn about the sacrifice that all Canadians have made in all the wars we've fought in, including the Great War, the two great wars, as well as other—all the other conflicts we've fought in. And we continue to recognize them every single year, Mr. Speaker, with ways—practical ways—that show that we respect the work they do, including the right to vote when they're serving overseas in Manitoba elections.

I'm just surprised the member opposite is not aware of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**Mr. Pallister:** Everything short of actual commitment to standing up for our veterans, Mr. Speaker.

Many of us wear a poppy as a celebration of peace. We attend Remembrance Day services to show our respect for men and women, barely out of childhood, who sacrificed their youth, risked and lost their lives in the interests of freedoms and of peace.

And the PC Party believes that our children need to be taught to respect those values. They are the values of Manitobans and of Canadians. The Premier says not. He's implying an argument of religious freedom exists.

So I'd like him today to rise in his place and tell this House which religion specifically does not respect self-sacrifice, honour and freedom.

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, our veterans fought for the freedoms that we enjoy in this country today—the freedom of association, the freedom of religion—religious expression, the 'freedom'—the freedom to live under the rule of law, the freedom to vote in democratic elections freely without fear and intimidation.

Our veterans have made tremendous sacrifices, which is why when I was in Hong Kong recently for the second time in the last couple years I visited the memorials for the veterans at Sai Wan Bay with the Lieutenant Governor, which is why we renamed

Highway No. 8 to recognize veterans, which is why we've brought curriculum into the schools to teach young people of the impact of war and the sacrifices veterans have made.

It's just unfortunate that the member opposite wants to breach and take away people's freedoms in the interest of driving a wedge issue into this House. Mr. Speaker, I really wish he would aim higher—aim higher—in the way he approaches these very important questions.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Pallister:** Any wedge that's been driven has been driven by a lack of commitment to support our veterans by that Premier, Mr. Speaker. Simply put, the Premier is shirking his responsibility. It's his government passed a law making school attendance mandatory with penalties for failure to comply. And what is the point of compelling Manitoba's children to attend schools where the most important lessons are optional?

The Premier argues that religious freedom's an excuse, but he refuses to cite a single religion which would disrespect the sacrifices of our veterans. I've never met anyone who despises war more than our veterans do. Many of us wear a button each year which reads: To remember is to work for peace.

The PC Party wants all of us, especially our children, to remember, lest we forget. Has the Premier forgotten?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, not only have we not forgotten, but this very year alone, in this current year, 2012, we did three specific things to honour veterans in this province of Manitoba: the Highway of Heroes, the special ceremony that we held for veterans in Manitoba and across the country who fought in the invasion of Juno Beach in France and Normandy, and also the recognition that on licence plates—that all veterans can have special licence plates, whether it's on motor vehicles or motorcycles, to recognize the contribution we've made.

It is required in schools—it is required in schools, Mr. Speaker—that people learn about the sacrifices the veterans have made in our wars, including current conflicts that many of them have just returned from, places like Afghanistan. But it's also important to recognize what they fought for. They fought for freedom of religion. They fought for freedom of expression. They fought for a democracy where we all live under the rule of law, and I'm

really appalled that the Leader of the Opposition would like to breach those rights—

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

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor. *[interjection]*

Order, please. Order, please. The clock is still ticking for question period. The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

### **First Nations Communities Water and Sewer Infrastructure**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech, the Premier shared the NDP's priorities for this year, but there was no mention of retrofitting over a thousand northern First Nations homes that have no running water. There was no mention of standardizing the price of milk across Manitoba as the NDP does for liquor.

A year ago, after I questioned the Premier about NDP inaction on running water, the Winnipeg Free Press quoted the Premier as saying: The Province is prepared to do more than its fair share to ensure that it gets done.

I ask the Premier: How many homes has he made sure are retrofitted this year for running water since he talked about this to the Free Press last year?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the member obviously missed the new legislation we brought in called Pay As You Save legislation. This allows Manitobans, no matter where they live in the province of Manitoba, to retrofit their homes with free insulation, with new green technology that reduces carbon emissions and provides more comfort in their homes. It allows them to do that in such a way that on the first month that they install that new technology and that insulation that their bill—that the bill they pay is lower than what it was before, including the cost of financing those improvements to the home.

That is unique legislation in the country. Here in Manitoba it is available to all Manitobans no matter where they live, whether in First Nations communities or in other communities, unique legislation which is fuelling new jobs in the province of Manitoba, more comfortable homes, less use of energy and overall benefits for the province of Manitoba.

### **Milk Prices Standardization**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** How many homes in northern Manitoba, which didn't have running water, are now retrofitted because of this bill? Tell us. That's what I asked.

Northern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, has exorbitant milk prices, but this NDP government has not made it a priority to make milk more affordable or to actually standardize milk prices across Manitoba as the NDP standardized prices for alcohol.

According to reports, the NDP's priority is \$12 million a year on communication staff. The NDP's priority is advertising costs for the Manitoba Lotteries Commission—\$2 million a year.

I ask the Premier: What action has he taken in the past year to make milk more affordable in northern Manitoba?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, we have taken a number of actions, including the Nourishing Potential Fund that's in partnership with the Winnipeg Foundation, which is a permanent fund which'll outlast any member of this House or any government in this House, which will provide food security to Manitobans all across this province. That is a unique organization—a unique fund that has been put in place. We were one of the lead contributors to that.

We have raised the northern food allowance on over seven occasions in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

And in our Pay As You Save energy program which members keep asking about, not only is there incentives to reduce energy consumption, but also incentives to reduce water consumption. A hundred homes in the Island Lake area have been renovated, and now all Manitobans can enjoy the benefits of the new Pay As You Save legislation.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, I table the NDP's priority: \$2 million spending on advertising for Lotteries Commission.

Mr. Speaker, child poverty in our province has been spiralling out of control under the policies of the NDP government. Their NDP Throne Speech was shocking. Investing in express liquor marts, but not in affordable milk for impoverished northern children with malnutrition and painful tooth decay.

According to the Throne Speech, an NDP priority is providing nicer showers for campers in provincial parks, yet no mention of providing running water for children in northern Manitoba who really badly need it.

I ask the Premier: When will the NDP make it a priority to bring affordable milk and clean, running water to Manitoba children in northern Manitoba?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, I actually do appreciate the question, because with our northern food strategy we have in northern Manitoba something that we never saw before. We have over 900 community gardens, 900 community gardens in northern Manitoba. We have renovated over a hundred homes in the Island Lake area alone. We have provided energy efficiency incentives throughout the entire province of Manitoba, including northern Manitoba.

We have invested in an east-side road, Mr. Speaker, which allows goods and services, including food during the winter months to get to those communities. That has never been done before. With climate change the winter road system was operating on a shorter and shorter basis every year. We're the only government in the history of this province which is building a permanent, all-weather road on the east side of Manitoba so that those citizens can have access to affordable goods and services, including food and milk, unlike any other time in the history of this province.

### **Cardiac Defibrillators Public Access**

**Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park):** Mr. Speaker, cardiac arrest can strike without warning and, indeed, 85 per cent of the time it happens outside of a hospital. And we know that rapid access to a defibrillator can mean the difference between life and death. And that's why just last year our government introduced legislation to ensure defibrillators are available in more places so that the devices can be easily accessed in these critical moments to save more lives in our province.

I was wondering if our Minister of Health could please provide an update to the House and to all Manitobans on this first-in-Canada lifesaving legislation.

**Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health):** Granted, we do spend a lot of time in question period and otherwise with the thrust and parry and back and forth, but I would say, with respect to all members of this House, that we are all today, I believe, to be

commended for the work that Manitoba has done in bringing defibrillator legislation and its public access to be the first of its kind in Manitoba.

I've had good advice from the member from River Heights, the member from Riding Mountain, the member from Charleswood, the member from Thompson, from you, Mr. Speaker, in bringing forward the best legislation that I believe every jurisdiction in Canada will copy so that we can bring defibrillators into the public forum, so we can reduce sudden cardiac arrest incidences, save lives 75 per cent of the time.

Today, I say we should all stand together and be proud of this because I believe that we've done this together, Mr. Speaker.

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

\* (14:20)

#### Public Accounts Committee Ministerial Attendance

**Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee has been making progress dealing with reports from the Auditor General—good progress this year. However, in November the meeting was cancelled on short notice, and then we come into December and the Auditor General—very busy individual—and her staff, they changed their calendar so that they could be there today, they could be there tonight to have this December meeting.

But the Finance Minister was not available to work tonight, so I must be seeing a mirage or a ghost here apparently, that—he's in the Chamber. So, you know, I think it's time that with Public Accounts, we have a very—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I want to caution all honourable members not to make reference to a member's presence or absence in the Chamber, so I ask the honourable member, please pick and choose your words very carefully.

**Mr. Helwer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will indeed.

You know, we were going to have a meeting tonight, but apparently we can't do it now, so it's time to look at removing ministers from the Public Accounts Committee or from attending and voting as we—they do in other jurisdictions. It wouldn't take much of a change at all. We just tell him to stay home, which, apparently, that's what we need to happen. I would like to see that happen, Mr. Speaker.

Can we conduct Public Accounts business without a minister on that committee?

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** I'm pleased to be able to speak about some of the progress that we've made in terms of the Public Accounts Committee. You know, I wasn't in the House the last time the Leader of the Opposition was in the House, but I fear in those days that it was pretty common practice to have maybe four PAC meetings in a year if you were lucky; maybe less. This year alone, there's been 11 PAC meetings, more Public Account meetings in this one year than, I think, they had in an entire term of government.

So, you know, we will continue to make progress on that. I think there's been very good co-operation between the opposition and the government side on this, and we'll continue to do—

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

**Mr. Helwer:** Yes, indeed, we have been making progress, but there's a lot more to be done, Mr. Speaker, you know?

When I met with the chair and the clerk of the public accounts committee in the British House of Commons, indeed, they were shocked that we had a minister that attended our meetings and, indeed, voted. Just—they were appalled; how can we possibly do business that way—it's not possible. So, their suggestion was, as I said, that he no longer attend nor vote. They suggested that the chair and co-chair should be able to call witnesses, and they suggested that the chair and co-chair should be able to set the schedule.

So, indeed, Mr. Speaker, those are the things we would like to see for the Public Accounts Committee. Would love to see a schedule for next year, but we're still waiting for it. Thank you.

**Ms. Howard:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate there's more to do. I think that slogan's been used, but we have had a pretty good history in this House working on issues in terms of the PAC committee and working together, and I would hate to see that ruined now. We used to have a good history of doing that.

We have put in place schedules of meetings way in advance—something that never happened under previous governments, Mr. Speaker. So we remain committed and able to do that, but I would suggest,

with respect to the member opposite, that the best way to have these conversations are likely with his vice-chair and between House leaders, not on the floor of the Legislature.

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

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### **Ski Valley and Rockin' the Fields of Minnedosa**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I would like to take the opportunity to recognize the efforts of two groups in my constituency today. They were both recognized at the ninth annual Tribute to Tourism awards in Brandon earlier this year.

Ski Valley Minnedosa has been a destination for skiers and snowboarders for 30 years. They received the Service Excellence award. Ski Valley has proven over the years to be a popular skiing destination for the people of Manitoba and beyond. The friendly and knowledgeable instructors have lots to offer beginner skiers and snowboarders. Ski Valley caters to families and school groups and offers a variety of runs to keep ski and snowboard enthusiasts of all levels interested and challenged.

In the 30 years of operation, operator Don Horner has improved the entry to the facility, added food service, expanded runs and rental services and added helmets and lift-chairlifts. Don provides incredible service to his valued customers.

Held for the ninth consecutive year in August, in Manitoba valley, rockin' in the field—Minnedosa is a festival by the fans for the fans. They received the Partnership Award at the Westman Tribute to Tourism Awards evening. Rockin' the Fields has become an event that fans look forward to each summer, not only for the fantastic musical talent that is showcased, but also for the atmosphere of community that has developed since its inception.

The festival brings tourism revenue to Minnedosa and has been able to give back to community organizations. Since its inception nine years ago, the group has been able to give back \$150,000 to community organizations. In 2011, they saw over 4,000 fans come through the gates over August long weekend.

The festival is supported by 11 board members, 160 co-operative members and over 300 volunteers. The organizers bring big name bands like Finger Eleven, Default and Platinum Blonde to their main stage but also support and nurture local talent through the Rock Offs. The festival organizers pride

themselves on focusing on an exceptional product and affordable price for the fans of Rockin' the Fields. This organization is a great example of what can be accomplished with community spirit and teamwork.

Congratulations to both.

#### **Dustin Hoft**

**Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, every fall, Food Matters Manitoba holds its Golden Carrot Awards ceremony at the Manitoba Legislative Building. These awards recognize people who are helping to promote healthy, sustainable foods for all Manitobans.

I'm especially proud of one of these individuals: Dustin Hoft lives in my constituency and is a farm assistant at FortWhyte Farms, where he and two other outstanding young people have been instrumental in program development.

FortWhyte Farms works to give young people hands-on training in sustainable agriculture. This gives at-risk students a sense of purpose and place, income, opportunity to learn leadership skills and access to nutritious local food.

Dustin is involved in all aspects of the farm's operations, from seeding to pest management, to harvest and marketing. He leads tours that teach children and adults about beekeeping, growing food, and raising chickens and pigs. He is a leader for the youth who work on the farm in the summer, helping them learn co-operation, teamwork and farm-related skills, and he assists with FortWhyte Farms' many educational programs, conferences and workshops.

Dustin also grows food in our community. He has several garden plots in family and friends' backyards and he grows food for himself and his family. Dustin saves seeds to recycle for the next year's planting and he promotes heritage varieties—varieties of produce not usually found in the grocery store.

Mr. Speaker, for many city people, knowledge of our food's origins goes no further than the aisles of the nearest grocery store. I am particularly impressed with Dustin's drive to find a way to live in an urban environment with a rural sensibility—an urban farmer, if you will. Leading by example, an individual like Dustin encourages the rest of us to consider how we could be a bit more self-sustaining and how we can integrate some of the great rewards of rural living, even on a small scale, into our urban lives.

I would like to congratulate Dustin and all of this year's Golden Carrot nominees for helping to ensure that everyone in Manitoba has access to healthy food and a deeper understanding of where it comes from.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Andrew Clarke and Tim Sweeny**

**Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize two individuals who were the recipients of the Excellence in Aboriginal Business Leadership Award this fall.

This award was established by the Aboriginal Business Education Partners, at the University of Manitoba's Asper School of Business in 2005, to honour individuals that have exemplified leadership within the context of Aboriginal business. Since establishing the award, 11 winners have been recognized and honoured. The stories behind the success of these community business leaders motivate and inspire the students to pursue work within many sectors, or even establish their own businesses.

The recipient of the 2012 excellence in Aboriginal leadership award was Mr. Andrew Clarke, owner of Clarke Financial Planning and Insurance Services. Mr. Clarke's firm specializes in offering group insurance and pension plan services to First Nation companies and governments.

The second recipient honoured this year was Mr. Tim Sweeny, owner of Creeway Aviation, who received the Excellence in Aboriginal Small and Medium Enterprise Leadership Award. Mr. Sweeny's company is dedicated to providing quality aircraft charter services and aircraft maintenance services to the people of northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House join me today in congratulating these two very worthy individuals who serve as inspiration to all future Manitoba business leaders, and wish them continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

\* (14:30)

**French Language Education**

**Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, linguistic duality is one of the main components of Canadian identity. Both languages, French and English as official languages in Canada, is important to the citizens of Manitoba and to our provincial

government. In the Radisson constituency many school children enrol in the French language programs. These programs are essential in ensuring that we continue to support and value bilingualism in Manitoba.

Whether children are studying French as an additional language or are developing their maternal tongue, it is fundamental that we continue to uphold and explore the French language and francophone culture in our province.

In Manitoba French is the maternal tongue for all 5 per cent of the population, yet 10 per cent of the population can speak French. Much of this is thanks to Manitoba's French language education.

Many children and youth in Radisson attend French immersion schools which provide linguistically rich learning environments. The immersion programs of École Howden and Collège Béliveau are designed to educate these—those with little or no knowledge of the French language. Through the program, immersion students develop a command of the language and an appreciation of the francophone cultural life.

Many students in my constituency are enrolled at schools at Louis Riel School Division and the River East Transcona School Division. Schools such as Joseph Teres School, Frontenac School, General Vanier School, Windsor School and Windsor Park Collegiate offer courses in basic French to develop competency in this official Canadian language. And École Lacerte of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine offers francophone students education in their own material tongue.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to the Radisson constituency that there is continued support for French language education. It is for that reason that in the past few years as MLA I have provided scholarships to students who have shown great improvements in the learning language of the additional language of French. I believe that it's important that we acknowledge of those working to excel, and I am looking forward to the opportunity of supports such students in this year.

I ask leave for, Mr. Speaker, to continue.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the honourable member for Radisson to conclude his member statement? *[Agreed]*

The honourable member, to quickly conclude.



**Mr. Jha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was about to mention that three of my grandchildren—they don't live here. They are in Toronto, Shreya, Vedika, and Ria Jha, all three go to bilingual schools and they speak fluent French, that makes me very proud of them.

I would like to thank all the educators who make French language instruction possible in our province and our country Canada.

Merci and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Child Welfare

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on the past and current state of child welfare here in Manitoba under the NDP government since 1999. I speak on this as it pertains to the multitude of facts and tragedies within the state of the child and family services system and the prevalence of poverty as an indicator of neglect, along with the testimony being given at the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry here in Manitoba.

It's highly probable that the majority of the almost 10,000 children in care in Manitoba along with their families may face a dismal future and experience insurmountable negative outcomes of well-being from this system.

Since the winter session has begun I've raised serious concerns about NDP governments over and over regarding the plight of children, poverty and the state of child welfare in the province, unacceptable CFS leadership in this province and the growing concern over the poor management in governance that steers the operations of child and family services as mandated under the CFS act of Manitoba.

I've highlighted in the House serious problems of CFS record keeping and the supporting concern that the system has demonstrated its failure to ensure essential records are kept protected and secure within a standardized system of doing so.

I've asked the minister for those CFS file management standards of which she committed to providing as—and I stand here today, I have yet to see the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard) table these standards. Are the standards missing too?

This should pose great concern to the members of the Legislature and Manitobans as the minister doesn't demonstrate true transparency or accountability to the portfolio of Child and Family Services of which she is authorized to oversee.

The testimonies of witnesses with the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry bring to light the sad realities of the current state of child welfare, the realities of sad outcomes for children who grow up in care and the suffering of their families and the inactions demonstrated by this government to enhance family well-being and promote healthy growth and outcomes for the children who are wards of the state.

Sadly and unfortunately, the Minister of Family Services has shown at times an almost callous disregard—

**Mr. Speaker:** [*inaudible*] time has expired.

Now, let's see if I can get this right today.

Grievances. No grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### House Business

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, on House business, would you please canvass the House to see if there's leave for Bill 3, reported back to the House today from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, to appear on tomorrow's order paper for consideration?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to have Bill 3, reported back to the House today from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, for it to appear on tomorrow's order paper for consideration? Is there leave of the House? [*Agreed*]

**Ms. Howard:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Our plan for this afternoon is to continue with condolence motions in the following order: Thelma Forbes, Sam Uskiw, Laurent Desjardins and Parker Burrell.

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now call condolences.

## MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

### Thelma Forbes

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that this House convey to the family of the late Thelma Forbes, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincere sympathy in their bereavement and its appreciation of her 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 offer a condolence motion and the appreciation of all the members of this House for the service provided to the people of Manitoba by Thelma Forbes, Progressive Conservative member, former member, for the constituency of Cypress.

Though it's been over 43 years since Thelma Forbes served as an MLA, she deserves the praise and recognition of all of our contemporaries today for the 'plath' and the trail that she blazed in Manitoba. She was the third woman ever elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and the first Conservative woman. Thelma was a true trailblazer.

She was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the member for Cypress, which is now split mostly between Midland and Spruce Woods, in November, 1959. She served until 1969. In 1963, she became the first female Speaker of the House in Manitoba and the second among all the Commonwealth countries.

She then became the first woman appointed to Cabinet as the minister of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs, and this was also another signal achievement on her part. Under her ministerial watch, our province established Manitoba Housing, providing affordable housing to those that need it.

In her personal life, after her completing—after completing her service as an elected official, Thelma Forbes remained active in the province. She turned to a life as a farmer and a business owner, running an Imperial Oil station in Rathwell and sold International Harvester equipment. From the—from 1954 to the 1970s, she and her family farmed a three-quarter section of—for grain outside of Rathwell.

In 1971, Thelma Forbes was awarded a Manitoba Good Citizenship Award, based on nominations from the general public. On January 28th, 1991, Thelma Forbes was inducted into the Order of the Buffalo Hunt, which is today's precursor to the Order of Manitoba.

\* (14:40)

Thelma Forbes passed away at the age of 101 on January 5th, 2012. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, she remains a symbol of what can be achieved in Manitoba through hard work and respect of the members of her community. She has lived in British Columbia since 1982 after her husband passed away, and I note in her obituary that she is survived by her family members, and she has played a very important

role with her family in that part of the world of Canada where she was known as Aunt Thelma, as well as very active in the seniors' organization there in Port Coquitlam and the old age pensioners' organization.

With those very brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, I offer the condolences of this Legislature for the excellent service that this individual provided to the people of Manitoba, over 10 years as a member of this Legislature and for many years after that.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Thank you for those words from the Premier.

Thelma Forbes is an icon, not only for women, but for all of the members of the Legislature and for Manitobans generally. She was an incredible person and served the people of this province well in her role here, but in other ways as well.

She passed, as the Premier mentioned earlier, at the age of 101. She was predeceased by her husband, Edgar and her brothers, Oliver and Donald, and she is lovingly remembered by her nieces, Pat Dales of Port Coquitlam and Jo-Ann Manyk of Vancouver and their families, and many, many friends.

She was born and raised here, of course, in Manitoba, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and she was the youngest child born to Robert and Annie Brown. She was born on the farm September 26th, 1910, and the family moved to Manitou and—after a particularly hard winter when Thelma was four years old. She completed her schooling in Manitou and then she went on to normal school in Manitou. That was one of four centres at that time that offered upgraded—raised the standards of teaching in our province. She graduated in 1929. Then she taught in various communities including: Manitou; Ninette; Glenora, home of the world-famous Glenora Mall; and Rathwell also—lovely little communities. In 1940 she married Edgar Forbes and together they ran an Imperial Oil station in Rathwell, and they also sold International Harvester equipment. In 1954, which was an excellent year, they bought a three-quarter section grain farm just outside of Rathwell. And it's beautiful dirt in that country and they farmed that until Edgar's health declined in the 1970s.

She was always active in the political arena in her life. She reminisced that as a child her mother would encourage the kids' interest in politics by having them paste pictures of candidates on a brown paper bulletin board in their kitchen.

And she worked as a campaign manager, and I want to make sure I have the name right, but it was a gentleman from Notre Dame de Lourdes. And I was just reading in Duff Roblin's great book, *Speaking for Myself*, about Marcel Boulic. Marcel was one of the only people, Duff said, the only person that he ever promised a Cabinet position to. And he says in his book he regretted that, not because of Marcel, but just because it was a bad precedent. Marcel, unfortunately passed away. Now, his campaign manager was Thelma Forbes, and so Thelma Forbes put her name forward. And I just want to share with you what Duff had to say about Thelma in his book. It's kind of cute. He said at the by-election: To replace Marcel Boulic and without much assistance from me, because I scarcely knew her at the time, Thelma Forbes came forward to win the Progressive Conservative nomination. She was a very interesting personality and a useful politician. After she had been in the Legislature a little while, I was happy to suggest to her to accept the nomination for Speakership. She turned out to be a very good Speaker indeed. She succeeded veteran Abe Harrison who, as time would tell, was really not cut out for that job—Mr. Speaker, we know, you know, especially what a challenging job being Speaker can be.

I continue with the quote from Duff's book: Abe was promoted to the Cabinet as a minister without portfolio, and we experienced a little tighter procedural grip on the reins—Mr. Roblin had a nice, euphemistic way of putting things a lot of the time. He went on to say that when Thelma was in the chair, Thelma was an excellent Speaker. The only thing was she didn't like the job, and so her natural political instincts were so well developed she had an awful time maintaining a decent neutrality.

Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case with you, but some would argue it has been the case with others in the past, that they have a difficult time remaining neutral during debate.

He goes on to say: I asked her to become a member of the Cabinet and she did an excellent job as Minister of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs, and she was the first woman Speaker in Manitoba and the first woman Cabinet minister in Manitoba, so she has her place in history. End quote.

She does; and, certainly, in many ways—not just here as I mentioned earlier, but in other ways outside of here. She was a member of the Winnipeg business and professional club, the Rothwell club, the 'jergion'

women's institute. In 1971, she won the Manitoba Good Citizenship Award; as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) mentioned earlier, the Order of the Buffalo Hunt—she was inducted into that in 1991. That reception was co-hosted, incidentally, by the previous premier, Gary Filmon, and by the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who may recall the presentation to Thelma at that time.

She was an advocate for seniors' affordable housing, and as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, she has her place in history. I wanted to reference a quote from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 1st, 1959, and it was an interesting observation, I think. She—the *Free Press* said at that time: The election of Mrs. Thelma Forbes from Cypress on Thursday brings a woman to the Manitoba Legislature for the first time in 18 years; that has been too long. And, as we know, she went on to serve for 10 years.

She was the third member of—female member of this Legislature—and I'm looking for my notes here to tell you exactly who the first and second were, because I did find that—Edith Rogers, of course, in 1920, was the first; Elin Halldorson—Edith was a Liberal, Elin Halldorson a Social Credit member, the second member of this place. And, incidentally, the first Manitoban elected—woman elected to the House of Commons was Margaret Konantz, who was also a Liberal, in April of 1963. And Margaret was the daughter of Edith Rogers, the first woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature, so there was a family connection there.

Thelma Forbes became, in 1963, the first woman to be appointed Speaker of this place, of the Manitoba Legislature, and in 1966, the first female Cabinet minister in the province in its history. This is a tremendous accomplishment, a tremendous legacy to be noted here today. Of course, her memory is not—is one we will treasure—the memory of her service, one we'll all treasure, and I'm pleased to offer comments to her family and condolences to her many family and friends today.

I thank Mr. Bill Huggart for some of the remembrances today. Bill knew Thelma well and described her as a lovely lady who always went out of her way to help people, a great advocate on behalf of her people, always fighting for what was just and right. I think we'd all like to be described that way by our constituents, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Mrs. Forbes is today described that way by many who remember her many years of service on behalf of Manitobans.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour):** I, too, just want to say a few things about the memory of Thelma Forbes. I didn't have the honour of knowing her. My connection to her really is one of having come to work in this building, and when I first came to work in this building, my office was just down that hallway where all the portraits of the Speakers are. So every day I would go down that long hallway and look at all these portraits and wonder about the lives of some of the people that I didn't know. And always I would stop at Thelma's picture and think about what must it have been like to be a woman in this Legislature in that time when she was, as has been noted, the first female Cabinet minister, the first female Speaker, roles that still today are not generally occupied by women.

We still haven't quite reached 50 per cent or better. Of course, we've made tremendous progress. And just thinking about, you know, even—I think all of us who are elected—all women who are elected, from time to time, of course, we face situations where we're reminded that we're not in the majority in politics. And to think about what that must have felt like some 40 or more years ago, when it wouldn't have been a very common sight at all to walk into a Cabinet minister's office for a meeting and see a woman sitting there.

\*(14:50)

And I think, as the Leader of the Opposition noted, there are many other women that came before and after Thelma, for whom Thelma—the women like me that come after, she was a groundbreaker. And it's always easier to be the second of anything than the first, and, certainly, I think we should all remember her today for that and thank her for that. Of course, in Manitoba, we're very proud that we were the first province where women won the right to vote and hold provincial office—some women, not all women. We know that Aboriginal women—it was many, many years later that they had the right to vote.

We also—as was spoken by the Leader of the Opposition, we have women who came before Thelma like Edith Rogers, who was the first woman elected to the Manitoba Legislature. And, interestingly, she is a distant relative of CBC's Shelagh Rogers, who, when in a visit to Winnipeg, came to pay tribute to her relation, Edith, who had been the first woman elected here. Of course, we talked about Edith's daughter, Margaret Konantz,

who was also the first Manitoba woman elected to the House of Commons in April of 1963.

In my own political life, I have been mentored and look up to Muriel Smith, who was the first woman in Manitoba to run for the leadership of any provincial party and the first female Deputy Premier in 1981. And I also remember being very excited as a young person getting to meet Pearl McGonigal, who was the Lieutenant Governor. I think it was when—Queen, I'm not that old—Princess Anne came to visit Brandon and I remember greeting her at the centennial auditorium, and there was also Pearl McGonigal and I got to shake her hand. And I remember my mother telling me how important it was that she was in this position—that she was the first woman to occupy that position.

And, of course, we also pay tribute to Sharon Carstairs, who was a leader—the first opposition leader who was a woman, the first woman to lead the Liberals in this province. And, again, you know, women who I have looked up to—Rosann Wowchuk, the first female Agriculture Minister and the first female Finance Minister. If you think about it, it's quite astounding that it really wasn't until 2009 that this province had a woman who was the Finance Minister.

And I also—you know, even today, we continue to see firsts realized. We have the member for Wellington, who's the first female woman of—first woman of colour to serve in Cabinet and the first woman of colour elected to the Manitoba Legislature. And then there's the member for Morris (Mrs. Taillieu) and myself, who were the first female House leaders in this Chamber—that also didn't come about until 2009. Some days it's an honour I could live without, but, certainly, it is an honour nonetheless.

So, I just think it's important for all of us in this House, and, especially, the women in this House, to pay tribute to Thelma as a foremother, as a grandmother, as somebody who laid the groundwork for the success that we get to enjoy and probably made it a little bit easier for us to do what we do. I also just wanted to reflect on the long life she lived, which gives me hope that serving in this place may not actually shorten your lifespan, and may—if done well, I suppose, and with a sense of humour and some balance, may lead to a long and healthy life afterwards.

So I share in the comments for other members in condolences to the family and loved ones of Thelma

Forbes, but also thanks for the life that she lived and the ground that she broke for all the women that come after.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** I rise today to pay respect to Mrs. Thelma Forbes, who, as was mentioned, passed away on January 5th, 2012 at the young age of 101.

And I am not going to go through all her accomplishments as the previous speakers have, because I—they've brought out the many points that she's done. But just a couple of things that—I grew up just down the road from Rathwell and know many people around Rathwell, done a lot of business around Rathwell, and I knew of the name Forbes, Thelma Forbes, growing up. And then also, when you go into Rathwell and you mention the name Thelma Forbes, it's like an icon around Rathwell. There's just such a respect for her and for her family and for her time in the Legislature from the time that they were doing business—they had the Imperial Oil and they had the International Harvester dealership. They were farmers and she was a community person. So those are just—I know that when you go into Rathwell and you mention her name, those things do come up.

And I will make sure—and I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) mentioned that notice is being sent to the family, and I'll make sure that these are sent out to the Forbes, to her nieces out in BC. But also I'll make sure that these comments get—and the Speaker will make sure—but I'll also make sure that these get sent out in the Treherne Times, because that's the local paper. Everybody reads the local paper, and it'll be a tribute to Thelma Forbes to the community and to make sure that they know that the respect was given to her today.

But I also have—when I phoned one of my wonderful constituents in Rathwell the other day about doing the condolence motion for her, Doris Wilson was telling me, oh, she says, it's a—glad you phoned today because Annette Henderson was—husband—was cleaning out a garage in Rathwell, in the attic of the garage, and was lifting out some wood. And between the pieces of wood was the certificate of Thelma Forbes and, Mr. Speaker, it says: Province of Manitoba. It's the ministerial certificate you get. It's the 24 by 32, or whatever, and it was up stuck between some wood up in there. And it's—it says: Member of the Executive Council, Greeting, and it's when she became Minister of Government Services, and it is the 24th day of

September, 1968, and it's signed by Attorney General Sterling Lyon and the Lieutenant Governor would be Browles, I believe. It's pretty small writing in there anyway, because this is just a picture, but—oh, pardon me, it's Richard Spink Boyles—Bowles was the Lieutenant Governor.

And so it's kind of neat. What they're going to do with this certificate—and I only have the picture of it. But they have the actual certificate. They're going to frame it and they're going to put it in the community hall in Rathwell as a lasting tribute to Thelma Forbes. So that, and perhaps we can have the Hansard copies stuck in behind there, too, on the wall in the hall of Rathwell.

So, Mr. Speaker, that—and the other thing I wanted to mention was, you know, we talked about her being the first woman—third woman to be elected, the first woman to serve in Cabinet. But you have to realize that this was back a number of years ago in the late '50s, early '60s, and transportation was not quite what it was these days. And the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen) and myself travel No. 2 lots and, you know, it's kind of nothing for us to jump in the car and come in. But this was a serious commitment by members, all members, but particularly rural members to make it into the Chamber to be here. I even suspect they sat many more days than what we do today. So they were away from home and in here a lot more. So it was certainly a much larger commitment.

She's—was born in Manitou which is also in the Midland constituency, and the Manitou area—I will send this and make sure that the Manitou paper gets a copy of this, too, because I'm sure there's some people who will know of her family in that community. So it's—

**An Honourable Member:** Home of Nellie McClung.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yes. Manitou is a home of lots of famous people besides Thelma Forbes. Nellie McClung also was born in Manitou. So that community has a lot of pride.

And I—when I was reading through the notes there, there was a normal school in Manitou, and I know there was a normal school in Winnipeg where many teachers got their schooling. But I didn't realize that there was also a normal school in Manitou, and these were—in her day she was 19 when she struck off to start teaching. That was quite an accomplishment for her and certainly took—it must

have taken a great deal of character on her behalf to be able to strike out and do—and teach in these number of communities: Manitou, Ninette, Glenora, Rathwell. And in Rathwell is where she met her future husband and they farmed and lived together for many years.

\* (15:00)

And so, after her husband died in, I believe it was 1982, Edgar died in 1982, then that's when Thelma moved out to Port Coquitlam, BC, to be close to her nieces for the remainder of her retirement. And it—it's also should be noted, too, that when she was out there she was very active in the Old Age Pensioners' Organization and a seniors' housing committee that was instrumental in bringing about the development of Mayfair, which is now a seniors home in Port Coquitlam.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to pay homage to Thelma Forbes, and as a—it's through history like this that it makes such a great province to have people like this that served in this Legislature.

Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few words on the record and pay tribute to Thelma Forbes and her contributions to Manitoba, both in this Legislature and outside.

I think it's interesting to look back on 1916, when women got the vote here in Manitoba under the Norris government and, of course, with Nellie McClung, who's already been referred to, playing a major role. At that point, people—women believed that it was really going to be a dramatic and immediate change with women becoming MLAs and members of Parliament and getting Cabinet positions, and so on and so forth. But, in fact, the process took a long, long time. And, although Edith Rogers became an MLA not long after in 1920, it was many years before and very gradually before things started to change. And so, Thelma Forbes was only the third woman MLA, and she was certainly—did incredibly well, becoming Speaker and then minister in the government.

I think it's interesting that part of the reason that she managed to become an MLA was that she had worked as a campaign manager. And it certainly speaks to encourage other people who would aspire to be—get involved in politics and become MLAs, to get involved as campaign managers and other positions within the political process, gaining experience and gaining the recognition for their

abilities. And I think that it's certainly a tribute to Thelma Forbes that she was able to make that move from being a campaign manager to being the next MLA.

I think it's a particular tribute that she was chosen as Speaker and able to fulfill that job very well. It also says something that she went on to become a minister—there may be hope for the Speaker yet, from Transcona—but I think that Thelma was relative unique in that respect. There were not many Speakers who then went on to play a major role in Cabinet and advance causes, as she did, for affordable housing, which, of course, is a very important one.

I think it's notable that she continued to be active in a number of ways well into her 80s, and then when she was in British Columbia, she became very active with other seniors and was on a seniors' housing committee which was instrumental in bringing about the development of the Mayfair independent living for seniors in downtown Port Coquitlam, where, in fact, she lived for part of the time after that.

I think it says something about her commitment to public service that she certainly didn't stop when she left office here and continued to be active, and, of course, living to 101 in itself is quite an achievement and says something about her perseverance and her stamina.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I would also like to pay tribute to Thelma Forbes and share my condolences with her family, her nieces in Port Coquitlam.

I've done some research on Thelma, and I just—I am just amazed at the strength and the determination that this woman had through her life. She was a leader in her community; she didn't sit back and follow. She was a leader in every sense.

She was a campaign chair for an individual. When that individual passed she was asked to run, like many women are, to run for politics; we don't often think of doing that ourselves. We appreciate the encouragement we get from others and I believe that she made the right choice to be a member of the Legislature.

She's a—was a rural member, as I am, and it makes me realize that, yes, you know, that there are people out there that had to work very hard to

balance their home life as well as their life within the Chamber. And she didn't have children but she loved her family. She has some beautiful family that will really appreciate knowing that there is a document that's going to be placed in her community, and I'm sure that they will make the effort to get out and share in the celebration of Thelma's life.

Nellie McClung once said, I want to leave something behind when I go; some small legacy of truth, some word that will shine as a—shine in a dark place. And I believe that Nellie, as well as Thelma, did do just that; they left a legacy, they encouraged women to stand up and to be heard. Thelma was a firm believer in women having to earn their right to be legislators, to be successful in business. I believe that she actually had some strong words of advice for young women at one point and was quoted in a newspaper, a national paper, for her comments. But I believe that she felt that we needed to be strong and, at times, stronger than some of the men that we socialize with. And I believe that she has left a great legacy for us.

She has received a couple of awards—or a number of awards for her—for leadership and her interest in business. Being a member of the Winnipeg Business and Professional Club would have been an interesting place to be, I'm sure, 45 years ago or so. She—I think she took things as a challenge and, obviously, grew from them. She received a Manitoba Good Citizenship Award in 1971 for her volunteerism and her involvement in a number of organizations, and she was an inductee for the Order of the Buffalo Hunt in 1991.

And to be the first female Speaker of the House, is—would have been quite an honour for her. And then to be moved into a department where she could then be political, which she loved to be—she loved politics. She didn't want to be non-partisan; she enjoyed the debates, she enjoyed that aspect of her career.

In closing, I would just like to say that her grand—or her—one of her relatives left a really neat comment in a guest book on her obituary page and I'm going to just share that, because I think it does sort of symbolize or share Thelma's true personality: "While my interactions with Thelma were limited because of geography, she remains a strong and influential figure in my memory. Her forthrightness encouraged me as a child and a young woman. I am particularly impressed by her ability to navigate the Forbes clan and Manitoba politics."

So, on behalf of all members within the Manitoba Chamber, I wish her family well, and we will cherish her memory.

Thank you.

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

*A moment of silence was observed.*

\* (15:10)

### Samuel Uskiw

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that this House convey to the family of the late Samuel Uskiw, 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:** I rise today to offer condolences to the family and friends of the late Sam Uskiw for his community service, for his 20 years of service in the Legislature as an elected MLA, mostly representing the area constituency of Brokenhead and later on the constituency of Lac du Bonnet.

Sam Uskiw got to know Ed Schreyer as a very young man, and they worked together for what was called the CCF, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. In the 1957 federal election, after they first met through the Manitoba Farmers Union, when Ed Schreyer turned to federal politics in 1966, Sam succeeded him as the member of the Legislature for Brokenhead. And in 1969 he helped persuade the Member of Parliament, Ed Schreyer, to leave his seat in the House of Commons to run for the provincial party leadership, a bid which we all know turned out to be quite successful.

After the boundary redistribution in 1969, he won the Lac du Bonnet constituency, joining the—Ed Schreyer's new New Democratic Party government. During that government, Sam served as a Cabinet minister in the governments of both—well, actually Sam served in the Cabinet minister in the government of Ed Schreyer, but as well as Howard Pawley from 1969 to '77—a very long term—he served as the Minister of Agriculture. From May 6th, 1971 to December 23rd of 1974, he served as the Minister

of Co-operative Development. And, in 1981, he returned to government under Howard Pawley and became the Minister of Government Services and the Minister of Highways and Transportation. In 1983, Sam became the Minister of Business Development and Tourism, and, in 1985, he took up the responsibilities as Minister of Natural Resources.

He was a passionate advocate for the citizens of rural Manitoba and a strong supporter of marketing boards and the supply management system that continues today in this province. As Minister of Agriculture, the portfolio he held the longest, Sam introduced a program to help farmers install running water and indoor plumbing in their homes. He went on to look for ways to make the lives better for Manitobans, even following his departure from the Legislature. In 1997, he was appointed as a head of the commission that reviewed Manitoba public auto insurance's personal injury protection plan. And of the 54 recommendations he made, 49 were accepted or taken into consideration by the then-Filmon government.

In his professional life, Sam, who was born in 1933, grew up on a farm in the East Selkirk area, and he maintained a passion for farming throughout his entire life. After his father passed away, he returned from Ontario to Manitoba to take over the family farm. And prior to joining politics, he served as the junior president of the Manitoba Farmers Union, which was later absorbed into the National Farmers Union in 1969. He also worked for the Manitoba Telephone System, an experience he was able to put to good use later as the minister responsible for that very same Crown corporation, the Manitoba Telephone System. And he is survived by five children, 10 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. His wife, Olga, passed away in 2004.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, we rise to recognize the tremendous contribution that Sam Uskiw made over those 20 years as an elected member of the Legislature and his ongoing contribution to the community. Even after he left this Legislature, he continued to be very active in community life in Manitoba, and we thank him and appreciate him for the service he provided.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, Sam Uskiw was an intriguing person. And born in October of 1933 in East Selkirk, he was well known to the people of that area in this province, not only as a politician, but as a

special character and a person who was intense in everything he pursued.

He certainly began his career in politics as a New Democratic member of this Legislative Assembly, as had been noted by the Premier earlier—a close relationship with Edward Schreyer—a previous relationship through agricultural advocacy organizations prior to the political association, but naturally, I suppose, flowing into his political involvement thereafter. Subsequently, later in life, although he did leave the New Democratic Party and became a fundraiser for the PC Party and very active with them, he maintained a strong relationship, of course, with Mr. Schreyer and subsequently backed him when he was running in an election—federal election in the Interlake riding, I believe—election 2005, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

Before entering political life he was a potato farmer, a meat cutter and a number of other roles that he played in various aspects. He was junior president of the Manitoba farmers union in 1961 and '62. He also served several years as a school trustee in his home area.

First elected in 1966, he actually replaced his friend, Ed Schreyer, who had left for the House of Commons, and served in—as a representative for the riding of Brokenhead. He was easily re-elected in the redistributed riding of Lac du Bonnet thereafter in the '69 election. At that point in time, of course, his friend, Ed Schreyer, had returned to provincial politics and he led the NDP to its first ever election victory in the election of that year.

Sam chose to support Mr. Schreyer over Sid Green in the leadership convention that preceded that election. He served from '69 until '77 as the Minister of Agriculture, which was the entirety of Ed Schreyer's tenure in office. Some, who may or may not have been accurate, felt that the—leaving Sam in that portfolio for that extended length of time was somehow an attempt to suppress his future leadership aspirations. I can't verify that; that is an observation some have made.

As Ag Minister, Mr. Uskiw was responsible for overseeing a number of initiatives and subsidy programs. He argued for many years that rural taxation was disproportionately high. He favoured shifting education taxes off land and more towards home ownership. He brought forward legislation to provide for a publicly owned land system to relieve farmers of the burden of investment.



And, although in the '93 election the NDP made some minor rural gains, the party remained decidedly urban in its nature. But Sam himself was easily re-elected in the '73 election and in the '77 election at the time that Sterling Lyon came to power.

On a side note, in '79 Mr. Uskiw decided to support Sidney Green's attempt to become the party's interim leader following Ed Schreyer's resignation, but declined to run for the leadership himself despite strong efforts from others to encourage him to run, such as Herb Schultz and Harry Shafransky. He refused to endorse the successful campaign of Howard Pawley, despite the fact that he and Mr. Pawley had been allies in the Schreyer ministry. But he was gravely concerned and uncomfortable with the direction of the party under Howard Pawley's leadership, particularly as it regarded the increased ties to the labour movement at that time.

In 1981, you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, Sid Green moved to start his own political movement or political party called the Progressive Party, and there was a lot of speculation at that time that Sam would support Sid Green in his attempt to move that party forward and give them official party status in the Legislature by changing parties during his time as an MLA. but he ultimately refused to do that. He said that he would try to change the NDP's policies from within the party rather than fight from outside. And while he did not leave the NDP, he did continue to publicly express his concerns about the move of the party in the aforementioned direction.

\* (15:20)

He was re-elected in the election of 1981—in which Howard Pawley formed a majority government—and was named Minister of Government Services, and Minister of Highways and Transportation in '81, and served well throughout his time here. He later, in '85, became the Minister of Natural Resources.

In 1986, he decided not to run and at that point decided to support Progressive Conservative candidates and to serve in a leading role within the Progressive Conservative Party, in fact, at one point serving on the Progressive Conservatives' fund board, or fundraising arm, and for a number of years being one of the party's leading, if not its leading, financial contributor. He also, though, spoke at meetings of Sid Green's Progressive Party in which he argued that his independence as a minister had been undermined somewhat by efforts from the trade

union movement. He had—he did not seek to return back to politics after that 1986 election, but he did chair a commission in the '90s which oversaw changes to the province's Personal Injury Protection Plan. He did—as I mentioned earlier, did support his friend, Ed Schreyer, and I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I put on the record 2005, but it was the 2006 federal election.

Sam Uskiw was an intense individual, a dedicated individual to his family, and our condolences go out to them. To outside observers, perhaps, a man of some contradictions. On the one hand, in my experience with him and others, was that he was very much open-minded and loved to learn about issues and he was very interested in policies, particularly those affecting rural Manitoba. But on the other hand, despite that open-mindedness, he was a very principled man very strong in the way—in his beliefs.

On the one hand, he was a dedicated, focused, hard-working person. On the other hand, he loved his time off too. He loved—I think his particular favourite place was Waikiki, if I'm not mistaken. I know he loved to get out away on vacations and certainly enjoyed his outside life and his yard as well.

And the interesting thing, in particular, about Sam Uskiw that you can say about very few people throughout Manitoba political history is that his legacy will be one of being a leader and a leading contributor both to the New Democratic Party of Manitoba and to the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba—an interesting and relatively unique legacy and one that speaks to a person, I think, of very interesting and intriguing qualities and Sam Uskiw certainly had those in abundance, Mr. Speaker.

Our condolences to his family and all those who will treasure his memory today.

**Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson):** I rise to pay tribute to Sam Uskiw today.

And during the early '70s as I was actively promoting the need for a properly funded beef organization to represent the cattle producers in the province of Manitoba, there were meetings all over the province and Sam attended most of those meetings. He was a strong believer of co-operatives and made many attempts to form a co-operative for beef, which was unsuccessful, but certainly not from a desire to help beef producers in the province. Although our ideologies were different, let there be

made—no mistake made that his commitment to agriculture could never be doubted.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute and my respect and my condolences to the family of Sam Uskiw.

Thank you.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines):** I, too, rise to pay tribute to a very dedicated and determined and helpful individual, Sam Uskiw, who, to me, was one of those heroes in 1969 who came to office quite unexpectedly. And Sam and Saul Cherniack and Larry Desjardins, of course, Ed Schreyer, were all heroes of mine as a youth.

Seeing them take on so many issues that were important in the 1960s and changed the face of this province through so many measures—home care, prescription drug program, personal care home development across the province as well as the agriculture reforms that Sam was very, very fond of.

I considered Sam a friend throughout the '70s, '80s, '90s and recently when we both attended and worked for Ed Schreyer in his federal nomination. I'd note at the time that Sam was fighting a vigorous battle with cancer, but was intense and was devoted to the ideals of Ed Schreyer, a mutual friend and someone we both feel very strongly about.

Sam was the kind of person—most people probably don't know—who was a successful businessman, made—ran a very successful business, very dedicated towards his family, and was a good friend, was a very, very good friend to many that I know and to myself as well throughout the years that I knew him.

And I, too, pay tribute to his life and to his dedication in public service and throughout his lifetime, and I think we're all—that this is all a better place because of people like Sam Uskiw.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Sam Uskiw and to extend condolences to family and friends.

Sam was a major contributor to our province, and he served admirably as Minister of Agriculture, later as Minister of Highways, and Natural Resources. When I first ran for political office in 1993 in Portage-Interlake, Sam was a legend in terms of what he was achieved and who he know and what

he was involved with, and certainly he's one of those people who is larger than life in many respects and certainly made a huge contribution to the province and something that I think we'll all be grateful.

Thank you.

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

*A moment of silence was observed.*

### Laurent Desjardins

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Monsieur le Président, je propose que l'Assemblée transmette à la famille de feu Laurent Desjardins, qui a été député à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba, ses sincères condoléances et sa gratitude pour le dévouement donc il a su faire preuve dans son travail au service de sa collectivité et de la population du Manitoba, et que le Président fasse parvenir une copie de la présente motion à la famille du défunt.

### Translation

*Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly express to the family of the late Laurent Desjardins, who was an MLA at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, our sincere condolences and gratitude for the dedication that he showed in his work on behalf of his community and the entire population of Manitoba, and that the Speaker forward a copy of this motion to the family of the deceased.*

### English

Mr. Speaker, I propose that this House convey to the family of the late Laurent Desjardins, 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.

**Mr. Speaker:** It's been moved by the honourable First Minister, seconded by the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that this House convey to the family of the late Laurent Desjardins, 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 of active community and public service, and that Mr. Speaker be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the family in both official languages.

**Mr. Selinger:** Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour parler de mon prédécesseur, l'ancien député de Saint-Boniface Laurent Desjardins, qui nous a quittés le 7 février 2012.

**Translation**

*I take the floor today to talk about my predecessor, the former MLA for St. Boniface, Laurent Desjardins, who left us on February 7, 2012.*

**English**

People often said that Larry was a big man, that everything about him was big. He spirit—his spirited addresses in this House remain the stuff of legends, and I think he could easily best some of our current members in a friendly debate.

\* (15:30)

Ceux qui le connaissaient savaient que Laurent aimait les défis. On disait qu'il était à son meilleur quand il avait un défi à surmonter.

**Translation**

*Those who knew him knew that Laurent liked challenges. It was said that he was at his best when he had a challenge to overcome.*

**English**

He was a man that was always at his best when he had a big challenge in front of him, and that's what brought the best out of him. He valued honesty and stayed true to himself and his ideas.

Et surtout, Laurent était un homme passionné autant par les questions qui entouraient la Francophonie que par le Manitoba.

**Translation**

*Above all, Larry was a man who was as passionate about issues surrounding the Francophonie as he was about Manitoba.*

**English**

In public life, Laurent began his political service as an alderman on the St. Boniface city council from 1951 to 1954. He was elected provincially as a Liberal-Progressive MLA in 1959 during the Roblin government era. The Liberal-Progressives later became the Manitoba Liberal Party. And, while Laurent may have started with the Liberals, he was not afraid to amend his ways. Described by former-Premier Howard Pawley as a man of principle, Laurent was one to always follow his values and his instincts.

After the 1969 election, Laurent's offer of parliamentary support to the then-new New Democratic government of Ed Schreyer enabled the 'farty' to form a majority government. In that election, the party under Ed Schreyer picked up 28 seats, going from the third party in the Legislature to the almost majority government in a matter of weeks. However, this was one seat short of a majority. When Laurent was faced with this dilemma—and there was some discussions of forming another anti-NDP coalition of the other parties—he decided he would change his party affiliation to liberal democrat and support Ed Schreyer. And he only did this after he consulted his constituents at a very large meeting in St. Boniface that attracted a lot of headlines. But those 500 people there, in their vast majority, supported his decision, and so the NDP was able to form a majority.

Ce changement d'affiliation était significatif puisque, historiquement, les francophones et les Catholiques ne supportaient pas le NPD. Laurent s'est tout de même joint formellement au NPD en 1971.

**Translation**

*This change of affiliation was significant because, historically, francophones and Catholics did not support the NDP. Larry nevertheless formally joined the NDP in 1971.*

**English**

He served as a Cabinet minister under both Ed Schreyer and Howard Pawley's governments. In 1971, he was named Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. In 1974, he was named Minister of Health and Social Development, the portfolio he truly loved, Mr. Speaker. In 1975, he became minister responsible for the Lotteries act and added it to his Health portfolio. In 1981, he became the Minister of Health and Minister of Recreation and Sport, with responsibility for Lotteries and The Gaming Control Act. And, in 1985, he became the Minister of Urban Affairs, followed in 1986 by being re-appointed as the Minister of Health and Sport. And he also had a great love for the Sport portfolio, and as I go further into his history, we'll see why.

L'ancien député NPD pour Radisson, M. Gérard Lécuyer, décrivait sa relation de travail avec Laurent comme étant joyeuse et de bonne humeur, mais il était privé quand ça venait aux enjeux reliés à son portefeuille. La carrière politique de Laurent Desjardins a eu un grand impact sur le paysage

politique pour les francophones au Manitoba. Depuis son premier terme sur les bancs du gouvernement, Laurent s'est cimenté comme champion pour les francophones du Manitoba. En 1961, il s'est démarqué en appuyant le financement public pour les écoles confessionnelles. C'est un choix qui était dû à son expérience, ayant été élevé à Saint-Boniface. Laurent croyait que le financement public était nécessaire pour compenser pour les lois anti-francophones du passé. Éventuellement, c'était son travail et son dévouement qui ont assuré l'adoption d'une loi pour restaurer les droits d'enseignement en français au Manitoba. Il a d'ailleurs été instrumental à la création du Centre culturel franco-manitobain en 1970. Grâce aux célébrations du centenaire du Manitoba, c'est grâce à Laurent Desjardins qu'une portion du financement des célébrations du centenaire du Manitoba a été disponible pour la communauté francophone, en appuyant le centre communautaire franco-manitobain.

#### **Translation**

*The former NDP MLA for Radisson, Mr. Gérard Lécuyer, described his working relationship with Larry as joyous and good humoured, but he was private when it came to issues that were related to his portfolio. The political career of Larry Desjardins had a great impact on the political landscape for francophones in Manitoba. From his first term on government benches, Larry cemented his reputation as a champion of Manitoba's francophones. In 1961, he distinguished himself by supporting public funding for denominational schools. It was a choice that flowed from his experience, as he had been raised in St. Boniface. Larry believed that public funding was necessary to compensate for the anti-French legislation of the past. Eventually, it was his work and his dedication that ensured the passing of a law restoring the right French-language instruction in Manitoba. He was also instrumental in creating the Centre culturel franco-manitobain in 1970. Thanks to Manitoba's centennial celebrations, it was thanks to Larry Desjardins that a portion of the funding for Manitoba's centennial celebrations was made available to the francophone community, by supporting the Franco-Manitoban community centre.*

#### **English**

During the 1980s, Laurent was a prominent supporter of Howard Pawley's efforts to expand and entrench French language services in Manitoba.

Il a aidé à avancer la cause du bilinguisme au niveau fédéral comme secrétaire des relations fédérales-provinciales. À l'époque, le Manitoba était le seul à s'ouvrir aux idées de Pierre Trudeau quant au bilinguisme. Nous étions à la table même avant le Nouveau-Brunswick. Son travail a aidé à faire du Manitoba une province accueillante envers les nouveaux arrivants francophones, et notre communauté francophone s'en trouve choyée.

#### **Translation**

*He helped to advance the cause of bilingualism at the federal level as secretary of provincial-federal relations. At the time, Manitoba was the only province to open up to Pierre Trudeau's ideas about bilingualism. We were at the table even before New Brunswick. His work helped to make Manitoba a welcoming province for francophone newcomers, and our francophone community is all the better for it.*

#### **English**

Bernard Bocquel, an author of Laurent's biography, said of him: Un homme aussi intègre que lui en politique, ça ne se voit presque plus aujourd'hui.

#### **Translation**

*You hardly ever see a man of his integrity in politics nowadays.*

#### **English**

We rarely see what someone of his integrity in politics today. And, Mr. Speaker, that integrity showed itself in his fight for francophone affairs just as much as in other legislation.

But he also had a great love for sport, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible for sport and fitness, he was key to making sports programs a major beneficiary of provincial lottery resources. He was also responsible for the creation of a government policy in support of amateur sports. This created the Manitoba Games and allowed sport to become a major beneficiary of the provincial lottery programs.

In his personal life, Laurent was actually an athlete himself in his younger days. He was a left-handed pitcher and first baseman with the St. Boniface Juveniles, St. Paul's College, the Norwood Seniors, St. Boniface Native Sons and played semi-professionally in the ManDak League. In 1940, the Winnipeg Tribune wrote of him: You can add the name of 17-year-old Laurent Desjardins to your list

of the junior league's likely looking baseball prospects. Desjardins, a husky southpaw making his first start in minor organized circles, baffled West End Maroons Saturday night, losing a no-hitter on George Thompson's fourth inning and pitching St. Paul's College to a 10-0 triumph.

In 1943, he was described as a youthful local hurler who had a rivalling team eating out of the palm of his good left hand for six frames.

He also played football for St. Paul's College, the University of Manitoba and later on for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. He also had an amateur hockey career, playing for the St. Boniface Juniors and Esquires. He also served as a scout for two NHL teams later on in life. In 1990, Laurent was inducted into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame.

Laurent's interests ranged far beyond politics.

Il était membre des Chevaliers de Colomb, du club de curling Granite, ainsi que du Conseil Canadien des Chrétiens et des Juifs.

#### **Translation**

*He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Granite Curling Club, and the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews.*

#### **English**

To all these organizations he generally gave his time and his expertise, trying to strengthen ties of friendship and bring happiness to the lives of Manitobans. In recognition of his community service, Laurent received a Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977.

Passing away at the age of 88, Laurent had a full and happy life, but he had also much spirit left in him. He will be sorely missed by his friends and his family and as well as all the people whose lives he changed through his many roles: the little league Manitoba hockey player who could now count on public funding to pursue her dreams, the francophone high school student who could learn and advance in his own language, and the patients in the Health Sciences Centre who benefit from better care enabled by progressive health reforms.

J'aimerais offrir mes sincères condoléances à la famille de Laurent : son épouse Mel dans la galerie aujourd'hui, ses deux filles, Caroline et Suzanne, son beau-fils Christopher Keenan, ses neuf petits-enfants et ses quatorze arrière-petits-enfants, ainsi que sa sœur Patricia. La perte de Laurent était triste pour le

Manitoba, mais son héritage progressif continuera à vivre pour plusieurs générations. Merci.

#### **Translation**

*I would like to offer my sincere condolences to Larry's family, his wife Mel who is in the gallery today, his two daughters, Caroline and Suzanne, his son-in-law Christopher Keenan, his nine grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren, and his sister Patricia. The loss of Larry was sad for Manitoba, but his progressive legacy will live on for generations. Thank you.*

\* (15:40)

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Merci, monsieur le Président.

Laurent Louis Desjardins, mardi le 7 février 2012, est décédé à l'hôpital général Victoria à l'âge de 88 ans. Le natif de Saint-Boniface a fréquenté les collèges de Saint-Boniface et de Saint-Paul, ainsi que le Cincinnati college of funeral directors and embalmers. Il était le propriétaire-exploitant du Salon mortuaire Desjardins et du Park Lawn mortuary, puis il a quitté l'entreprise pour prendre sa retraite au début des années 1970.

Pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, il a servi dans la marine canadienne à bord du NCSM St. Boniface. Il était très actif dans les affaires communautaires, dans les sports et en politique. Il était échevin de la ville de Saint-Boniface de 1950 à 1955 et a représenté la circonscription de Saint-Boniface à la législature provinciale for 20 years.

#### **Translation**

*Thank you, Mr. Speaker.*

*On Tuesday, February 17, 2012, at the Victoria Hospital, Laurent Louis Desjardins, aged 88, passed away. Born in St. Boniface, he attended St. Boniface and St. Paul colleges and the Cincinnati College of Funeral Directors and Embalmers. He owned and operated the Desjardins Funeral Chapel and the Park Lawn Mortuary, retiring from the business in the early 1970s.*

*During the Second World War, he served in the Canadian Navy aboard the HMCS St. Boniface. He was very active in the community affairs, sports, and politics. He was Alderman for the City of St. Boniface from 1950 to 1955 and represented St. Boniface in the provincial legislature for 20 years.*

#### **English**

In a press release issued in 1971, after Mr. Desjardins had already served for a number of years,

for 20 years, unbelievably, Mr. Speaker, as a St. Boniface City alderman, as an MLA for a number of years, of course, initially for the Liberal Party, and now for—running—or joining, after this election, the NDP, the press release actually was very interesting because it was biographical in nature and gave some insights into his background. But it said—and I'll just quote a piece of it here—it said: Mr. Desjardins, 48, brings to the department—and this is where he was announced to become a minister, in this particular press release, referred to him becoming the Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs—and it says: Mr. Desjardins brings a long background in sports and cultural development.

And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had outlined a number of things. I think I'll perhaps be repeating some of those things, but it's worth repeating because it's tremendous record of accomplishment. He had played junior hockey for St. Boniface, senior baseball in various leagues. He had signed to play professionally as well with the Winnipeg Maroons just before the team disbanded just prior to the Second World War in which he served. And he also played senior football with the University of Manitoba and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers wartime team. He coached as well. He coached the Isaac Newton team, St. Paul's College team, Winnipeg Rods, served on the Blue Bomber executive. He was chairman of minor football.

But he went further, Mr. Speaker, in his service. He was also the president and general manager of the St. Boniface Canadiens Hockey chain for seven years. He was, as the Premier had mentioned, the Montréal Canadiens' scout during those same years, and he later served for five years scouting for the Boston Bruins. This is the original six, so that's quite a thing, and there weren't as many teams. Mind you, they were more active then than our current NHL today, I guess. He scouted also for the 1960 Olympic Games in Grenoble.

So many other aspects of his life—he served with the Navy in the north Atlantic, quite appropriately, aboard a ship named after, well, St. Boniface, which is quite appropriate.

His public service record is exemplary. He went on to serve in so many capacities, initially as the legislative assistant to Ed Schreyer. He went on to serve as Minister of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, as I've noted, Minister of Health and Social Development for three years, responsible for the Lotteries act for three as well under Howard

Pawley, Minister of Health, of Recreation and Sport, responsible for Manitoba Lotteries, later as Minister of Urban Affairs for Mr. Pawley, minister of health and sport, responsible for The Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act and The Fitness and Amateur Sport Act, from 1986 to 1988 for Mr. Pawley.

As has been noted, he supported expanding French language services in Manitoba, head of the provincial Secretariat on Dominion-Provincial Relations. He studied western Canada's lottery system. He was the first chairman of the western Canadian lottery corporation. Later on he worked with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy in respect of—not for them but with them—in respect of 'publiz'—public policy discussions around health-care funding and sponsored over 25 bills in the areas of health and social services.

An extensive background of great accomplishments. He brought to his political experience his practical experience as a small-business person with his funeral home business, his military service as an experience that he had, as did many from Manitoba and across our country in the Second World War. He was also on the St. Boniface Hospital board, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, and, of course, was inducted, as has been noted, in 1990, into the Manitoba Sports Hall of Fame. Just a tremendous and varied career.

His—specifically to his political issues, I would just like to, especially, remark that, as a Roman Catholic and a francophone, he was a strong supporter of funding for denominational schools, for private and denominational schools. As a person who regarded that funding as necessary for redressing some of the anti-francophone legislation that had been pursued by previous Manitoba governments for a long time, beginning back in the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th. The Roblin government had taken some steps on that front, but that issue was still unresolved in the 1970s.

When, in 1969, Mr. Desjardins made his decision to move from the Liberal Party to the NDP, that was a watershed moment in not only his personal political career, but in Manitoba politics and in Manitoba political history in some respects. It resulted in a dramatic shift in his career personally. Shortly after, the NDP moved from third place to first place in that election in 1969. Under Edward Schreyer's leadership, Mr. Desjardins was moved, as I mentioned earlier, into a Cabinet position. There was a lot of uncertainty right after that election about

how things would pan out, Mr. Speaker. It was not at all certain, initially, that Mr. Schreyer would be given an opportunity. There was a kind of anti-socialist coalition that was forming, and many people speculated at that time, that Mr.—they did not speculate at that time, that Mr. Desjardins would actually, because of many of his previous pronouncements in this place and elsewhere, move to join with the New Democratic Party. But, nonetheless, he decided to make that decision. And the consequence was that Mr. Schreyer was able, when this impasse or this non-determined election results was creating political confusion— if you can call it that, it allowed Mr. Schreyer to then move forward and to form his government with the help of Mr. Desjardins. And that affiliation, or change of affiliation, was truly a significant thing in Mr. Desjardins political career and a significant thing in the history of Manitoba politics. He had been previously known as a strong opponent of socialism in any form. Manitoba's francophone population was not traditionally supportive of the New Democratic Party before that time and, yet, he was able to form an alliance with Mr. Schreyer on the understanding that he would be able to continue to work in favour of denominational school funding on the side of the government.

In July of '72 his efforts in support of denominational schools were dealt a setback when a government-sponsored bill to permit funding was defeated. Now, it was defeated because in the Legislature at that time there was a free vote and a number of the New Democratic members in the House decided against supporting that bill. However, there was some small progress made by the Schreyer government in respect of administrative agreements with certain private schools to provide them some access to public money.

Given the lack of historical francophone support for the NDP there was a lot of speculation that Mr. Desjardins would not be re-elected in the provincial election of 1973. And his riding was actually targeted by a group, citizens' group, in the amalgamated—now amalgamated city of Winnipeg, which included St. Boniface. And this group convinced Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties to withdraw their candidates in certain ridings so there'd be a single candidate. Something certain former federal Liberal members advocated in the past provincial election, that Liberal supporters do, sort of, an attempt to avoid dividing the anti-whatever vote.

His sole opponent in 1973 in the June election was a Liberal candidate named J. Paul Marion. Following a very close race, Marion was declared the winner. And here's a lesson to all of us on the importance of get out to vote: J. Paul Marion was declared the winner by one vote; 4,301 to 4,300. That's the ultimate nail-biter, Mr. Speaker. That result was, however, disputed and—oh, the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) also had a very close race. I think he could very much relate to this, but—*[interjection]*—and landslide, I guess, would know about that. In any case, it was a very close race.

But, Mr. Desjardins did, as a result of the election being overturned by The Controverted Elections Act in December of '94, Mr. Desjardins was returned to this place in a bi-election by more than 600 votes; truly, relative to the previous election, not quite a landslide.

Monsieur Desjardins is one—is a person which not only the people of St. Boniface admire, but anyone who has studied the history of this province admires for his tremendous and varied career. His success at all levels, in fact, in every aspect of his life was the result of a strong, endearing personality and a commitment to work that is exemplary and something that stands, I think, as an example to all of us at what can be accomplished with those efforts that Mr. Desjardins put in.

Our condolences to his family and, certainly, our best remembrances of him to his friends and those who treasure and value his great contribution to Manitoba.

\* (15:50)

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation):** I had the privilege to serve with Larry Desjardins from my election in 1981 through to 1988, with his resignation, at that time, when he moved to his position at—as the head of the Manitoba Health Organizations. And I have to tell you, coming into this august Chamber, he was one person that I was automatically both fascinated by, having, you know, seen him at various political events, you know, NDP conventions—but also someone that was both very welcoming and he was a very gregarious individual, but also someone that had some sense of the collective history of this place.

I mean, when I first got elected—he had been first elected in 1959, so it was quite the connection to a very different era in Manitoba politics. What struck me about it by the way, as I got to know Larry,

sitting with him and seeing some of the things that Larry brought with him, was just how significant a figure Larry himself was in Manitoba political history.

I mean, I think it's important to note that he started his political career at a very young age, something I had a kinship with. He was 27 when he was first elected to city council, but he was elected in 1959 in a very interesting period for Manitoba politics. Manitoba was only really just leaving the non-partisan era. I think it's often forgotten that one of the legacies of the scandal of the building of the Manitoba Legislature, was people, in very short order, after a Liberal government—but from the 1920s really, through to the 1950s, until Duff Roblin became Premier, you essentially had a coalition government. It had gone through various different labels, the Progressives, et cetera, but when Larry ran in 1959, he was elected as a Liberal-Progressive, you know, running counter to that stream, of course. He was a Liberal when the party was formed, I believe, in nineteen fifty–1961.

But what was interesting really, was Larry really was elected at a time—a very significant time for the francophone community. I think when people look back in history, they will look at that period as being a rebirth of the francophone community in Manitoba, and Larry always carried that with him.

It's important to remember that, you know, in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, really, until just a few years ago, the history books wrote that Louis Riel was a traitor. We now recognize Louis Riel as a father of Confederation. In fact, certainly, without Louis Riel, Manitoba would not have been formed in 19—or, pardon me, in 1870.

You had the Manitoba Schools Question that just burned in the francophone community and was part of a massive effort in the 18—starting in the 1890s to assimilate the francophone community. And let's not forget, in the early days of Manitoba, the French language was the language of the majority. That changed with significant immigration.

But Larry brought with him that strong sense of the grievance, but also the political identity of the francophone community. And I wouldn't underestimate, by the way, the milieu that he entered in 1959 through to, certainly, 1969, because even though it was a period of time in which there was not the previous coalition style, the more non-partisan style of politics—I remember Larry telling me that many of the votes at that time, and Ed Schreyer

confirmed this after, were actually relatively free votes. There was more of a tendency for people to vote on urban-rural lines, Mr. Speaker. And I think it was during that period that Larry came to know Ed Schreyer, another person who entered politics at a young age, 22, before he became a federal member of parliament.

And then when you had the historic events of 1969, and people forget that the NDP government of the day was elected with a minority government, Larry basically made a—what was a historic choice and was very controversial at the time, but he decided to support the government. In fact, he became a liberal democrat, which, I don't think we've had liberal democrats since that time. But he eventually became a member of the party, I think, in the—in '71, and Leader of the Opposition related some of the controversies of the day. But, I mean, we had a free vote on funding for parochial schools, separate schools and, in fact, the premier lost, as the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) points out.

We had, you know, Larry Desjardins defeated by one vote. He remained in Cabinet, I believe, until January of 1974. Then, eventually, was a by-election, was re-elected by 600 votes, and it was really actually only at that point in time that that transformation took place. And I know one thing. Larry was always, I think, struck by, by the way, was the degree to which the Schreyer government really represented the diversity of Manitoba in a way that perhaps hadn't been represented in—by governments before because you had representation in Schreyer government that included, obviously, the francophone community, but many people of diverse backgrounds, Ed Schreyer himself. And that was something that was very important to Larry.

Now, the Larry that I knew when I was elected was again someone that carried with him a very significant sense of that history. And I can't not comment on the—probably the most significant debate that I have seen in this Legislature, not necessarily one of the most pleasant ones, and that was the French language issue.

And I have to say, by the way, in retrospect, it's hard to believe that we went through that in this province. And I'm not going to get into the politics of it, but the anger and the hatred. I mean, I saw it directed at francophone MLAs; I saw it directed at Larry. I saw people wandering this Legislature—our security in those days was perhaps not what it is today—trying to force them into caucus rooms. I'll



never forget when Larry actually blocked a group from trying to, you know, burst into the NDP caucus.

But, you know, the one thing that struck me about Larry, by the way, is if you read his speeches from that day, and you saw, you know, the heap of what would happen, is Larry always, by the way, you know, he didn't lose his cool, okay? He gave a strong defence, obviously, a historic reference point in terms of francophone community. But he was not going to be moved.

And it's ironic that—because after that, that battle, much of what was in the proposal ended up being put in place and practised in Manitoba. And I do think, by the way, that notwithstanding the politics of what happened and the fact that nothing did happen in terms of the specific proposal at that time, it's a very different Manitoba today. I mean, I look at my kids: both went to French immersion, which was controversial in the 1980s, by the way, in my community. I can tell you they're both, well, I was going to say bilingual, but they actually speak more than two languages.

Again, the—you know, in a province where there's a hundred languages 'spollen'—spoken, my daughter has learned six of them in Thompson alone; my son, four.

But, you know, there's now more than a hundred thousand people in this province who speak French. The historic francophone community has been renewed. Fact, every bilingual municipality in this province show growth in the last census, which is quite remarkable. And I think what's happened is because of that rebirth of the francophone community, and in some ways even coming out of that crucible of 1983, 1984, we have changed that—the province.

And when we did recognize Louis Riel, you know, at Louis Riel Day, to my mind it was coming full circle because a lot of our roots in this province are very much of the francophone founding along with, you know, our First Nations, the Metis people and immigration from all over Canada and all across the world, and for me, Larry was always a key figure in terms of that.

Now, he went on to do other things after politics. I do want to note, by the way, that for a former minister of Lotteries, it was, I think, very appropriate that he prepared a report that is always a reminder of—to us in terms of the balance that we need, in terms of gaming in this province. And he was one of

the first to identify some of the addictions-related issues from gaming. And it's something we all have to recognize.

Larry continued to be very passionate about health care. I think a lot of that came out of his time on the St. Boniface Hospital board. He was very committed to health care. It's one of the reasons he did leave politics, to go with the MHO, but he continued to do that.

And I think, as people related, by the way, he loved sports. Anything to do with sports and you'll find Larry in the, you know, the Hall of Fame. He's recognized here as a significant sporting figure.

\* (16:00)

But, you know, I think one of the great legacies, again, of what Larry fought for, I'll get back to it, is in terms of the status of the French language in the francophone community. So that's why, in paying tribute to my former colleague, someone I respected, someone I always enjoyed my conversations with both when he was in politics and when he was out of politics—and I did want to finish, you know, by something that we perhaps should be doing more of, Mr. Speaker, and I suspect we will be over time, which is, you know, to address this Chamber in one of our two official languages of this Chamber—you know, an important language in the history of this province.

And I want to reflect, and I know the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has reflected similar sentiments, and I want to say with Larry Desjardins: Laurent Desjardins, le Manitoba a perdu un véritable champion. Très peu de gens dans nos vies ont une influence aussi importante sur notre province. Monsieur Desjardins était une de ces personnes. Merci beaucoup.

#### **Translation**

*Manitoba has lost a real champion. Very few people in our lives have as important an influence on our province. Mr. Desjardins was one of those people. Thank you very much.*

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in tribute to Larry Desjardins, Laurent Desjardins, and extend condolences to family and friends.

J'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour Laurent Desjardins, pour son travail — pour son travail comme ministre de la Santé et son travail pour la

communauté francophone du Manitoba. C'était un homme extraordinaire, en effet.

**Translation**

*I have a great deal of admiration for Larry Desjardins, for his work—for his work as Minister of Health and his work for the francophone community of Manitoba. He was indeed an extraordinary man.*

**English**

I think the—it's notable that Larry Desjardins was for many years a Liberal and for many years a member of the NDP party, and he certainly contributed in this Chamber in many different ways. When he was Minister of Health, he seemed to do a pretty good job of running the portfolio. The waiting lists were and waiting lines were a lot shorter than they are now and the quality of care was highly respected. I think that the work that he did and the understanding that he had of health care was a significant contributor.

I was recruited to the Cancer Foundation and to the Children's Hospital by Lyonel Israels, and Lyonel Israels had been director for quite a number of years of what was then the Cancer Foundation, of course, now CancerCare Manitoba. And Lyonel told me of one occasion, of course, when Larry Desjardins, Laurent Desjardins, was the Minister of Health, and Lyonel was having a lot of trouble getting some attention that he needed to the Cancer Foundation, and, of course, Lyonel didn't speak French very much and he was trying to figure out what on earth he could do to get Larry Desjardins' attention. And so, he got some help from somebody else with the French and he wrote everything out and he learned it and he 'pronounce'—pronoun—learned how to pronounce it well, and then he went on the radio in St. Boniface in French and made his case and the next day he had Larry Desjardins' attention. He got things done. So, if things were brought to the attention of the community in St. Boniface and the francophone community, they certainly came to Larry Desjardins' attention, and he was certainly one to act quickly when something came to his attention.

My colleague the MLA from Elmwood reminds me that Larry Desjardins for quite a number of years ran a funeral home, and, sitting on the opposite side of the Chamber from the Conservative Party, when he didn't like something that was being said on the other side, he would bring out his tape measure and say—sort of indicate, I'm measuring you up for your coffin. He had a sense of humour and I think that that

sense of humour, you know, meant—in—that sense of humour was important in terms of carrying him through the difficult times in politics and the challenges, and as we all know that sense of humour can be pretty important.

So I would just conclude by saying that, you know, he was a remarkable man and made a major contribution to Manitoba, and I think that we who are here today are in his debt for what he was able to do in health care and in sports and in other areas.

Thank you.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines):** Merci, monsieur le Président.

Je voudrais dire quelque chose sur l'ancien député de la — de notre chambre législative : M. Laurent Desjardins. Je voudrais commencer par dire qu'il était très surpris que je parle en français, mais je voulais parler en français un peu parce qu'il était un héros pour moi.

**Translation**

*Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say something about the former MLA in this Legislative Chamber, Mr. Laurent Desjardins. I would like to start by saying that he was very surprised that I spoke French, but I wanted to speak in French a bit because he was a hero to me.*

**English**

As I said earlier in my comments about Mr. Uskiw, Larry was one of the heroes of my childhood and youth. I used to sit up in the gallery and watch the Legislature—strange as that might seem—and I—there never was a question that Larry ever answered. He was a marvel in terms of his performance in the Legislature. It was really quite marvellous. He would talk and, you know, the opposition would be scratching their heads and I'd be scratching my head as to—and it was quite remarkable.

I—but to be serious, he was a man that—larger than life, very, very strong convictions, but a incredibly sensitive man who could be driven to tears by the plight of anyone hurting, and I had witnessed that. In fact, I know for a fact that both Ed and Lily Schreyer will say that the night that their daughter, Lisa Schreyer, 'recited' the Lord's Prayer in French might have been the night that Larry actually decided to fully come over and be committed to the government of the day, and that he was driven to tears by a young child being able to speak in—to say

the prayer in French to an English-speaking family that were—that had immigrant parents.

When I had the honour of being the Health critic for my party and the Health Minister, I'm not ashamed to say that I had many—spent much time with Larry, sought his advice on many occasions and followed his advice on many, many occasions. And almost invariably his approach to politics was, in fact, non-partisan. The good policy is good politics, Mr. Speaker, we all know that. And in so many ways his approach was humane and larger than life and feeling and correct, and he helped a lot of people. And when I think of—and I said it earlier today—when I think of the legacy of that government I think of Larry as the Health Minister forever and all of those initiatives, all of those first-time ventures in health care, again: Pharmacare, home care, expansion of personal care homes, 1010 Sinclair. All of the innovations that occurred in this province in the late—in the early 1970s were hallmarks of progress in this country and were steered in many ways by Mr. Desjardins.

And, of course, sports was a passion as well, and I got to experience that in my many conversations with him. I had the honour and pleasure of visiting his home on many occasions and talking politics, and the advice I received, like so much advice that we received from elders, was extremely helpful in the very difficult journey to deal with health care in politics in this province.

\* (16:10)

So we all stand on the success of those who came before us. It's very difficult in words to convey the impression and the impact that one individual had on a province, but surely that vigour and that commitment ought to be followed by all of us in the future, and I think that would be a fitting tribute to the legacy of the former member of the Legislature, le député de Saint-Boniface, Monsieur Laurent Desjardins.

### *Translation*

*The member for St. Boniface, Mr. Larry Desjardins.*

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise and just put a few words on the record about a politician and a member of this Legislature that I think touched many people's lives and hearts in many ways.

Now I didn't have an opportunity to spend a long time in this Legislature with Larry Desjardins, but I

was here for a couple of years, and those were the two years from 1986 to 1988 when we were in opposition and he was the Minister of Health. And I was new, a novice in this Legislature, was—had a little difficulty trying to find my way around, but I listened intently to what he had to say, and he was—sometimes talked around in circles, I wasn't always sure that I completely understood at the end of any question that he answered or any speech that he made that I really understood exactly what he was saying, but he was a man of principle. He wasn't always politically correct, and he didn't always agree with his party or the governing party. There were times, because of his very strong Roman Catholic belief, that he had some differences of opinion on abortion and things like that with members of his own caucus and his party. He was never afraid to speak out and say what he thought.

He also, when it came to the whole issue of health care, although certainly his party would never have thought that any type of public-private partnership would have been a good thing, Larry Desjardins has spoken publicly about the value of a public-private partnership and how he wouldn't mind paying for the kind of care that he might receive.

He also did, and I've heard him speak and talk in interviews about hallway medicine and said that, quite frankly, it was one of the things that probably put the NDP government into power in 1999, but he would much prefer to be in a hallway getting some sort of care than up on a ward where there was no one to look after him.

So I've heard those, and I'm paraphrasing what he said, but he wasn't afraid to stand up and speak his mind, Mr. Speaker, and I valued that in him, and he was always one of those people that would come over and spend a little bit of time talking to members in the opposition. He had a very nice demeanour and nice way about him. He was a jovial person. He certainly has had a very colourful—had a very colourful life, many different accomplishments, and I know that many of those on the government side of the House would know much more about him. But I did value his expertise and, I would say, even mentorship in my few short years in the House when Larry Desjardins was here.

So to his family I give my sincere condolences and I think that Manitoba is a better place because we had a politician like Larry Desjardins in this Legislature.

Thank you.

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

*A moment of silence was observed.*

**Parker Burrell**

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** I move, seconded by the member for the Legislature of Swan River, that this House convey to the family of the late Parker Burrell, 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:** I rise to offer my condolences to Parker Burrell and his family and friends, for his life of active service to both his community and here in the Legislature.

Parker Burrell served as the MLA for Swan River between 1988 and 1990. He was passionate, in particular, about the issues of commercial fishing and fish hatcheries. And, as a fisherman himself, Parker Burrell did a great deal of work behind the scenes, both as a member of the Legislature and later as a private citizen to ensure the fishermen of the Swan River area and particularly Lake Winnipegosis did not lose their livelihoods.

In 1989 Parker Burrell spoke in support of Elijah Harper's resolution to help support Aboriginals in their attempts to have their treaty rights recognized, especially in regards to education.

In his professional life Parker Burrell was a professional fisherman and director of the Manitoba Federation of Fisherman. He also sat for several years on the board for the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, and in the 1990s, after his time in the Legislature, Parker Burrell continued to work on behalf of fishermen. In 1992 he was part of an advisory group of local fisherman around Lake Winnipegosis who worked together to decide the future location of a local fish hatchery which was expected to generate profit for the area.

Parker was born on February 6th in 1937, in Winnipegosis, to Glen and Myrtle Burrell, and he was the youngest child in a family of 10. The family travelled by boat to settle in Dawson Bay on the north end of Lake Winnipegosis. And a family business at Dawson Bay kept all the family busy in

their early years. They then relocated to Overflowing River where they managed a sawmill, fished and operated a hunting lodge.

Parker attended school in a log house in the—Dawson Bay until grade 8 and then he went on to high school in Birch River for—the Birch River High School for grades 9 to 12, and there he lived with his sister, Florence Corbett, and her family. He was instrumental in beginning a school newspaper and he had a flair for writing and interested many readers. After grade 12, he furthered his education in The Pas, and he's received his certificate of communication in Cranberry Portage.

Mr. Burrell was a man who always was looking for—to advance the interests of the people that he knew in his community and in the adjoining areas, and this allowed him to move forward both in elected life and in community life to make a difference for the people that he served. He's also credited his time for Legislature for learning all the intricate ways in which government could be leveraged for resources back to his community, and he took that knowledge with him after he left the Legislature and provided many important resources to the people of his area.

Mr. Burrell served well the people of Manitoba during his time in the Legislature and, after, in the community as well as before he entered the Legislature. And we offer our condolences and our respects to his family today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of meeting Parker just a couple of times, but he leaves an impression and he left an impression on a lot of people despite his short time here at the Legislature. He was an intriguing personality, and I'll share some anecdotes that I've been offered by others who served with him, momentarily. But I'll just review and perhaps repeat a couple of the things that the Premier had commented on.

\* (16:20)

The youngest in a family of 10, an outdoorsman from the beginning, apparently, Mr. Speaker. His family were managing a sawmill. He was a fisherman at a very early age. They operated a hunting lodge. Parker went to school in a log schoolhouse in Dawson Bay 'til grade 8 and then, doing really well in school and reading everything he could, he had a particular interest in politics and in world affairs. He moved on to continue at Birch

River high school for grade 9 to 12, but he had to move away from home to do that, move in with his sister and her family. And he, at the time that he attended high school, he began a school newspaper. Had a flair for writing; he interested many readers. He then—after grade 12, he continued his schooling at The Pas and he received a certificate in communication in Cranberry Portage.

He only served in this place—1988. After the '88 election, in which he defeated star candidate Leonard Harapiak, he served for a couple of years and then the family got revenge on him and sent Rosann, Len's sister, to take him out by 233 votes. So it was a short time, certainly, but, I think, for those around Parker, a good time. He was a person of great humour. He did—after his career as an MLA, he sat on the Freshwater Fish Marketing board for several years. He also was—started and ran a company, North End Packers, for a number of years, built up a big operation hauling and packing fish from many lakes in the area that he came from.

He was active in many community projects; he was the president of Mafeking Community Centre. When their indoor facility was built, he was credited with helping, as the Premier alluded to, get some money from the government to help with that project—and good for him. He also helped to enlist community members in providing labour—volunteer labour to work, complete that project. He bought a mill, he hired local people to saw lumber to make the arena; a real kind of an old-time bee approach to getting things done, Mr. Speaker, but that was Parker.

He organized talent shows to raise money for the project, broadcast over CKDM radio, and he organized picnics and rodeos and many other projects to help raise money for that project. He had winter and summer licences as a commercial fisherman, fished with an old wooden boat initially and then with a modern steel boat, and he had an old green Bombardier for his winter fishing. He loved the royal family, and I know he'd be intrigued by the current 'conflabs' concerning Will and Kate. He kept pictures of the royals up in his residence and read all kinds of books about the royal family, loved to read about Sir Winston Churchill and, legend has it, did a really good impersonation of Winston Churchill as well. So he was—and John Diefenbaker was one of his favourites as well.

Parker was a generous person. When he had a good catch of fish, everybody knew about it because

they got to eat some of them. He was a person who, when he butchered a beef, everybody got some beef too—that kind of a man. A generous human being, and he'll be sadly missed by his family.

Jim Downey served with him, and Jim, of course, no stranger to good anecdote. I've got to tell you, he said that when the Conservatives were—when Parker was running in his first race against Leonard Harapiak, the Conservatives came after Parker and they said, Parker, you have to present a better image to the people, you're going to have to buy a suit. Well, he resisted, but they insisted. And he said, all right then, but, well, okay, at least if I lose they can bury me in it; and that was Parker's attitude.

He wasn't a well-dressed man, and he did get a little bit of teasing for—some of you who were here at that time, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) would verify this. A little bit of teasing went on in respect of Parker's attire, but nobody ever questioned the quality of his character, and no one ever, ever questioned the quality of his personality. He had a lot of common sense—sometimes too much common sense.

Harold Gilleshammer tells the story that one time in the Legislature the fire alarm went off. Well, they had to evacuate the building; everybody went out. And after about 10, 15 minutes some panic arose, because Parker was nowhere to be found. Well, another 10 minutes later they said everybody could go back in, and they went in and found that Parker was having a nap—and I think it was 1:33, perhaps—having a nap on the cot. He'd decided that if there was a real serious fire, somebody'd come and get him.

So he also rolled his own cigarettes and—which some found distasteful. But nonetheless, of course, in those days there were no such rules around here about smoking in the building. But it was—Harold Gilleshammer recalled that he had just gotten a new car, and Harold was going to see a friend at a local hospital, and Parker said, why don't we go out for some dinner? And he said, well, you'll have to wait in the car, they won't let you smoke in his hospital room. And when he got back, his new car was covered with pieces of tobacco and stunk of cigarettes, of course, because Parker had been doing nothing but smoking, chain-smoking, for the last 45 minutes. Jim Downey said he never saw a shirt that Parker Burrell wore that didn't have burn mark—burn dots on it from tobacco falling off his loosely rolled cigarettes.

But, when he spoke, people listened to him. He had a unique sense of humour. He was engaging. He was often a master of ceremonies in local events, and I'm sure the member for Swan River would have been to some. He was a person who was engaging to the people around him, obviously a caring person, and regardless of the quality of his suit, he was no backwoods guy. He was a pretty well-read, smart individual, and I think the people of Manitoba were fortunate to have him serve them in this Chamber.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives):** Mr. Speaker, yes, it's a great honour to stand up today to recognize a great individual as Parker Burrell was, and my condolences to the family and friends of the family.

Unfortunately, I did not know Mr. Parker Burrell, and one of the things that really intrigued me when I read through his bio, and the only thing I could think about is the pioneers, and I'd like to classify the pioneers—and he was definitely one of them, from the area—as I relate to a lot of stories I hear from my grandparents. And I can see the 'commonarity' between Mr. Parker Burrell and my grandparents simply by the hard work the pioneers did and the staple they put in the fence post of being an icon in the community. And Mr. Parker Burrell definitely was that. Specially when you consider—I've lived all my life around Lake Winnipegosis and I've had a lot of intervention with the fishermen in Lake Winnipegosis. The summer fishing is one thing; it's the winter that's the most challenging. And, as you can see, for someone that's had the passion and desire as he did towards Lake Winnipegosis in maintaining the viability, that the occupation—as he did, you tend to recognize the determination that he had, because my personal experience witnessing people harvesting fish in the wintertime on the ice is not the most pleasant occupation to be in. But definitely to the fishermen in Lake Winnipegosis—to all the fishermen in ice fishing—definitely, you have to take a recognition to Mr. Parker Burrell who was bound and determined that that is an occupation, that there was people out there that loved it and wanted to attain it.

The other thing I want to make note—and I don't want to be repetitious to the previous speakers of the individual—and I do know that Rosann Wowchuk and I've talked of him numerous times and, yes, there was a lot of humorous stories about Mr. Parker Burrell. But as the member opposite has indicated that he was a very talented, gifted individual, a very comical individual. But I guess that's all part of being

in the rural landscape. You tend to enhance that, and he was recognized for his talent of peeking—speaking to people on a daily basis and having the comical aspect of it.

So I won't be repetitious in the previous comments, but I do want to recognize the two years that he served as MLA, and he's still talked about by the fishermen. And I do know that one of the things we all choose—farming is definitely an important criteria in the geographical area in the province of Manitoba, but fishing is part of that as well, and I want to sustain that. The wishes—if he's listening—I will try and carry on those traditions, and our government will carry on that tradition, that fishing is a very top priority in our government, that his wishes come true, that we sustain the fish population in Lake Winnipegosis.

But, in closing, it's a great honour to stay here—stand here today to recognize Mr. Parker Burrell, and to the family and friends: I unfortunately had never met him, but I do respect—by his bio—and his future endeavours that he's done.

So thank you so much.

\*(16:30)

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, and it's my honour and privilege to stand today and indicate that I did have an opportunity to spend two very special years in this Legislature with Parker Burrell. And I recall when he was first elected in 1988 and when he arrived at the Legislature, he certainly wasn't flamboyant in any way. What we saw was a Parker Burrell who was a very down-to-earth, common sense individual that was a little overwhelmed, I think, by his opportunity and his experience to be here, but he very soon captured our hearts and our minds as we heard him speak and contribute to this Legislature over those two years.

And, Mr. Speaker, he had a sense of humour. Not only could he tell stories that we could all laugh at, but he could tell stories that would have him laugh at himself. And I think that that's one of the qualities in Parker that I really come—came to understand and to appreciate. Because not all of us can laugh at ourselves, and I think it's something that is learned, and it was a behaviour that we really respected in Parker.

He had a lot of common sense, Mr. Speaker. It was very down-to-earth from—and just listening to and understanding his upbringing and his background and the struggles that his parents had to

move to a new community with 10 children. He was the youngest of those 10 children and he—and times were, I'm sure, not easy, and he lived on the land and the water, I guess. With his fishing background and expertise he understood a lot about the north and the community that he grew up in and he lived in, and the people that he served and who supported him when he was elected to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to—and I—as I was just trying to remember Parker Burrell and some of his time here, I just went back and looked at his maiden speech in this Legislature. And I just wanted to quote from it because I think it does tell us something about who he was, a little bit about his sense of humour and a bit about why he maybe was the man that he was. And he was talking—telling a little story about his mother, and he talked about how she cooked for the mill crew and she had an exceptional hook fishing season that year and that she was the political one in the family. And she left him with an autographed picture of John Diefenbaker, which he said he still treasured and had hanging in his living room at home. And he says, and I quote: I remember after the 1963 election when the Conservatives went in with the minority government and mother was not in the very good humour, everyone we knew seemed to drop in to talk about the election. Things were going pretty well her way until a good friend arrived with a younger person with him that no one knew. He let mother strongly voice her opinions for a while and then he said, Mrs. Burrell, please be careful what you say. This young man is Lester B. Pearson's nephew. Well, mother straightened herself up and looked him right in the eye and said: I will tell you just one thing, little man. If I was Lester Pearson's nephew, I sure would not want anyone to know about it.

And that was just one of the quotes from a speech that was well presented, well thought out, and just talks a little bit about that sense of humour, talks a bit about Parker Burrell the man.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that I had the opportunity to spend a couple of years in this Legislature and, again, I say, that everyone that we touch in this place, whether they be from the government or the opposition side, brings another dynamic to our lives and another opportunity for us to learn something that we maybe never knew before. We all have special experiences to bring, and I know that everyone that has touched my life in this Legislature certainly has left a lasting impression. Parker Burrell left that impression in his two short

years that he was here, and my condolences to his family. I believe it's his sister that we have been in communication with. To her, I'm just providing or indicating my condolences to the family, and want to know that I value the opportunity to have come to know Parker Burrell in some small way.

Thank you.

**Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance):** I'm pleased to rise today and put a few words on the record in honour of Parker Burrell, who served for a couple years in this Chamber.

I think it's a testament; it's a testament to our society; it's a testament to our system of governance, that a guy from Dawson Bay, a commercial fisherman, a fellow whose family is well known in the Dawson Bay area through their sawmill, through—definitely through their contributions to commercial fishing on Lake Winnipegosis, can be elected to this House and serve people in the Swan River constituency, as Parker did.

I've talked before about being born in Swan River, my family being there and my grandfather living all of his life in the Swan River Valley and being involved in commercial fishing himself and getting to know the Burrell family, even Parker's—even a generation older than Parker's generation.

It's—I think it's worth noting the kind of person that Parker was and what he brought to this Legislature. He was a man definitely formed of the commercial fishing and sawmilling activities that were prevalent in the Dawson Bay area, and the work that that generation, being born in the 1930s, the work that that generation did and how that formed the attitudes and the approaches of that generation.

I'm not surprised at the kind of story that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) just put on record, was exactly the kind of stories that Parker Burrell, and others of that generation, would tell. The thing that always struck me about Parker was his sense of humour. I think he rolled a bit with kind of the—the talk about him having to buy a suit for the first time in his life when he became an MLA. I think he kind of rolled with those sorts of things, and he had a bit of a chuckle to himself.

But, Mr. Speaker, I saw Parker at different events. I taught school in Birch River and Benito around about the time he was getting involved in politics. And I'll never forget one time—one meeting they had in Bowsman. And, in the hall in the town of

Bowsman, Clayton Manness was speaking and talking about what that government was doing in the '88-to-'90 period, and Clayton was making a speech.

He was introduced by Parker Burrell, who told several jokes, who had got people laughing in the crowd before he introduced his colleague, who was the Finance minister at the time. Clayton Manness started to speak and Parker Burrell gets up and walks off the stage and he's gone. And, Clayton didn't—I guess, didn't notice that. He turns in his middle of his speech, and he starts talking to Parker, and then he says, where is Parker? Well, Parker was in the washroom. Parker comes out of the washroom, walks right up to the microphone as Clayton is speaking. He takes the microphone—and Parker walked very slowly up to the stage, took the microphone, and he said, Clayton, I was answering to a higher authority. And Clayton laughed; the crowd thought it was great. The crowd laughed and Parker went and sat down. Another time I was—that was just kind of the way Parker kind of rolled with things, right.

The other time I had some interaction with Parker, when he was an MLA, was we had a school group here at the Legislature, and I went to see my local MLA, who was Parker. I had a list of really tough questions that I wanted to get to the bottom of, talk to Parker about, make sure he understood my thoughts on it, and they were some pretty tough questions. And every time I, you know, went after Parker on this or that, he'd say, have you seen these Manitoba pins? And he'd say, I'll give you a pin. And then I'd say, okay, thanks, Parker. And then I'd say, now what about this and this and this. And he'd say, have you seen the crocus pin? And he had more pins than I ever thought was possible. He was pulling them out of his desk from all over, and every time he did that he would have a laugh about it.

He knew that he wasn't in a—maybe not in a good position to answer some of these questions, and I will admit he tried his best to do that, but he always—he thought it was pretty funny that he was offering me up a pin to kind of distract me, and I thought that was quite funny, too, and enjoyed my conversation with him that day.

\* (16:40)

I do want to—though, I do want to say that I think people underestimated Parker Burrell. I remember being in the Swan River Valley at the time of the nomination that he won to represent the Conservative Party, the Progressive Conservative Party in the Swan River constituency. There was good interest in

that nomination. There were several high profile Conservatives putting their name forward, and then there was this commercial fisherman from Dawson Bay who kind of wandered in and put his name in as well. He wasn't considered the favourite from what I could understand, looking in from the outside but, you know, what he did, though, was he was determined he was going to win this. He did it the old fashioned way, didn't rely on news releases and statements to the local Star and Times or anything like that. Parker had a—he had a list of the people who were on the membership list that he went out and sold more memberships.

A friend of mine who farmed south of Benito—if you know the Swan River area at all, Benito's in the southwest corner of what that constituency was, and Parker was from Dawson City—Dawson Bay up in the northeast part of the constituency. This friend of mine, who was on the Tory membership, said to me: This guy just—in an old beat-up car, just drives into my yard, walks up to my house, knocks on my door and asks me if I'll come out and support him. So this guy did. And Parker did it kind of the old-fashioned way in terms of winning that nomination.

But I think the most significant thing that happened was that community of Dawson Bay, and it isn't one of the biggest communities around it; it's a small community, but the Burrell name and Parker's reputation was so strong that that community, like none other I've seen in a long time, got together and they made sure everybody from that community had a Tory membership in their pocket, and they were all coming to the Swan Valley Regional School for that nomination meeting, and they fanned out across the constituency to get this commercial fisherman elected to go up against a Cabinet minister. And they succeeded in terms of Parker winning that nomination, and then we all know how the election of 1988 turned out, Mr. Speaker.

Parker worked very hard to get where he did and I think bucked all odds in terms of getting there. I think it's probably a pretty good lesson for anybody who wants to be successful in politics, and I really did think this. In many ways, we underestimated Parker and I think we need to, at times like these, I think we need to recognize those kind of contributions that he made and also, I think, send our condolences to his family and those who supported Parker to be the MLA for Swan River.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.



**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about Parker Burrell, pay a tribute to him, extend condolences to his family and friends.

I got to know Parker Burrell quite well stopping in at Dawson Bay many times as I was travelling around the province, and it was always a good place to get fish, but it was always a good place to have a conversation about what was happening on Lake Winnipegosis with the fishery there. And we had long conversations about this. I mean, as I think most people know, Lake Winnipegosis is one of the great tragedies in bad resource management in this province. In the 1950s and '40s, there was a lake which produced among the very top in all of North America, about—I think it would be about a million kilograms of walleye a year. By the mid—well, in roughly 1960s, things went south, and about the same time as Lake Erie, except that there was a good plan and Lake Erie was brought back, and, of course, that didn't happen with Lake Winnipegosis.

And in the mid-'90s, when I was a Member of Parliament, I had quite a number of people come to me and talk about the problems on Lake Winnipegosis, and I didn't have much of a chance to do very much when I was a Member of Parliament.

But, afterwards, I had a look at what was happening and recognized that the production on this lake had gone from a million kilograms of walleye down to about 25,000. And, you know, for a farmer, as the MLA for Swan River will know, you know, if a million kilograms is what you should be getting, say about 40 bushels of wheat per acre, and all of a sudden you're getting one bushel per week per acre, it's not very good. And it's not very economic, and

it's not a great situation. And it, you know, the situation is a little better now than it was. But there were major problems in Lake Winnipegosis, and we had some quite extensive discussions about the situation and what could be done.

And I had the impression that one of his big regrets was in, in the two years that he spent as an MLA, he was never able to get the attention and the change and the impact on Lake Winnipegosis and its fishery that he had wanted.

But I certainly have a great admiration for him, and, as the MLA for Dauphin has talked about, he was a very down-to-earth guy, likeable and always a good person to stop in and visit. And I admire him a great deal for, you know, who he was and what he achieved.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, we need to acknowledge people like Parker Burrell for what they've contributed to Manitoba and done in a really down-to-earth, grassroots way, and I admire that.

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

Please rise for a moment of silence.

*A moment of silence was observed.*

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

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