

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	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
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine	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	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
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Arthur-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Witness Security Amendment Act

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 3, The Witness Security Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité des témoins, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: The fight against organized crime requires constant and dynamic action. This bill amends The Witness Security Act and strengthens the program that protects witnesses testifying in major and organized crime cases. It establishes the role and powers of a witness security officer. It will also permit financial assistance to a protected person to be suspended in cases where the protected person could be expelled from the program because they've committed an offence, breached their security agreement or endangered their own safety or the safety of others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 204—The Results-Based Budgeting Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that Bill 204, The Results-Based Budgeting Act; Loi sur la budgétisation axée sur les résultats, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: This bill requires the budgets for all government programs, services, agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed on a regular cycle to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes the public needs. Mr. Speaker, we need to be sure that we are getting value for money when it comes to government programs and services, and this is a transparent and accountable process that will ensure Manitobans are receiving government programs and services in the most efficient and effective way, and we look forward to all members of this House supporting this bill.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to petitions.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Good afternoon. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that would harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of C. Robertson, A. Corbin, S. Peleck and many other fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase–
Cross-Border Shopping**

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and Minnesota's retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoban consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by K. Johnson, P. Preteau, G. Desrosier and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum

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

The reasons—these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government promised not to raise taxes in the last election.

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

(3) An increase to the PST is excessive taxation that will harm Manitoba families.

(4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major tax increases are necessary.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to not raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

Signed by L. Synchshyn, R. Barcellona, S. Cornwall and many other Manitobans.

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase–
Cross-Border Shopping**

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

* (13:40)

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

And (2) to urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Morantz, S. Martin, S. Murgoski and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to support—to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping

and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by E. Peters, A. Hall, B. Waldeman and many other Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table, pursuant to The Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered under that act after the last regulation tabled in this House and more than 14 days before the commencement of this session.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, while I have no recorded guests to introduce today, I'd like to welcome our visitors to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly this afternoon, and on behalf of honourable members, we hope you will enjoy your visit here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gas Tax Revenue Infrastructure Investment Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, there's a powerful sense of déjà vu in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time. It's eerily familiar, actually, listening to the Throne Speech from the NDP this year and remembering back to just a year ago when the Premier was saying, pay us higher taxes, we promise we'll use them for roads. But he did it one better a year ago. He said, quote: "For every dollar in gas tax we raise, \$2 will be invested in roads and bridges in the province of Manitoba."

Now, one year ago that promise was made and the gas tax totalled \$295 million. So that would mean that the NDP must have spent \$590 million on Manitoba roads if they were to keep their promise.

So I guess I have to ask this Premier: Did he keep his word?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Before I answer the question, I would like to correct the record on the misinformation put on it by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday.

Yesterday he indicated, and he sent around a photo to the members of the Legislature, that a certain bridge, the Plum River bridge, was already being built. The only problem was with that photo; it's 20 years old and it's on an entirely different project. Twenty years ago the southbound lanes on the Plum River bridge were rebuilt. The announcement that we made on Highway 75, Mr. Speaker, was for the northbound lanes, an additional \$10 million for a different project.

I'd like to give the opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition to retract his misinformation.

Tax Increases Government Intentions

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The northbound lane funding was approved five years ago. The Premier announced it last week as if it was new. He's the one misleading Manitobans, and he should be ashamed of himself.

The issue at hand here is the Premier's credibility on the gas tax promise, something he ignored in his response and will continue to, I predict, ignore. He made a promise on putting gas tax into roads. He did not keep that promise. He missed it by \$84 million, not even close—not even close. Not spent on what he promised to spend it on, spent it on something else. Not within a stone's throw of a pothole. Not in the proximity of a promise kept.

Now, speaking of broken promises, last year the Premier jacked up taxes on Manitobans. Then he tried to sell them with a promise, a promise he broke.

Now, last week he did it again. So will he admit he's at it again?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition deserves a full and complete opportunity to withdraw and apologize for the misinformation he put on the record yesterday.

Twenty years ago—he circulated a picture of a bridge project from 20 years ago and said the project that we announced last week was already built. He was wrong on that. He's wrong on the fact. He's two decades out of date. He needs to acknowledge today that the \$10 million we're committing to that bridge is for the northbound lanes, not the southbound lanes, which were completed 20 years ago.

Last week he put out a press release making accusations about projects that were cancelled. Within minutes, he had to withdraw that press

release because he knew that the information was false.

Will he today also admit that the statement he made in this House yesterday was false, Mr. Speaker?

Gas Tax Revenue Infrastructure Investment Record

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Speaking of false information, let's not go back 20 years, let's go back two years. Let's go back two years ago to a promise made by this Premier on his honour to the people of Manitoba, along with every one of his colleagues over there, that they would not raise taxes. Now they raise taxes and they try to sell Manitobans it's for roads, but it isn't for roads.

Manitobans paid 70 million additional dollars in gas tax last year; \$70 million, it's not small change. Everybody pays more at the pump. That's money off the kitchen table to that Premier's Cabinet table to spend, and the NDP promised Manitobans that they would spend it for roads. And how much goes to fix our roads? Not one penny of it—not one penny of it. In fact, they spent \$25 million less last year on roads than they did the year prior.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that he loves his takeoffs but he's not very good at his landings?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the only person that's crashing and burning today is the Leader of the Opposition. Says he doesn't want to go back 20 years, why did he circulate a 20-year-old photo of a project that was completed 20 years ago?

* (13:50)

He made the issue a live one. He misrepresented the facts in this Legislature, misrepresented the facts on a bridge project that was completed 20 years ago. The projects we announced on Highway 75 are for the northbound lanes. The picture he circulated was for the southbound lanes.

Will he withdraw that statement today just like he withdrew the press release last week?

Gas Tax Revenue Infrastructure Investment Record

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, the only one with no credibility is that minister there. That's the one. He went to the door, to every Manitoban, and said, I will not raise taxes. Promises

made, promises broken: This is the legacy of this government on a daily basis.

In 2012 the NDP government announced two for one on the gas tax, which they forecast \$45 million from consumers; actually, it brought in \$70.3 million. Yet spending went down by \$25 million for the same time period.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of MIT: How is it they cannot stop deceiving hard-working Manitobans?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I love the opportunity to talk about infrastructure.

And the fact that last week the Leader of the Opposition put out a press release in which he said that one in four highways projects around the province were cancelled, when the media asked him which ones, he actually listed two, one that actually wasn't a real highway project—it dealt with flood control—both of which are active projects. So I want you to keep that in mind.

Today he puts out another press release, you know, and it follows from yesterday where he distributed a picture of a bridge project that was 20 years old.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite, they got the wrong project, they got the wrong decade, they got the wrong century.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable member for Lakeside has the floor.

Mr. Eichler: What's wrong here is the minister has the wrong information once again that he puts on the record each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Financial Management Strategy Report on Outcomes, the minister budgeted \$75 million less than planned for road infrastructure in 2012. What kind of two-for-one deal is that for Manitobans? This government had \$25.3 million of extra revenue, \$25 million less. What a sweet deal for this government, a deal that goes against every infrastructure project that this Province is trying to announce and they don't come through on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of MIT why he continues to mislead hard-working Manitobans.

Mr. Ashton: You know, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that's obviously happened with the Leader of the Opposition is not only is he stuck in the 1990s in terms of highways project—and, I think, pretty well everything—but what he also hasn't recognized is the fact that we had major flooding in 2011 and 2012. You know, I know members opposite may not have realized that we had a one-in-a-400-year flood, but when we came to our infrastructure priorities, this government put unprecedented resources, \$1.2 billion, in fighting that flood, no thanks to members opposite.

But I want to stress again, projects that they said were cancelled weren't cancelled. The project they released yesterday, the picture was from the 1990s. And we are spending five times what they spent on highways when they were in government in the 1990s. That's the reality for Manitobans. We are—

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

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, that was the flood of the century, not the excuse of the century. What's wrong with this minister?

All anyone has to do is to look at the numbers, what was collected by this government and what was spent, to see that this government cannot be trusted. This government promised two-for-one spending on the gas tax on road infrastructure. That means they should have spent \$590 million in 2012. Instead, what did they spend? Mr. Speaker, \$506 million.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister, again, of MIT: He's broke his promise on the two for one every dollar collected on the gas tax with no plans to do so. What is this government really about? They cannot be trusted.

Mr. Ashton: You know, Mr. Speaker, what's—I think what's the real comparison here, if he wanted the symbol of this, ironically, the picture that the Leader of the Opposition did put forward was probably the major project they did on Highway 75 in the 1990s. It was actually the only one. It was a million-dollar project. We're investing \$215 million.

So I want to make—I want to advise the member opposite, by the way, and perhaps all the Conservative members, they should fasten their seat belts, that because of the investment of this government they're going to be able to see, they're going to be able to feel, they're even going to be able to smell the work we're doing on our highway infrastructure. That's the NDP difference.

Vehicle Registration Fees Infrastructure Investment Record

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, perhaps we'll use the government time machine and bring the minister a little closer to the time here. In 2001, then-Minister of Transportation and Government Services Ashton said, quote, increased—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm sure all honourable members know that when the Speaker stands, he's to be heard in silence.

I know the honourable member for Brandon West has been here for some time now, and I'm pretty sure he knows the rules how we're not to reference members of the Assembly by their family names or their first names, only by the constituency names or ministers by their title or portfolio. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

The member from Thompson said, and I quote, increased vehicle registration fees would help fund improvements to our roads and go a long way to ensure the quality of Manitoba's highway infrastructure is maintained long into the future. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, since 1999 over \$1.3 billion has been raised through vehicle registration fees like the fuel tax promise.

The question is: Where did it go? Not to roads nor other infrastructure, so where?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the member for Brandon West on a bit of a virtual tour.

First of all, I'll start in Brandon. I don't know if he's driven on Victoria Avenue recently, but he might want to start with that. If he takes a drive north of Brandon, he might want to look at the major paving work that's been done on Highway 10.

But, Mr. Speaker, if he really wants to check out the difference that we've made since we've been in government, he might want to drive west to Saskatchewan, because they announced and did nothing to four-lane Highway 1 to the border. Guess who did it? This NDP government.

Mr. Helwer: Well, again, the question is not answered. So we'll go a little different direction.

In Budget 2012, then-minister of Finance said, quote: Vehicle registration fees will increase by \$35 per vehicle. Mr. Speaker, every cent raised in these ways will be invested in roads, bridges and other infrastructure, guaranteed. End quote. That guarantee, like other promises of this NDP government, is of no value.

Where did the money go?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I'll continue the virtual tour for the member for Brandon West.

And, you know, when he drives in—or drives back to Brandon on Highway 1, perhaps he'll want to check out the major work that's been on Highway 1. He might want to take a little bit of a turn onto Highway 16. He'll see that that was falling apart when we were—when we came into government, and it's not a surprise, Mr. Speaker, because their idea of a capital budget was \$85 million a year. This year our capital budget is \$468 million. That's the NDP difference.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, over \$1.3 billion raised from vehicle registration fees alone, \$160 million last year. Obviously, the NDP has not kept their promises for infrastructure funding.

Where did the money go?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, while we're continuing this virtual tour of Manitoba, maybe over the next couple of days while the member for Brandon West is in around this Legislative Building he might want to take a drive on Highway 75. And, yes, we have a major project coming up that will bring it to interstate standards, but we've already spent \$125 million on improving the condition of that highway.

*(14:00)

He might want to check out Highway 6, Highway 7, Highway 8, Highway 9. He might want to go to Highway 59.

What he will see is a government that in the last three years has spent more on capital than the government of the 1990s in which the Leader of the Opposition was a key Cabinet minister. That's where he will see the money that was invested, and I guarantee him our government is going to invest it

throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, because we're all about infrastructure. That's our bottom line.

Specialist Treatment Patient Wait Times

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, what he'd see is a government that under-spends on infrastructure each and every year.

Mr. Speaker, the Fraser Institute released its annual report on wait times for health care in Canada, and this is the study that measures the time that—to be waiting to be seen by a specialist and also the time between the time you've been seen by that specialist to the time that treatment starts. And last year Manitoba scored second worst in the country when it comes to people who have been seen by a specialist and are waiting to begin their treatment.

Can the Minister of Health please inform the House how Manitoba ranked in this year's report when it comes to wait times to actually receive treatment?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): In the spirit of putting corrections on the record, I do want to address something that the member put on incorrectly yesterday when it came to ambulance off-load times.

He incorrectly stated what the trends have been in ambulance off-load times. In fact, Mr. Speaker, transfers are down at the WRHA by 57 per cent between the last January to August. Paramedic off-load times have been improved by 10 minutes between January and August, and patients who have been transferred within that target time have actually been increasing.

So, once again, incorrect facts put on the record by one of the members opposite, and I did want to correct that while I had the chance.

Mr. Friesen: Well, once again, this new minister is a dollar short and a day late, so we'll try again.

I can understand why she'd try to wiggle out of that question, because what the new report shows is that when it comes to Manitoba the wait time for a patient who has been seen by a specialist and waiting for treatment to begin has gone from 15.4 per cent last—15.4 weeks last year to 17.8 weeks this year, and I table the information. That's dead last, worst in the nation, bottom of the barrel, epic fail, as kids of today would say.

How does this minister account for this total and colossal failure?

Ms. Selby: Let me put a few more facts on the record.

Of course, the Fraser Institute report only spoke to 5 per cent of the specialists in Manitoba and, unfortunately, obviously wasn't speaking to our radiation therapy specialists, who CIHI ranks No. 1 in the country. They also, Mr. Speaker, were also obviously not speaking to people who do things like life-saving hip fracture reports, because we are also ranked No. 1 in the country. I suppose they weren't speaking to the cardiologists as well, because we know from our numbers that a hundred per cent of the patients were receiving cardiac surgery within the medically appointed time.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, dead last.

The study also shows that the total wait time from first consultation 'til treatment is 25.9 weeks, and I table that information for the minister. That's third worst in the country, last in the West and last place everywhere west of Québec City.

Let's be clear, being asked to wait 25.9 weeks in order to receive medically necessary treatment is unacceptable, and let me also add that wait time is also up from last year, and what does the minister do? Try to cast aspersions on the study.

Well, how does she like this one? According to the Conference Board of Canada, Manitoba is also dead last when it comes to accessibility in health care.

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, do you know what affects accessibility in health care? I can tell you what affects it. Firing a thousand nurses makes it really tough. Know what else is difficult? Cutting 15 spaces from the medical school. That makes it harder to see a doctor, even more hard when 116 of them fled under the Leader of the Opposition.

Have to tell you, Leader of the Opposition doesn't want to go back 20 years, neither do Manitoba families.

Manufacturing Industry Provincial Comparison

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, dead last is the hallmark of this government—dead last.

Statistics Canada released its manufacturing numbers for the month of September, and with a zero growth in Manitoba's economy continues fall behind

the other provinces. Our neighbours to the west have posted solid gains in manufacturing, with Saskatchewan up 10.5 per cent. Over the past year Alberta's up 2.2 and BC's up 4.5, while Manitoba has remained stagnant.

Mr. Speaker, why has this government failed Manitobans so miserably by being dead last in everything?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Actually, at my last observation, I think Manitoba is No. 1 in the hearts of the Saskatchewan government, who struck a \$100-million deal for hydro.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I listen to the member opposite and I sometimes wonder which Manitoba he lives in. We have one of the most affordable costs of living in the nation. We have a great quality of life. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. We've got hydro that Saskatchewan apparently adores, clean, green energy. I just wonder, according to the member opposite, which Manitoba does he live in.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, our neighbours to the west are growing their economy with businesses. Skilled workers are moving there from Manitoba each and every day.

These economies have banded together and are proving successful in their growing their economy. Manitoba had a choice to join in this growing their economy and this government said no.

Mr. Speaker, manufacturing in Saskatchewan is up 10.5 per cent. Over the past year Alberta is up 2.2 per cent, BC is up 4.5 per cent, while Manitoba has zero growth.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government quit failing, start succeeding and join the New West Partnership at least?

Ms. Oswald: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, a \$100-million hydro deal, that's sounds like a partnership to me. I don't know about members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, Manitoba's manufacturing capital investment ranks in the top three in the nation. So the nattering nabobs of negativity across the way, they just don't get it.

I can certainly tell the member opposite that just in the last week alone, Mr. Speaker, we've introduced new legislation to protect workers, we've opened a

new Jobs and Skills Development Centre, we've announced the upgrade to Highway 75, something that they sorely neglected during their time in office. And those upgrades alone are going to need 2,500 great jobs for Manitobans. Why is he so against that?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Emerson, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, other economies are growing in this country while the Manitoba economy fails. Saskatchewan's manufacturing sector is up 10.5 per cent over the past year, with Alberta up 2.2 and BC up 4.5, while Manitoba is stagnant. Inflation is going to go up or is up in record levels. Taxes are the highest levels in a generation. Other provinces are growing their economy while this NDP continues to fight battles of the past.

Mr. Speaker, rather than spinning their tires, when will this government get on the road to building a strong economy for the future of all Manitobans? Will this minister finally admit that the 14 per cent increase in the PST is the last straw that's breaking the manufacturer's back in Manitoba?

Ms. Oswald: He's speaking about living in the past and his leader is tabling photos from 20 years ago. It seems a bit—a little odd, Mr. Speaker.

But I can say an RBC senior economist reported last week that Manitoba's will be one of Canada's strongest economies in the years ahead. Manitoba's manufacturing sales actually increased ahead of the national average. I can tell you that real GDP growth was 2.7 in 2012, the second fastest rate—growing rate in the nation. KPMG ranks Winnipeg as a No. 1 place to do business in the midwest.

* (14:10)

There's so much optimism here, Mr. Speaker, except on that side of the House.

Drug Activity and Weapons in Schools Incident Reporting

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I asked the Minister of Education about what information was going to schools about the deadly drug fentanyl. He refused to stand up and answer.

So yesterday I asked on behalf of parents how many cases there were of drugs being found in our schools, and he didn't have an answer. In fact, he went so far as to take credit for the DARE program,

a program that is being led and trained by the RCMP and that hasn't been properly supported by his government.

But he's had a day to reflect and compose himself and perhaps talk to officials in his department.

So can he today, on behalf of parents, tell us how many times drugs were found in our schools in the last academic year?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for the question, although I'm a little embarrassed by the attention I'm getting from him, and I've—getting three questions in three days. He had a chance to ask my predecessor questions for, what, five years and he asked one time. So I'm—but I am pleased to have it.

It goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that we on this side of the House believe completely in safe and inclusive schools for all of the children in every school across Manitoba in every classroom. After all, we're the party who came forward with Bill 18 last year. We—it's a bill that requires school personnel and volunteers to report on cyberbullying. It works to create Internet safety. It accommodates students who want a GSA, and in every single case they voted against it.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, it took so few questions to get his predecessor removed from Cabinet, he may want to be careful what he asks for.

Mr. Speaker, the member mentions issues about the charter and the Safe Schools Charter. Well, I'm going to give him an easier question. He should be able to hit this one out of the park. The Safe Schools Charter talks about weapons in school and how it's not acceptable—zero tolerance—to have weapons in school. So this should be a very, very easy question for the minister.

Can he tell us how often weapons were found in school in the last academic year?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, I honestly—I expect a little bit more for the member from Steinbach, but he appears to want to go to the bottom of the barrel. I guess a picture is worth a thousand words after all.

It is true, Mr. Speaker, that in 2004 we introduced the Safe Schools Charter. It required schools to have codes of conduct that prohibit students from using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs at school.

We fund several organizations that bring drug awareness and prevention programs to young people, such as Klinik, the Sports Medicine and Science Council of Manitoba and the 'kild'—Kids Help Phone. There are plenty of resources, plenty of tools out there for students who need help.

That's what we're about on this side of the House. That's what they—we stand for. What do they stand for?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, we stand for actually having real information.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the Minister of Education says it's terribly important to know how many drugs are in school, and yet he has no idea. The Minister of Education says, oh, it's very important that we don't have weapons in school, and yet he has no idea. It's like they passed the charter for safe schools and then hung up the mission-accomplished sign and decided to do nothing else.

I'm asking a very, very simple question. Maybe it's too simple for the Minister of Education, but he—can he please tell parents how often drugs and how often weapons have been found in our schools in the last year? He must know that or he simply doesn't want to know that because the problem is too great for him to actually tackle.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, the member from Steinbach disappoints me still. The fact of the matter is that on this side of the House we have passed legislation in any infinite number of ways to protect students and children in classrooms in schools across this great province.

We stood with students who asked for GSAs in their school. They in turn embraced us. We worked with them. We stood shoulder to shoulder with them.

We have a plan for safe and inclusive schools. The people of Manitoba know where we stand, but we don't know where they stand.

Core Infrastructure Spending Government Definition

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, while the NDP government has sprinkled their new additional core infrastructure dollars sort of like magic dust to every individual community project, people this weekend were stuck west of Winnipeg waiting for Highway 1 to reopen this Sunday after our first snowy mess of the season. Drivers were

informed that cutbacks on overnight snow clearing left the highway unsafe for driving.

Mr. Speaker, with funding being cut to one of Manitoba's seasonal essentials, clearing snow on highways, does the Premier confirm that ordinary road maintenance is not a part of core infrastructure?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Maintenance obviously is a part of core infrastructure. And the member knows full well that that was a very serious storm that occurred west of Winnipeg, and that highway is being improved. It's directly connected to the Saskatchewan border now, twinned, as a matter of fact. And, of course, there is maintenance. And as a matter of fact, the maintenance is prioritized to those areas that need it the most, Mr. Speaker, including that area that he mentions.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, except when it's overnight.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his NDP government said in their Throne Speech that every dollar raised from the new percentage point of provincial sales tax will be fully dedicated to new investments in core infrastructure over and above existing spending levels.

Since in previous statements the government has indicated that the money will be used for building health centres, schools, community centres and has made announcements of funding for arenas and for playgrounds, I ask the Premier: Does he include such spending on health centres, arenas, schools and playgrounds as spending on core infrastructure?

Mr. Selinger: The member's had several days to read the Throne Speech now. We made it very clear that additional PST money would be input into new investment, new investment in Manitoba on infrastructure, incremental investment on infrastructure in Manitoba. That's what we said the PST would do. We've already announced some very significant projects.

I was pleased today to be with the City to announce a very significant project with the City of Winnipeg for a second phase of rapid transit out to the University of Manitoba. It's a comprehensive project. It will include active transportation, rapid transportation, an additional lane for the Jubilee underpass. That will trigger more investment in sewer and water in that area. It will reduce by two years the amount of congestion and disturbance as that project goes forward.

Better vehicle traffic, better active transportation, better rapid transit, all in south Winnipeg. I look forward to the member from River Heights voting for that project, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, after a very confusing eight months when it comes to the spending around the PST, we would like, and, I believe, deserve as Manitobans, some straight answers.

The Premier and his government have made announcements including funding for a church roof, a corridor of plazas, trees and seating benching and housing and indicated that this was the new PST money and it was being used for these.

Will the Premier confirm today that these are not what he considers core infrastructure now with respect to the PST and admit that he was wrong to mislead Manitobans to believe before that he was spending new PST dollars on these items?

Mr. Selinger: Very clearly in the Throne Speech, the PST money would be dedicated to new core infrastructure, flood protection for Manitobans. Core infrastructure, I think the member from River Heights would subscribe and endorse that. New investments in highways, Highway 75, Highway No. 10, Highway No. 9, Highway No. 6, Highway No. 1 going east, Mr. Speaker.

Thousands of jobs will be generated through those projects, direct employment, good paying jobs for young Manitobans and their families to stay in the province, Mr. Speaker. Doing it this way allows us to continue to invest in schools and hospitals and personal-care homes. Those are important dimensions of making Manitoba a better place to live.

I know the member opposite supports that. I only hope he votes for it in the next budget.

Rapid Transit Expansion Southwest Winnipeg

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. In fact, St. Norbert is growing faster than ever and more people are living there than ever before.

* (14:20)

Our government has committed to invest over \$5.5 billion in core infrastructure over the next five years. These strategic investments will help power our economy and ultimately employ people.

Winnipeg's population is expected to reach over a million people within the next 20 years, and it's never been more important to invest in public transportation.

Can the minister responsible for the City of Winnipeg update the House on the exciting announcement on phase 2 of rapid transit this morning?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister responsible for relations with the City of Winnipeg within the Department of Municipal Government): Looking forward to talking about the photo, but I'm going to stay focused on rapid transit here, Mr. Speaker.

A very exciting announcement today: In partnership with the City of Winnipeg, we're moving forward on rapid transit. You know, Winnipeggers and Manitobans want us to get moving on things, build things. That's what we're doing. Very transformative, progressive announcement today: State-of-the-art transit, it's building on the unprecedented growth we see in our city and in our province. It builds on the excitement and enthusiasm that Winnipeggers and Manitobans are feeling.

It's an integrated project. It's a corridor to the University of Manitoba. It's going to deal with the traffic backup on the Pembina underpass. It's going to add a lane, making traffic move smoother and faster. It reduces construction by two years, promotes and encourages active transportation and, to top it all off, it's going to lead up to up to 4,000 jobs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Student Financial Aid Information System Project Update

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the Student Financial Aid Information System was tendered in late 2008 with full implementation of both phases to be in place by June 2011. It's now late 2013. Phase 2 has not been implemented.

Why has the minister failed to provide phase 2 of SFAIS to Manitoba's post-secondary students?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I'm feeling—Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. I'm feeling especially glad to have not one but two suitors here in the House today.

I appreciate the question from the member, but, of course, he will realize that were he to apply for a student loan, he would be able to do so without any

problem whatsoever. The system is up and running and functioning very well.

But he—I also appreciate the fact that it gives us a little bit of opportunity to talk a back—talk about the fact that we have the third lowest tuition rate for universities in the country, the second lowest for college students in this country.

Accessibility, affordability, quality in the classroom is what we concentrate on. I'm not sure what their objective is.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, over \$15 million has been spent by this NDP government on the new SFAIS program, yet post-secondary students are still using the old system.

If the old system was adequate, why did this government spend over \$15 million of taxpayers' money? What return can they show for that expenditure? Where did it go?

Mr. Allum: And I just reiterate to the member the most important and salient feature of the student financial aid process, that were he to go online and make an application, he would be well served by that process and by that system today.

It helps me, though—it reminds me that I should also indicate to him that we've frozen university tuition fees to the rate of inflation. We've provided \$90 million to students who stay and work in Manitoba through the 60 per cent tuition rebate program. We've reduced the interest on student loans.

As I said before, we're focused on quality, accessibility and affordability in the education program. They're focused on cuts.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, he neglects to say that the old program, the one that was existing prior, is the one that's being used by those students. Yes, they're being served by it; why did they spend \$15 million for another program that hasn't even went into place?

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the minister ordered a review of the proposed new program. That review was to be completed by May 2013. Over \$15 million were spent. The program has not been implemented. The review has been done.

Would the minister inform the House: What were the results of that review?

Mr. Allum: I thank the member again for the question. I think it's worth saying that on this side of the House we do invest in infrastructure, whether it's

paving new roads or investing in information technology to serve the 21st century.

We know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition, when they were in government, when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting at Mr. Filmon's Cabinet table, they cut funding to universities, enrolment declined dramatically, tuition fees went up, bursaries were cut.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to return to the discredited policies of the 1990s. We're looking forward to building a educational system for students in the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: Time for members' statements.

Observance of Funeral Customs

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that scattering the ashes of a loved one is an important tradition for many Manitobans, which is why I made a motion in the Legislature last year spring urging the House to adopt a policy that would allow ashes from human remains to be scattered on unoccupied provincial Crown lands and waterways. Regrettably, the resolution was not unanimously supported at that—at the time.

Over the past two months, I have been working closely with a number of government departments and the Funeral Board of Manitoba to clarify the Province's policy. I am pleased to inform the House that the families who wish to honour the last wishes of a loved one now have the clear right to follow their cherished culture or religious traditions.

The revision to the policy confirms the—that families may scatter properly cremated remains on provincially owned Crown lands and waterways, including provincial parks, without seeking formal government approval.

Although this clarification eliminates one unnecessary worry for grieving families, I would encourage all families to work closely with their funeral homes when making arrangements following the loss of a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing the cultural and religious significance of this practice will also help make every Manitoban feel welcome and included in our province. We strongly value the fresh perspective newcomer families bring to Manitoba. Recent newcomers to our province come from over

140 countries. The New York Times called Manitoba a hub of parka-clad diversity.

Since many religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism mandate cremation, the practice of scattering cremated ashes is an integral part of religious burial ceremonies for several faith communities in Manitoba.

I am so pleased to have helped to clarify this policy for families coping with the loss of a loved one. I am proud that Manitoba has taken this important step that recognizes our province's diverse cultural and religious traditions. Our multicultural way gives our province and our country an excitement and vibrancy like no other place in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Karen Davis

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, literacy is important for children regardless of where they are from. And with the help of an outstanding former constituent of mine and a country music superstar, children in this province are going to get the opportunity to burst-boost their literacy skills.

Karen Davis has been instrumental in bringing the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Manitoba. The Imagination Library provides children under the age of 5 with books. The program was initially launched in 24 communities in Manitoba and seven First Nations, with the goal to spread it all across Manitoba.

As of September however, every First Nation community in the province will have access to the program, giving over 10,000 children in this province free books each and every month for the next five years. In First Nations communities the books are selected to promote culture and tradition.

Since the program began, the Imagination Library has provided 33 million books to children in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Literacy is a cause that is very special to Karen. As a single mother who grew up in Ebb and Flow First Nation, she knows what programs like these can do for children, especially those on First Nations.

Karen has been recognized as a woman of distinction by the Brandon YMCA-YWCA in 2011 and was recognized with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her work with children and illiteracy.

Karen is a proud First Nations woman and her work for children both on and off First Nations is something to be truly proud of.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of this House, I want to congratulate and thank Karen Davis for her work with children and giving them the chance to expand their minds through the power of reading and literacy. This is very important work and all children deserve a book to read whenever they can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Holodomor (Ukrainian Genocide)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): This week Manitobans marked the 80th anniversary of Holodomor, the systematic famine and genocide which killed an estimated seven million Ukrainians from 1932 to 1933. It was a peacetime catastrophe, unprecedented in the history of Ukraine. The actions perpetrated by the Soviet regime were meant to destroy any aspirations for a free and independent Ukraine.

Ukraine was the most productive agricultural area of the Soviet Union when Stalin brought in his policy of forced collectivization. Since workers weren't allowed to take grain from their farm until government quotas were met, this caused widespread starvation and had devastating consequences for the region's productivity. The famine reached its peak in 1932 after Stalin raised Ukraine's grain quota per collective beyond any reasonable expectations. One third of those victims were children.

When a tragedy of such magnitude occurs, its effects ripple through decades and generations. Manitoba has strong cultural links to the Ukrainian community, with many survivors of the Ukrainian famine and genocide and their descendants making their home here in Manitoba. A haunting painting by Orysia Sinitowich-Gorski entitled Holodomor-Genocide II, hangs year round in the east hall of the Manitoba Legislature and it serves as a reminder that remembrance must not be confined to one day, one week or one month of the year.

This year, as is the tradition, hundreds of Manitobans will gather at Winnipeg City Hall on the fourth Saturday of November to commemorate the victims of the Ukrainian famine and genocide. I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the leadership of the Ukrainian Canadian

Congress and local organizing committee for their hard work in organizing the many public events held during this week and throughout the month of November. Events of such magnitude stand as difficult examples of pain, suffering and violence—a dark period in human history. They remind us that while we may take them for granted today, freedom, independence and truth are hard won.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We Day

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): On October 30th, I was proud to join 16,000 youth and their teachers at We Day at the MTS Centre. We Day is a day-long event that has lasting impacts for an entire year, allowing youth to create and be part of a change in their communities and around the world. Youth are encouraged to dedicate themselves to a year of service, where they work with their communities and global partners to impact the world.

Two brothers, Marc and Craig Kielburger, started Free the Children and We Day because they recognized that major issues in Canada and around the world needed to be changed and that youth can be a part of that change and lead the world.

Guest speakers like Martin Sheen, Martin Luther King III and Spencer West, along with musical guests, like Shawn Desman, helped excite and energize the crowd, creating an event that was unlike anything else I've ever seen.

Major issues from around the world were brought forward, such as poverty and cyberbullying. This is timely and very apparent in Manitoba, where the poverty rate is amongst the highest in the country and the youth in this province are not protected from cyberbullying by the government. It is very apparent that these issues need addressing and it's up to the youth and all Manitobans to get the government to act. These youth understand that changing the province and changing the world is more than just speeches and empty rhetoric. It's about rolling up your sleeves and getting to work.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join in congratulating the organizers of We Day, as well as the youth and the teachers of this province who, through their actions, are making this province and this world a better place. I cannot wait to hear more about Manitoba students changing the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Development Plans

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): What does it take for this NDP government to listen?

Former NDP Premier Ed Schreyer, former NDP Energy minister Tim Sale, former NDP Natural Resources minister Len Evans, former Public Utilities Board chair Graham Lane, former University of Manitoba dean of engineering Garland Laliberte, former president and CEO of Manitoba Hydro, Len Bateman, and former vice-president of Manitoba Hydro, Will Tishinski, all have one thing in common: They believe that Manitoba's biggest mistake is the money being spent by this NDP government on future hydro developments without a true NFAT. These experts agree that Manitoba Hydro's development plans are based on questionable projections of not only construction costs but also export contracts and revenue.

Manitoba Hydro is set to spend \$34 billion on several projects, which is more than our Province's entire provincial debt of \$30 billion. This development represents the largest financial gamble in Manitoba's history, a gamble that lives and dies by export rates to the US which are at an all-time low due to cheap American natural gas.

For the first time on record, Manitoba Hydro CEO Scott Thomson stated on October 2nd, 2013, at standing committee, and I quote, "If gas prices stay at \$3 five years from now and the outlook is a lot lower, that's probably going to impact on the decision whether to proceed with Conawapa at that time, defer the project or shelve it indefinitely." Unquote.

Where this NDP government has refused to change course, it certainly seems that even the CEO of Manitoba Hydro is hesitant and conflicted on the issue which, with the dam at Wuskwatim set to lose \$9 million a month for the next 16 years, perhaps the NDP should heed Mr. Thomson's concerns.

It's Manitoba ratepayers who'll be shouldering the cost of this gamble with hydro rates going up by 8 per cent in the last year alone, set to increase an additional 4 per cent per year for the next 20 years. Manitobans simply cannot afford for this NDP government to get this decision wrong.

So what does it take for this NDP government to listen?

House Business

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Swan: I'm rising to seek agreement of the House that as per the written agreement between myself, the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), the time limit specified in rules 31(2) and 31(3) for the selection and prioritization of private members' resolutions shall be waived for this session of the Legislature with the understanding that private members' resolutions can still be announced a week in advance for consideration.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement of the House that as per the written agreement between the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights that the time limit specified in rules 31(2) and 31(3) for the selection and prioritization of private members' resolutions shall be waived for this session of the Legislature with the understanding that private members' resolutions can still be announced a week in advance for consideration? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Mr. Swan: On further House business, Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). The title of the resolution is Cultural Diversity.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 31(8) that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Concordia, and the title of the resolution is Cultural Diversity.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, who has 15 minutes remaining.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): As I was saying yesterday, I just want to recap a couple of the topics that I had mentioned yesterday, and, of course, got quite a ways to go, so I'm just going to start off by reiterating the fact that I did thank all of our table staff and pages and various other staff, assistants and Leg. staff throughout the building. They are just a few examples of the hard-working Manitobans here in this fantastic province of ours. And on more than one occasion we talked about how great of a province this is, except the problem with this province is that we have a have-not government and they're not taking into consideration the well-beings of those hard-working Manitobans, the 1.2 million of them.

We also—yesterday, also I touched on the broken promises of Budget 2012 and 2013 where the combinations of expanding the PST and increased fees totalled, between those two years, \$500 million, and when you divided that up by the 1.2 million people in this fantastic province of ours, that equated \$1,600 per family of four. And, of course, that had to do with the increase in the PST by 14 per cent, the one point.

* (14:40)

And the members across the way, unfortunately, they don't quite get it when we talk about the increased PST and the 14 per cent increase. There's really nobody in the province that's gaining or getting those type of raises to their income. Mr. Speaker, 14 per cent is quite the ordeal and quite the hardship, especially when we get talking about families who are trying to encourage, again, their kids, their grandkids, to get into extra-curricular activities, whether that's the arts or sports or what have you.

You know, and we could even break it down even farther. We break it down into every day's needs—basic needs, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about insurance. We're talking about gas. We're talking about hydro fees. Absolutely everything is increasing.

And, again, all those hard-working Manitobans, they're pulling out, roughly, \$5 million, each and every week in the illegal PST increase, which, again, they were supposed to hold a referendum. But, again, this government of the day feel that they're above the law and they're doing it without actually following written legislation. So then, when we talk about broken promises, we talk about breaking the law, we then go from various communities to

various communities, many community members, hard-working Manitobans, come up and wonder and ask the question, why should they then follow the laws if this government—the government that creates the laws—decides to ignore their own legislation?

Yesterday we—I also mentioned the forced amalgamation fiasco by the past minister for Local Government, who is now the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport. So it's just—it seems to me that he was unable to handle his own portfolio, so they decided to do a little bit of a Cabinet shuffle. And now, unfortunately for Manitobans, we're going to see the demise of the tourism and our cultural sectors.

Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government cannot be trusted. And I'm going to get into, for the next few minutes, some more examples of exactly why this government cannot be trusted.

Again, the broken promise on the no new taxes. This government—57 NDP candidates ran in the 2011 election, stating that they were not going to raise the taxes; they were actually going to balance the budget by 2014. By 2012, roughly five, six months later, what did they do? They expanded the fees, they expanded the tax, and then the year after that, they were even more bold, and they decided to raise the PST by that 14 per cent.

Vote tax, Mr. Speaker, another example of sheer laziness. And I think the fact that this government, these 37 MLAs, including Cabinet ministers—ministers, are too lazy to actually get out and ask for support of Manitobans. So what are they doing? They're going ahead and they're going to pass some legislation so that they can basically accept a vote tax, which totals \$5,000 per member per year. That means that each one of those NDP MLAs do not have to go and ask for support. They're going ahead and they're taking it out of the back pockets of each and every Manitoban in—hard-working Manitoban—right here in this great province of ours. They're not even going out and asking for that support; they're just taking it right from their back pockets, their kids' piggy banks, their grandchildren's education funds. It's absolutely disrespectful.

Amalgamation—well, there's lots that I can actually talk about the amalgamation, but because I have a short amount of time left, I'm going to basically say that, again, that was one more example that this government continually does, and that's the disrespect. It's the non—no consultations. And they just don't feel that they should have to be accountable

to the people who elected them, Mr. Speaker. They went ahead and they're making changes throughout the province, which is against the mandate that the people of this great province of ours gave them when they elected them in 2011.

But I'm—from what I'm hearing, Mr. Speaker, that is going to change, and I think, change for, obviously, the better. Our party is energized. We're ready. We've got some new ideas and we're going to be moving forward with this great province of ours, once, of course, we figure out the true story in regards to the financial fiasco that this government has left us in. For that matter, it's going to be my—if not my kids, it's going to be my great-grandkids possibly—not even grandkids that I'm talking about—that are going to have to tackle this debt that this spend government continues to put us into. I believe that we're roughly \$31 billion in debt already, which is up from the four point—14.2 that they inherited when they took office in 1999.

And, of course, broken promises—you know what, Mr. Speaker, I don't quite understand why this one's not brought up often enough, but I'm going to bring it up, and it's the Crocus fiasco. It is amazing to me on how a premier of the day can dodge such a fiasco. We take a look at the past Finance minister, who is now in charge of local government. He went ahead and raised the PST, he's going to wear some of that burden on him, but then they did the Cabinet shuffle to try to divert some of that. We go back to the Crocus fiasco. Who was the Finance minister of the day when that was going on? It so happened to be the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was the Finance minister of the day. Now, don't tell me that that Premier did not know that that fund was going to absolutely collapse and cost Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans, tens of thousands of dollars of their personal investments and their savings? And why this Premier has not worn that, I don't quite understand. But it is going to come to a light, and I'm going to do my best to continue to bring it forward.

We couldn't trust him then; how can we trust him now with a lot of the promises that he continually makes on a day-to-day basis, whether it's a ribbon cutting or an announcement? Now it's a—now it's the infrastructure.

As we've said, the amount of dollars that have been promised towards core infrastructure funding is quite a bit less each and every year. They've come under budget, and what do we have to show for it?

Crumbling infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to take years and years to recoup some of that infrastructure.

So, again, one last tidbit on the Crocus fiasco, and I will be talking about this in the future again. But the Crocus fiasco, I'd really like to know how many Cabinet ministers and MLAs on the—in the NDP side were able to somehow get out of that Crocus investments with their money as opposed to many, many, many thousands of other Manitobans. And I'm sure after today, I'm sure that there's going to be quite a bit of information coming my way so that we can dive into that a little bit more, because I don't feel that somebody who made such an atrocious error could possibly stand today and also be promoted to be Premier.

So now we have—what do we have? We have two ministers—two ministers that had overspent in their own portfolios, one in charge of Finance and one in charge of jobs. So now where do they have to go from there? I'm assuming they're both going to be running for the leadership of the NDP party. That only makes sense, because that seems to be the trail or the pathway—*[interjection]* What's that, member from Gimli? I know he's—the member from Gimli, he's busy chirping over there, and I know in a few seconds he's going to get a few—a chance to actually stand up and put some words on the record, whether it's for the Throne Speech or whatever he wants to contribute to this debate, Mr. Speaker. So, again, I'm sure he will get up and put some rhetoric on the record, false statements on the record there.

Now, we talk also about another broken promise, education off of seniors—education tax off of property for seniors. They had raised it by \$400. Basically, Mr. Speaker, in the last election their promise would have totalled about \$36 million in savings to our great senior population in this province of ours. And the \$400 is just a basic, small pittance. So I'm assuming that's going to be coming up somehow in the upcoming budget, and to try to total or try to lower that bar on the deficit as they've been doing in the last many, many years.

* (14:50)

The gas tax, again, our leader brought the point of gas tax up today. They raised the gas tax up saying that they were going to contribute—for every dollar raised they were going to contribute a second dollar, so a two-for-one type of scenario, and as we found out today again, the revenue that was going to be generated was to be spent on roads in the

2012-2013. They had budgeted for \$590 million, they had fallen short. They actually only spent \$506 million on roads which was \$84 million less than what was pledged to spend.

ER closures, Mr. Speaker, 18 to 19 ER closures or blips in service. Now, each and every day when we're doing constituency casework, we hear of stories and sad stories on where people have tried to get in and get the services of the emergency rooms and, unfortunately, the way this Province is running the emergency rooms they have to actually—they have to encourage the people to actually call ahead and make a reservation, so to speak, and see if the emergency room is even open.

I know that the past Health minister, she stood up and basically said that when a person would go to the emergency room, and, if there would so happen to be no doctor available in the emergency room, that the nurse or nurses' station would help them call 911 and we'd wheel up a ambulance with some paramedics right up to the door and to help them get into that ambulance and ship them off to another hospital or another possible ER somewhere in the health region, even though, it seems, that the past Health minister and the new Health Minister, I think, need to get outside of the Perimeter and actually see how vast those health regions are in regards to distances.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that my time is running short, so I would just like to put a couple words on the record.

I know that the member from Elmwood had—has actually given me leave to put some words on the record in his place, but I'm not quite sure if that's allowed.

But to sum up, this government is not listening. They don't consult Manitobans. The Minister for Education mentioned Bill 18. Mr. Speaker, we need a Bill 18, an antibullying bill for this NDP government. They can't be trusted and it's time for a change. Thank you.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors within the Department of Health): Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est un honneur et un plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui en réponse de le discours du Trône avec mes collègues dans cette Chambre comme la nouvelle ministre de la Vie saine et des Aînés, et plus important, comme le député de Kirkfield Park.

Translation

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to speak today in response to the Throne Speech with my colleagues in this Chamber as the new Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors, and more importantly, as the member for Kirkfield Park.

English

It's a pleasure to rise today in response to the Throne Speech as the new Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors, but most importantly as the member for Kirkfield Park because that is the neighbourhood that I was born and raised in and the neighbourhood that, despite our long summer in this Chamber, still had plenty of time to get out onto the doorstep and host a number of barbecues and communicate with my neighbours, talk to them, find out what matters most to them. And I do find it somewhat amusing how members opposite make various allegations regarding what happens on the doorstep if you're a member of government, because much like the endangered species of the building crane that, you know, occurred in the 1990s, it's—again, they're speaking of something that is a foreign experience to them, the notion of the doorstep and talking to one's neighbours.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And the one thing that I have to say is that, you know, in going through this Throne Speech, in listening actually to a neighbour of mine—His Honour read the Throne Speech—that it was interesting to reflect back on the different things that my neighbours had said over the course of the summer because it really reflected the idea of having listened to them. The things that they said to me and what they wanted from our government is exactly what was delivered in the Throne Speech.

I guess the best way to say it, and it's not that Gandhi has never been quoted in this Chamber before, but I guess I would like to paraphrase Gandhiji right now in saying that what our neighbours were looking for in the same way that Mahatma Gandhi had said, be the change you wish to see in the world, our neighbours asked us to be the team—to be the government that they wished to see in power. They wanted us to be the ones—be the change that we wanted to see in government. They—want—they wanted us to be that change and we have listened to them and that's why in this Throne Speech the—our approach, in short, is really to continue to focus on what matters most, and that, at this time,

means jobs, a stable economy and key services that families depend on, such as health and education. And it's an approach that will guide our plans for the years ahead, and it's also one that is both good for Manitoba, good for the steady growth of our economy and our population and, again, those kinds of things that give us stability, that give us a sense of hope for the future in a time that still is ridden with economic uncertainty in so many places. It gives us a place of positivity.

And again, one of the things that members opposite, in their ongoing negative discourse, is they keep referencing the PST, and what is interesting is to know that in this Throne Speech, we've addressed—we have listened to Manitobans, we have listened to my neighbours because the new point of PST is going to be fully dedicated to new investments in core infrastructures. That's what my neighbours asked for. They said, I have no problem with it, as long as I know that it's going to the things that matter most. And what were those things? When I said, well, what are the things that matter most to you? They said they wanted highways, bridges and strategic transportation infrastructure. Hmm, I believe we had an announcement today regarding just that kind of thing, and I believe we had a couple announcements regarding Highway 75 as well. So it seems that those things that they've asked for have materialized.

Another thing that mattered to them, because, again, where we live in our particular part of the city doesn't have a huge impact related to the flood, but they have friends and they have family not that far away where flood protection is very important. I have to say that one of the things that impressed so many of my neighbours was during the flood of 2011 was the presence of our Premier (Mr. Selinger), both out on site, overseeing the situation, being a hands-on leader, coupled with the fact that they would see him—in fact, I think one of the most interesting moments was a neighbour of mine had—did a little bit of a double take because, as I showed up on the doorstep that spring with the Premier, it was around news time and they did a double take, because there had been the Premier earlier in the day at a flood site and then there he was on the doorstep, and they did a double take wondering, oh my gosh, how is it that you're in so many places at once in one day. They appreciated the fact that he was a hands-on, active leader, and they appreciate the fact that flood protection is one of those core investments.

And another one—oh, boy—the number of times on the doorstep when I asked my neighbours, what is their primary issue or concern, and they talked to me about municipal infrastructure, especially roads and again in this past summer, water and sewer. So, again, those are the kinds of things that we are going to be partnering and investing in, and this is the kind of investment that they want, and this is what is being offered to them. We are being the change that they wish to see. And that kind of core economic infrastructure provides a solid foundation for steady growth and good jobs in the years to come.

And I found it really interesting to hear members opposite that would talk about all the growth and wonderful things that were happening in their neighbourhood and the arrival of immigrants and the growth of their community and all these things that were booming. And then they would have to switch gears and talk about—oh, wait a second, you guys aren't doing anything for the economy on your side of the House. You're not doing anything. Well, which one is it? Is your neighbourhood growing? Is your community there, you know, growing or is it stagnating? Which one is it? You can't have both. You can't have a foot in two camps here.

*(15:00)

And so the point is, is that we are growing, and our economy is doing phenomenal relative to so many other places going around with double- and triple-dip recessions. But the thing that's interesting, and what I'm looking forward to with our new Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), is knowing that these kinds of investments, which do provide a solid, steady growth for our economy and into the future, don't come at the expense of vital infrastructure that support families, such as schools, hospitals and post-secondary campuses, because in the 1990s it was Manitoba's infrastructure was starved for resources. It took years to rebuild those resources.

And again I find it so ironic when I hear members opposite, that they say they don't want us to reference the '90s. Well, I have a—just a little piece of advice on that. Stop picking leaders from that vintage, stop picking photos from that vintage and maybe the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) could stop picking notes of that vintage.

So, you know, I'm happy to see that they've adopted a recycling plan, but I don't think policy, papers and speaking notes should be—

An Honourable Member: Coming out of a blue box.

Ms. Blady: Yes, coming out of a blue box, exactly.

So, again, there are ways of meeting priorities and doing those kinds of things without having to return to the failed policies of the past. So, again, maybe they should look in the mirror before they make references about living in the past. I actually have to note with the photograph that was submitted, a 20-year-old photograph, I just have to say I'm impressed it wasn't a daguerreotype in light of the recycling program that's going on over there.

But again this is one of these things, what is it that my neighbours are looking for? They're looking for a place to keep building their family, growing into the future. And for someone like myself that has a child in their 20s, I'm looking for a place where my child and his friends can build their careers and build their lives.

And so last year we committed to the ambitious target of creating our workforce by 75,000 people by the year 2020, and I am so impressed that it is our Premier (Mr. Selinger) that has taken the formal responsibility for driving our skills agenda. And again, in the years ahead, as a part of this agenda we will enhance and streamline tax credits for employers to hire more apprentices and grow their labour force. That means so much to the small businesses in my neighbourhood, especially those in the trades.

Again, the idea of new tools that will match apprentices to job openings, helping people begin their careers but also finding the much needed skilled individuals to fill those vacancies that we currently experience. And more—and also to introduce legislation to ensure that apprenticeship opportunities on all major government-supported building projects are there.

And, again, one that I happen to love is the designation of a new trade, the power line technician, to help build hydro infrastructure. And I guess in light of that hundred-million-dollar deal that we just signed with Saskatchewan, we're probably going to need a few of those folks. So I look forward to that next batch of young, trained individuals.

And that's the thing that I love about Manitoba Hydro: it's something that we all collectively own and it's also something that means that we generate our own electricity supply and we do it in a green manner, we do it in a way that—unlike fossil fuels, which are basically resources based on the

decomposition of dinosaurs, so literally they are dinosaur technologies—unlike those things which have a limited supply, the water runs. The water runs freely. The water will not end the same way oil will end, and so we can continue to build hydro.

And, again, despite the naysayers across the way, our province is doing very well, it's growing. And interestingly enough, even with all of the energy efficiency programs that we've had like Power Smart, all of these things that we do to ensure that we're using our electric power wisely, we still have a growing need, and that growing need comes from a growing economy. And what's interesting is that if we don't build things and if we don't expand and if we don't build the bipole, we have an issue in 10 years when we run out of power.

So to see those increased investments and, again, the jobs that that'll provide for those new power line technicians, it's all part of the wonderful things, the growth that is going on in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one of the foundations of any growing economy is to make sure that you have a strong educational base. And, again, it's a classroom where we get our kids the best start, but I remember the classrooms of the 1990s. That was not a warm, fuzzy, happy place to be, because we had layoffs and we had school overcrowding. And I can—I'm happy to say that with this government we have a different approach. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we invest in our kids in a way that really creates a much more positive environment, and I'm so thrilled to see the difference when I see that the classrooms that my children are in and the classrooms within my own neighbourhood, because we've got a situation where we continue to invest by hiring more teachers and building and renovating more classrooms. In my own neighbourhood alone, in Kirkfield Park, we are going to see expansions of kindergarten classrooms at both École Robert-Browning and École Bannatyne, two of our French immersion schools in the neighbourhood.

And, again, this means that we are building, not just by investing in that physical infrastructure, but over 100 new teachers have been hired. We're also working to improve the curriculum and we saw that last year with the—working closely with teachers to improve the math curriculum, and this year I'm excited to see what our new Minister of Education will be bringing forth in terms of looking at the language arts curriculum as well as the French as the first language curriculum that is employed by

Division scolaire franco-manitobaine as well as those that are in French immersion schools like my own children.

So, again, it's about growth, development, investment and it is one of those things that, again, that I find so sad in a way when I listen to members opposite, because they seem to be really focused on the negativity. And one thing that I can say, and this is a belief that I had long previous to taking on the role of being the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors, is the fact that it's the kinds of thoughts that you embody, it's the beliefs that you hold, it's what kind of energy, what kind of people you surround yourself with that really set the tone for your life. And, if you surround yourself with negativity and you're only thinking negative thoughts, it doesn't do a lot for one's mental health and well-being, but it also sort of gives you a rather negative tinge on things. And so I find it rather sad to listen to members opposite who on—in one hand claim that they love Manitoba but can—all they can do is seem to disparage at every opportunity the wonderful things going on in this province.

And, again, one of the things that shows the positive results of the kinds of investments that have been made over the past is that there's recent research from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy in their RHA Indicators Atlas that really tells us about how much the health status of Manitobans have changed since 2006, and, actually, it's a much more longitudinal base as well that's there. It's a wonderful snapshot of the kinds of results that one gets with investment in health and healthy living. And what we've seen is that health status is in fact improving. Life expectancy has increased and premature mortality rates have decreased, which indicates that fewer people are dying before the age of 75. The diagnosed prevalence of many diseases and health conditions has decreased including respiratory illnesses, heart disease, osteoporosis, and congestive heart failure. Heart attack and stroke rates also declined, as did the per cent of residents with diabetes who had lower-limb amputations.

And, again, more importantly, the rate at which new cases of things like diabetes and hypertension were being diagnosed has decreased over time. This is about investments in prevention. Investments make sense. Investments in health and healthy living gives you a healthy population, a healthy population that can work and grow a healthy economy. And what's happened is we have members opposite that their only way of viewing things is to stop, recycle

their notes from the '90s, and suggest cuts—cuts, cuts, cuts. I'm sorry but I don't want to see cuts to things that are going to jeopardize those kinds of results. I like the fact that our life expectancy has increased, I like the fact that Manitobans are healthier than they have been in the past.

* (15:10)

These are the kinds of things that we need to continue to invest in. These are the kinds of things that Manitobans want. It is the priority of Manitobans to have a healthy province, and that's a healthy economy as well as healthy individuals within that economy. And, again, it's about the fact that we've had to spend over a decade rebuilding a health system that was so devastated in the '90s, and now we're seeing the results of having rebuilt and reinvested in the things that matter most to Manitobans.

And there's been so much good news not just on this particular report, but something that I know touches close to my heart, is at the University of Manitoba, my alma mater, to know that the research work that's being done there is, again, contributing to the health and well-being of so many and so many in my neighbourhood. I'm not sure how many folks are familiar with the fact that Brummitt-Feasby House, the first hospice for those living with ALS, is located in Kirkfield Park and just basically a stone's throw away from where a cousin of mine lives, a cousin that lost her father to ALS, to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Well, the University of Manitoba researchers there have identified the gene associated with ALS, and that gives hope to so many of us who have had a family member whose life has been impacted by ALS. But, again, that kind of research comes as a result of investing in post-secondary education and supporting the researchers there and promoting a strong and vibrant academic environment.

The other thing is—that makes me—that this brings me to—is when we think about those of—or us that have had to address health issues where someone has needed rather intense care. I think of our home-care system and the fact that it helps tens of thousands of seniors remain in their homes longer and, again, we've made home care even stronger than it has in the past, and I would say most importantly we phased out the fees that had been introduced in the '90s.

We've done more innovative things. In fact, one of the innovative things that the Minister of Health

and I were able to acknowledge today in an award ceremony related to health innovation was the hospital home teams. Hospital home teams are amazing, and I'm so happy that we have them in different parts of the city, including in west Winnipeg serving the Kirkfield Park area as well as other areas around the Grace campus. And so we've got that kind of investment in people that is, again, making it easier for folks like myself in the sandwich generation where we're raising our kids and also having to worry about the health needs of our parents.

And, again, we've got development and progress going in terms of five personal care homes throughout the province, whether that's Lac du Bonnet, Morden, Winnipeg. Again, we've got more—we've got 100-bed personal-care homes being built in two new sites in Winnipeg and, again, a commitment to everyone having a doctor, as well as the fact that the idea of having a family doctor. Sometimes in terms of meeting the needs for everyone to have a doctor it's about ensuring that people get the right care with the right professional at the right time, and that means, offering other forms of medical treatment so that people get what they need when they need, including—and this is one thing that I'll be very much looking forward to—will be the opening of the Access Winnipeg West at the Grace Hospital campus.

So I let members opposite—you know, tell them to stay tuned. Which again, I do remember, I believe it would have been spring of '07, we had one particular member opposite who was chirping about—and fear mongering—around the closing of the ER and, in fact, we actually have three projects going at the ER. We'll have the access centre, then there'll be a new MRI and then there'll be a new ER. So, again, not a bad thing.

Again, these are the things that matter most to my neighbourhood. These are the things that matter most to Manitobans, and these are the kinds of things that are being delivered in this Throne Speech.

Of course, there'll be—also, I mean, the St. Vital QuickCare clinic. There's going to be a new mobile clinic servicing communities in western Manitoba and, again, if you're going to open up these facilities, what do you need to do? You need to train and hire more doctors, more nurse practitioners and other providers. What you don't need to do is send a thousand nurses packing. What you don't need to do is close down seats in a medical school. Again, failed

policies of the past. The last thing anybody on this side wants to do—this side of the Chamber—is take advice from people that ground our health-care system into the ground.

Again, as a cancer survivor, I've mentioned to other folks that I am—you know, I've been very impressed with the services that—and the medical treatment that we have here in Manitoba, everything from our wait times in terms of radiation therapy. And I was very pleased to have been with the previous minister of Health when we announced the Cancer QuickCare Clinic. And, again, I know how much it means to people. Actually, just a few weeks back, at dinner I ran into husband of one of my high school classmates. He is on his second round of remission. Michael has had a very intense battle in terms of cancer, and one of the things that was really interesting was he basically said to me he is thankful, despite the fact he and I will often have different opinions on politics, he said he was thankful for being a Manitoban and thankful for being a Canadian, because he said if he was an American in a two-tiered health-care system, he would be dead right now. He wouldn't have lived to have a second bout of cancer and a second bout of remission. I know that the treatment that he's been getting, the importance of having access to free cancer drugs, have made a huge difference in his life, in the life of his wife, Michelle, and in the life of their children. These are the things that matter to Manitobans.

Again, part of that contribution to our health and healthy well-being is a lot of prevention, and that's where my new role as the Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors comes in. And one of the things that we've made great progress in over the years has been in smoking and in terms of preventing youth from starting, protecting non-smokers from exposure to second-hand smoke, helping smokers quit and denormalizing tobacco products and their use. And, again, in terms of accomplishments, the smoking rates for Manitobans 15 and over have declined from the 23 per cent it was at in 1990 to 18 per cent in 2012. And the smoking rate has declined—for the 15 to 19 category, has declined even more from 29 per cent in 1999 to 13 per cent in 2012. It's about focusing on prevention. And one of our best tools in focusing on prevention has been the SWAT teams, the Students Working Against Tobacco. They have significantly expanded and established in high schools throughout Manitoba, and they now have 50 SWAT teams operating in schools. And those SWAT teams are located throughout the province,

whether it's in Winnipeg, Brandon, Steinbach, Minnedosa, Thompson, Norway House, Vita, Split Lake, Camperville, Portage la Prairie, Waterhen. They're even located on five of our Manitoba Hutterite colonies.

These are the kinds of things that make for a healthy next generation for those folks that are going to be in our role someday and making decisions. And knowing that the kinds of supports, the kinds of encouragement, the kind of healthy living lifestyles and investments that were made in them are going to be the kinds of things that they would like to carry forward and expand on in the future.

There is so much more that can be said. Again, we've had the numbers go down. One of the sad points is that we do have tobacco companies that are taking advantage of the loopholes in federal legislation on flavoured tobacco. And I am proud to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we will continue to work with the federal government to deter young people from starting to smoke and that we will continue to work with them in terms of legislation and in terms of policies related to the detrimental role that flavoured tobacco is playing in encouraging young people to take up the habit of smoking and beginning a tobacco addiction.

Again, there is so much that could be said about the vital things that are happening in our neighbourhoods. I guess one thing that I would like to say is that I've had the pleasure in the past few weeks, in this new role, of meeting so many phenomenal Manitobans from around the province. As many know, I come from a neighbourhood that has quite a large population of seniors, and so this role that I've now taken on affords me the opportunity to work with them in new and dynamic ways and to really form some amazing partnerships.

I'd like to recognize that the Manitoba Council on Aging, we had a wonderful recognition award and it was wonderful to see so many people out there. The kind of work that they do is inspiring, and it was wonderful to see so many folks from my own neighbourhood tied into that organization. And again, it speaks to me of the vibrancy of everything from our Mensheds to our 55+ Centre.

* (15:20)

And one of the things that I was most excited to do was, last week, we hit the 100 mark for the number of age-friendly communities in Manitoba. We welcomed 14 new communities. They included

Ethelbert, Birtle, we had Wadena there, we've got—or, sorry, Waskada there and we had a number of really amazing folks there. Eileen Clark from Gladstone and associated with AMM was out there and, wow, there is an amazing and inspiring woman who has been part of the age-friendly movement right from the get-go. So that partnership with AMM, to create more and more age-friendly places in Manitoba, is a phenomenal thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this Throne Speech encapsulates so many of the wonderful things that Manitobans want us to do that we are continuing to invest in those things that matter most, whether it's core infrastructure or in maintaining the kinds of front-line services that they want.

And I would just like to say that I would like to again thank the neighbours that I've been able to meet with over the past few months. Like I said, it wasn't easy to pencil in time with them. It was wonderful to get out to barbecues and beyond the doorstep. I think some of them were very much surprised by the fact that I found the time to do that but with members opposite only filibustering 'til 5 p.m., it made it possible. So it was great.

I'm really so excited about the new role that I'll be able to—that I've taken on and the things that I will be able to do with the variety of people that I am now working with and the kind of partnerships. I'd like to thank my predecessors in this role for the foundation that they laid and for the amazing work that they have done. I hear about it from our partners continually and I look forward to taking it to the next level, seeing what new and wonderful things we can do to make a healthier Manitoba with healthier individuals, and, most importantly, that they can have a healthy lives in a healthy, vibrant economy with a government that leads by caring. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the amendment to the Throne Speech. And, as always, I am in awe and humbled to represent Brandon West, thrilled that I am able to be here to represent the people of Brandon West and that, you know, that they selected me in the last election and I continue to work for the good of that area and the citizens of Brandon West and trying to help them navigate the mystifying areas of government that they seem to find very difficult, as do I, trying to figure out where they can go to get the right answer for their problems that they have, and trying to help them figure out a solution for those

difficulties. So it is indeed very humbling to represent Brandon West, even though we do have to be in Winnipeg.

And I am thrilled to be able to go back to Brandon on weekends or some evenings when we're not in session or even when we are in session. It's close enough that I can travel back at nights and still get back here in time to do the work that's necessary—when those highways are open, as they weren't on the weekend. The first snowfall in Manitoba that's fallen, shock and surprise, the highway is closed. Apparently, you know, we didn't have any road-clearing crews out there working on them; we had to close them. I did manage to see some of the crews busy working Monday morning, but on that travel when I did come in from Brandon on the Monday morning, no sand on any of the ice that I travelled over, with trepidation and care, to make sure that we could be here in the safety.

And, unfortunately, the closing of the highway on Sunday did cause the cancellation of several events, and one of those events that it did cancel in Brandon was the symphony coming out to Brandon, and this is often looked upon as a great thing, obviously, to have the symphony to come to Brandon. There's a young pianist that was travelling with them this time on her tour and that now, since this has been cancelled, we've been deprived of that important contribution to the arts in western Manitoba, and I'm sure it will be very difficult to reschedule that event with that young pianist. It's almost impossible, one would think, that she could change her tour to be able to come back to Brandon to—so that we could benefit from her talent. So I know they will have that again. The symphony will continue to come out to Brandon. Unfortunately, it did not occur this time, and I have to say it's the fault of the government, you know, that they weren't able to maintain the highways to the ability of keeping the Manitoba public safe on those highways.

And, you know, I do get a lot of comments from people saying, well, you must have to travel a lot in this new job, and I do. I have to travel into Winnipeg more often than I used to. I don't put any more miles on my vehicle now than what I did in my past careers because in past I was travelling all over Manitoba to various sites in rural Manitoba. Now it's mostly in one direction, so no more miles.

But I have noticed something strange in the last couple of years as I travel the Trans-Canada Highway between Brandon and Winnipeg. It became

evident to me that most people travel in the passing lane. Now, why would they do that? Why would you travel in the passing lane? I'm sure you know that you're supposed to travel in the right-hand lane and allow faster traffic to proceed in the left-hand lane, the passing lane. That's why it's called the passing lane, so you can pass vehicles there. But, obviously, what's happening here is that this government has not maintained infrastructure for 14 years. They have a sudden increase in attention that they think they're going to pay to it, and that infrastructure has deteriorated over that period of time. And, obviously, what's happened is the right-hand lane of the highway is deteriorated to the point where vehicles, truck traffic, find that they have to travel in the passing lane in order to have a smooth enough ride, and it's still not smooth to be able to transit between Brandon and Winnipeg and other parts of the province.

So it's very sad to see that, and perhaps you don't travel on that highway and you don't see evidence of that, but that is something that not only I have noticed, but it has also been brought to my attention by many, many other people. And, indeed, a commentary on people about why weren't the plows out quickly enough on this first snowstorm, fairly minor snowstorm of the season, and one wit suggested, well, they didn't want to put the plows down because the asphalt's so thin they might peel it off, and that would be sad to see indeed.

And, yes, there was discussion about paving Victoria Avenue in Brandon, and when I talk to people that are experts in that field, my question to them is, well, that's interesting, this piece here, and I watched them do little pieces of it. I didn't—wasn't there to see the whole thing. I know they didn't work at the basic structure underneath very much. It was a topcoat type of thing, and how long is that going to last? And the expert said, well, that'll be two to two and a half years that that topcoat will last. Let me think now, what else is going to happen in two to two and half years? There's an election, isn't there? So this topcoat on Victoria is going to last just past the election. Isn't that surprising, and these are the experts, and I'm sure you can talk to them as well.

So it's very interesting this government has a sudden interest in infrastructure because they've let it fail so badly in Manitoba. And as you travel the province you see that failure time and again, not only on the Trans-Canada Highway, but on many, many other highways in Manitoba, and that is infrastructure, our core infrastructure.

There are other areas of core infrastructure, of course, and this government doesn't seem to be clear on it. Because usually when people talk about infrastructure, and I did ask this question of the previous Finance minister, what his definition was, and you usually see roads. You see sewers, you see that type of infrastructure, the basic things that the government needs to provide to the citizens of Manitoba in order for those people to live and produce and have commerce and other things of that nature.

But the government's not quite sure on it, so they talk about—in this Speech from the Throne there is core infrastructure and then in the next line it talks about strategic infrastructure and questions about what that might be. And here they have highways, bridges, strategic transportation infrastructure, flood protection, municipal infrastructure, including roads, water and sewer. So that now seems to be the definition of core infrastructure. But then just the other day in this House the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said they're going to spend \$1.6 billion on core infrastructure: more schools, more hospitals.

*(15:30)

Wait a minute. Let me go back to the Throne Speech. No, I don't see that in there. I don't see hospitals and schools in core infrastructure. But according to the Premier it is core infrastructure. So I'm not sure. Perhaps he's confused. And I think he was part of the production of this speech, even though he didn't have to read the lengthy speech that the Lieutenant Governor laboured through—and all compliments to him to be able to get through that piece of production there, as it went on and on and on and on, and tried to make things clear but in fact confused it a little bit more.

So very surprising that all of a sudden we have this interest in infrastructure even though they don't seem to have an idea of what that actually is. What's next? What's next? Let's see, this government might be interested in hallway medicine. Hmm, that's something I seem to recover from years past. They were going to fix that. No, but hallway medicine has become highway medicine. Yes, that's where people now have to go to have their babies, born on the highway between here and Yorkton, or other services or travel around to various emergency rooms to see if they're open or if they can be seen in those rooms. No, we have highway medicine now, but perhaps that'll be their next topic of interest next year, because now we have this sudden interest on

infrastructure even though we're not quite sure what that might be, and even, as I said, the Premier's not sure.

And then we go back into things. They talked about floods and they talked about protecting communities from floods, and I do see work going on in Brandon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are building a flood dike there to protect Manitoba—or Brandon from a one-in-we're-not-sure-how-many-year flood, because we've heard numbers thrown out here—one-in-100 year, one-in-300 year, one-in-700 year—it depends on what day the Premier's talking about, and it's all on the record. In fact, not long ago, just a couple days, he said one-in-300 year for the protection for the residential part of that community, so I guess we're going to allow the water to go into the business part of the community, maybe not protect them even though they're right adjacent to the residential part of that community. So I don't know, confusing, but perhaps when the minister gets his new rubber boots he can go out for the photo op on that dike and show people what they think they're doing.

Anyway, even though the City of Brandon was the one that had to put the whole plan together because the Province wasn't getting it done, and they're trying to make it work within the structure of the money that was allocated for that. And that has indeed reduced it from the one-in-300-year promise to we're not sure, because it's probably not going to be one in 300. It's not the original plan that was thrown out there. It doesn't protect everywhere, so we're not sure. It's maybe something halfway, and that's pretty much appropriate for this government. They don't do things all the way through. They start things and don't finish it, or they talk about it time and time and time again and the promises just tend to go on and on, and we see it going along again.

So, you know, when we look at what this government does—has done in tax increases, the increase to the sales tax, the 14.3 per cent is something that they talk about being a very difficult decision. Well, I'm sure it was, because Manitobans told them not to do it. And in committee—and I know many of you were there—you listened to Manitobans say, don't do this. And they also said, you know, you have legislation in place that says when you do this, you have to come back to Manitobans for a referendum and get Manitobans to approve this.

And I've been door knocking over the last few months as we've had this break, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

and talking to Manitobans at the door as some others have, and it is still a topic of big contention out there. It's a major topic that I heard at the door about the province was the sales tax increase and how it's driving Manitobans away to other economies, to driving them to buy in Saskatchewan or North Dakota or Calgary. Because now when the highway's closed that we can't get into Winnipeg to get to the airport here, it's very fortunate that we have WestJet Encore in Brandon and at least we can travel out of the province that way even though you can't get to Winnipeg to get to the airport.

We can now use WestJet out of Brandon. It is a fabulous thing. We have used it in our family. Many of our friends have and the flights are quite full. We—often I hear from colleagues, and I've witnessed it myself, that the plane either might be full or two to three or four seats empty, and the same thing going out. So very encouraging to watch and to—interesting to see who is using that service, because it's not just people from Brandon and Brandon West. It's not just people from the immediate surrounding areas. We also have people coming into that area to work in that area, because they live in Alberta and they're coming to work in the oil patch because—surprising thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker—we have oil in Manitoba.

I know the government likes to talk about hydro as Manitoba's oil, but we do, indeed, have oil, and it's being ignored by this government. They don't really seem to know what's going on down there. We've asked them questions about it and they've had to call out to the area to say, is this true? And people will have to tell them, well, yes, come out and visit and we'll show you what's happening out there.

So we have people coming in from Alberta to work in that part of the province, and then they work there for a couple of weeks and then they travel back home to Alberta. Where do you think they pay their taxes? I wonder where they might pay their taxes. I have a suspicion that they probably pay them in Alberta. But, no, let me think. You don't pay taxes in Alberta. Hmm, isn't that a shock? Well, I wonder why they would do that. Isn't that surprising? So there are opportunities there for those people to work in Manitoba and live in Alberta. Hmm, interest—isn't that interesting, and we've opened up that opportunity for them with WestJet, and they're able to contribute to our economy, but not pay taxes elsewhere. Hmm, pretty surprising.

But, anyway, Manitobans really do deserve to know what's going to happen to that increase in sales

tax, the 14.3 per cent. You know, we asked questions here all day today about where's the money going, because if the government was committed to core infrastructure, why have they been cutting budget and under-spending it year after year after year? Because the infrastructure continues to deteriorate and this government does not pay attention to it, they continue to cut it and we don't see any of the results out there. They do some cosmetic changes and things look a little bit better for a time, but, again, they start to deteriorate pretty quickly.

And, of course, we had the government commit that the sales tax increase was going to fund that core infrastructure that they had a definition for, but apparently they forgot to tell the Premier (Mr. Selinger) because his definition was a little bit different as was the previous Finance minister. And nobody really sees to be—seems to be too sure, indeed, about what that core infrastructure is. So core infrastructure is strategic infrastructure, because the thing that most people that I know understand is things like hospitals, schools. That is not infrastructure. That is called superstructure because it is above ground and, indeed, you might want to look it up and see if you can, indeed, use that definition. But there is a definition that people use that way and you can look it all up.

And, you know, this government talks about cutbacks, and if you've been in an emergency room, if you can find one that's open, well, the government here has been cutting back for years because you can't get those services when you need them. When you go into a waiting room for emergency you may wait there for two hours, four hours, six hours, 10 hours or, certainly, in the cases of people that we've heard in the news, much, much longer, sadly. And then there are the statistics of people that leave the emergency room waiting room area without being seen. So, you know, when the government says they won't have cutbacks, well, they already have. They already have had cutbacks to services. There's been cutbacks in infrastructure. There's been cutbacks in front-line staff in health care and we see that evidence time and time again.

And, if you know, as I've spoken in the past, this government talks about spending government money to help the economy. But, obviously, we have a problem with the First Minister that didn't have a degree in economics, even though he came from a particularly auspicious area of the—of England that he did get a degree from, but apparently not in economics and doesn't understand things like the

multiplier effect and, indeed, the more you spend of government money the less effect it has, and the increased per-dollar of additional government purchases declines as we go along here. So those are things that perhaps he can talk to some economists. And I would encourage the new Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) to do so, because the past minister of Finance didn't under-seem to understand those concepts because he constantly talked again and again about these dire, dire circumstances where we were in. And, yes, the world did go through restructuring of economies, that was quite a number of years ago, and emergency measures were necessary during that period of time.

*(15:40)

But the question is how effective were those emergency member-measures that type of a stimulus? As you carry on with that stimulus program, it becomes less and less effective and either—even counter-effective, counterproductive to the economy, so that as you get into that post-crisis mode—which is certainly where we have been for several years now, the environment where that type of that monetary policy has a detrimental effect to the economy a whole—as a whole, is where we are living today.

And that is something that you can look and you read all the studies you want and the evidence is there. Indeed, they go back to the '30s, which is, of course, the Great Depression, and that is some of the things that those studies are based on and they extrapolated and they reflect it in the other downturn that we had here more recently, and those are certain things that are evident in the changes there.

So, as the government tries to spend their way out of whatever they're trying to spend their way out of here, even though they're not spending it on core infrastructure, it's having a different effect on the economy, a detrimental effect, indeed.

And we will probably continue to see that because that policy contributes to inflation. And when we look at the federal government that has dug its way out of its financial troubles and it's going to balance the books quicker than ever, the major detriment to Canada now is actually the provinces and their debt because the government is going to—the federal government is going to balance their debts but many of the provinces are still in difficult situations and Manitoba is in one of the most difficult, when we look at their deficit spending and the debt there that we have created.

So, while that progressive fiscal stimulus might have been interesting and useful at that time, that type of policy is no longer necessary and, in fact, creates a drag on the economy and no longer has the desired effect on our economy.

So, in fact, we are replacing essentially, if you want to look at it one way, we are essentially replacing private dollars with public dollars, even though those public dollars do come from the private sector through taxes.

And there is indeed a school of thought in economics that it's a one for one, that every dollar you spend in—on the government side, in fact, does remove it from the private sector. And certainly they do it in the tax side, they're—this government is very good at taking money out of the private sector on taxes and we've seen that in terms of the sales tax increase and what it's doing to Manitobans, and we see it in other areas like the increased vehicle registration fees that have been foisted on Manitobans; 221 per cent increase since 1999, a staggering amount of some \$1.3 billion. And the question was posed today, and it was committed several times in several budgets, that these vehicle registration fees were going to infrastructure.

Where'd it go, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because the government's under-spending its infrastructure budget, taking the money away from people to be invested in—at that time, the minister of Finance had a better idea of what core infrastructure was because his definition of infrastructure was roads, bridges and other infrastructure, and he guaranteed it, so whatever that guarantee is worth is probably not very much.

This government's respect for the law continues to deteriorate, you know, we have the law in the books that says if you're going to have a sales tax increase of this nature, you have to go to Manitobans and ask them to approve it in a vote.

And, again, this government thinks that they have the ability to raise it without that approval, they're going to try to change that legislation retroactively and Manitobans have said they deserve that right to vote on this sales tax increase, and they are very upset about it. You heard some of them at committee, I'm sure. I know you were there, deputy—Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the chair of some of those committees. So you did indeed listen to the anger of Manitobans, not only about the sales tax increase but that this government was ignoring

Manitobans to right–right to vote on this particular increase, as they have that right committed in law.

So very unfortunate that this government is ignoring Manitobans in that regard. I have heard that time and time again from them. And I'd encourage the government, if they truly believe that this sales tax increase, the 14.3 per cent, is necessary and is responsible—and I can't say it is responsible—but if they believe it's necessary then you should be able to convince Manitobans, then you shouldn't have any fear of going out and holding a referendum. If it is so necessary and you can prove the evidence that it's necessary, then you should be able to prove it to Manitobans for a referendum. Call a referendum. Let's see how it goes. Bring the challenge on. You have the opportunity as government to do that and I would encourage you to do so. If it is so absolutely necessary, call the referendum and you can go out and prove your case to Manitobans. That's what they want. They want to know that you're listening to them—we know you're not. They want to know that they have the right to comment on this. They want to know they have the right to vote on this particular sales tax increase, as they do indeed today have a right to vote on that sales tax increase, and this government continues to ignore that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's sad to watch the government deteriorate its involvement with Manitobans. You know, the consultations now that the government is—now that they're interested in infrastructure, they seem to have gotten the clue that there's a problem out there. So not only have we increased the sales tax to supposedly pay for that, even though the First Minister, the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) not sure what infrastructure is and we've got the vehicle registration fees that have been committed to it, even though the government doesn't seem to know where that went, you know, now they're starting to talk to Manitobans about, let me think; what do you think, as Manitobans, we should do with infrastructure money?

Well, Manitobans have been telling this government time and time again what should be done with infrastructure money. The AMM has been very vocal on the infrastructure deficit, as have the mayors of particular cities in Manitoba. So we've heard that time and time again, but now that the government has a sudden interest in it, well, they think that maybe they should talk to people. So they invite people for a round table. A little late, after the fact, when you've increased the taxes so much and

the registration fees and other fees to suddenly say, hmm, what should we spend this money on? And there are so many projects out there that this government has ignored over 14 years. Of course, there's a huge wealth of projects that are available that have needed this money long ago and the government has ignored.

So those—we see the roads falling apart and deteriorating in Manitoba, and the cost of replacing and reconstructing those roads is obviously much higher than the annual maintenance might have been on those roads had the government been interested at all in infrastructure over the last 14 years. And I'm sure there are many, many other people that would wish to comment on this. I can imagine that there are several on the—several people on the government side that can hardly wait to tell me where that vehicle registration fees went, where the gas tax went, why the Premier is confused on core infrastructure including schools and more hospitals but on the other hand trying to define it in the Throne Speech as not including schools and more hospitals. So it's all, you know, a little—it's no wonder that many of my constituents are confused on how to navigate the halls in here and how to find the right person to talk to for their concerns when the Premier himself is confused about basic concepts here of infrastructure and economics.

So, at that point, I'm sure there are others, many others that wish to comment on that, so thank you for the opportunity, and we'll stop at that point and let others, I'm sure, have much more to say. Thank you.

*(15:50)

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): It's indeed a pleasure to stand to put a few words on the Throne Speech today. I just have to start by saying I'm not sure which is more painful, being a Bomber season ticket holder or listening to the member from Brandon West for the last 30 minutes. The jury is out on that. But, okay, I apologize, that was an attempt at humour, but I will say that he did give me some gems in what he just put on the record there and I want to thank him for that.

First of all, he got up and he said—or not first of all—but some way in that ramble he did say that Brandon is growing and people are coming from Alberta to work in Brandon. He did say that. Just as yesterday the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) said, I've been going and seeing the personal success, the personal success of businesses and

industry in communities like Morden and Winkler in the RM of Stanley. And I can tell you—I can tell you—I would be happy to say in this place that those businesses and industries are thriving and they're doing well and are expanding.

Our province is growing, our province is thriving. Our province is seeing unprecedented growth in terms of the population, and we have in the past month seen that 22 out of 29 economic indicators, Manitoba is above the national average for those 22 of those 29 economic indicators. But, no, the negative nabobs—I like that expression; I'll use that a few times—across the way—across the way—have stood up and talked about everything being so bad here in the province of Manitoba.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to throne speeches—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker—throne speeches are an opportunity to set your vision and to lay out your plan for the future of the province, and before I talk about our plan and our vision for the future of the province, I want to talk about another thriving community which, unfortunately, I didn't get to spend as much time at the lake this summer as we were all here debating this summer. I didn't get as much time in my community; it's unfortunate. But I was able to go to the Canada Day celebrations as I do. I was able to attend the Winnipeg Beach Boardwalk Days, of course, the 124th Islandingadagurinn and looking to—forward to the 125th Islandingadagurinn next year, the Elvisfest.

Yes, I attended Elvisfest—thank you, thank you very much. I attended a lot of community events and a lot of celebrations of community, and that's what Manitoba does well. We have a lot of communities that we are proud to be a part of in this province and I think that it is, indeed, a privilege to represent those communities.

I'm also looking forward to cutting the ribbon on new seniors' housing in the community of Riverton. I'm looking forward to cutting the ribbon on new social housing and affordable housing in the community of Gimli in a couple of months. I'm looking forward to continuing to work with community partners as we invest in infrastructure to support the growth of rural Manitoba.

But, you know, back to the Throne Speech. We're faced with tough choices and we have to work with the cards that we've been dealt in very difficult economic times, and for several years all provinces have expressed concerns about a persistent pattern of federal government off-loading of

costs and responsibilities onto provincial and local governments. Federal off-loading has virtually affected the entire range of public services, and that includes training, social services and agriculture support, and the negative effects of the off-loading of the federal government have been compounded by substantial cutbacks in transfer payments under the equalization system and established programs, financing arrangements for health care and higher education. And these reductions will have an impact on all Manitobans and all of us must re-examine the way in which we deliver services as a result.

Now, I'm—neglected to say that I was quoting that, and that's actually from a Throne Speech in November 26, 1992, when the Leader of the Opposition was out taking pictures of bridges with his Polaroid. But they reference the federal government 19 times in that Throne Speech, and they talk about the fact that the federal government had abandoned their responsibilities to the provinces, and they made their choices. They made their choice not to invest in Manitoba. They made choices to cut services in Manitoba. They made those choices.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In our Throne Speech we don't reference the challenges that have been handed to us with the current fiscal reality that the federal government has placed upon our shoulders, the burden that they've put upon our shoulders. They—we haven't referenced that because we made a choice. Our duly elected federal government has made a lot of cuts, and we'll talk about that at some point in time, I'm sure. But we made a choice. We made a choice that was a very difficult choice to make and that choice was to invest in Manitoba by getting more revenues through the increase in the PST.

Now, it was interesting when we first brought forward this Throne Speech that two responses from the Leader of the Opposition were (1) that throne speeches are empty rhetoric and they become an exercise in empty rhetoric, and I was really, really kind of sad to hear him say that; and he said (2) that we're creating zero jobs.

Now, if you go back to that Throne Speech I referenced in 1992, they talk about the \$205-million Canada-Manitoba infrastructure investment that they were engaged in and how it would create thousands of jobs. So it's really curious that in 1992, a \$205-million Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Program would create thousands of jobs, but in 2013, a \$5.5-billion investment in infrastructure and

superstructure—thank you to the member from Brandon West—would create zero jobs. So, it's really fascinating. Tories say amazing things. And I'm so thankful that we have Hansard because we can refer to those amazing things that they put on the record.

Let's talk about education. And the other thing that I noticed about the throne speeches from the 1990s is the language: My ministers are aware of the importance of the roles that both teachers and parents play in the education system. I am advised that my government will host a Manitoba education information forum to provide leadership in the discussion of implementing important educational reforms—my ministers, my government.

This is our government, and it was really curious to read that language. And when they talk about education and their vision for education in 1992, talk about oxymorons, the vision for education for members opposite: cut education funding, establish the Dyck-Render commission to go out there and say to teachers you're overpaid for what we do—what you do as teachers, you should have your salaries cut. Lock teachers out from professional development. The list goes on and on and on with what their vision for education was.

And that was the 1992 Throne Speech. In 1994, in the evolving global economy, Manitobans will be required to continue to train and upgrade skills to ensure success as entrepreneurs and business managers.

Have they ever talked about training? Have we heard anything from the members opposite about training? Did we hear over the last four elections anything about training? No, we did not.

Well, what about social services: My ministers advise me—this is—my ministers advise me that are fully engaged with other provinces in dealing with social policy reform, and all the more necessary because of reductions in federal supports to the provinces—there they go again. My ministers are committed to developing with the other governments a national vision reflecting the needs to support Canadians for social services and taking into account the fiscal realities facing all governments. Members of this House will be kept apprised of this progress.

Well, what was the result of their reform to social services? What was it, again? I believe clawing back the child benefit and taking 500 dollars and 40–\$548 a month out of the pockets of those

who needed it most; cutting their subsidies through EIA; setting up a snitch line to report people who were cheating, people who were the most desperate and in the most need, report them for cheating on their EIA—oh, yes, a whole number of social service reforms that the members opposite were engaged in.

And is there any mention of social housing? No. I went through five speeches when the members opposite were in government and when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting at the Cabinet table, and in five speeches, there was no member—no mention, I should say, of social housing and the need to rebuild, the need to improve that infrastructure, or superstructure, for the member of Brandon West, there was no mention of that in these speeches. So that's their take on social services.

Oh, let's see, what else have we got? Jobs and the economy: Frozen major tax rates and introduce tax cuts incentives for individuals and small businesses to stimulate the growth—economic growth and job creation.

So let me get this straight: Having a 9 per cent small-business tax in 1999 was good for the economy? And we have a zero per cent small-business tax here in Manitoba now, since we've been in government. And our reductions to the corporate capital tax, the corporate capitalization tax, we have created a very positive environment for small business here in Manitoba.

Oh, and now, this is where it's almost comedic. Health care, November 26th, 1992, bringing health care closer to home means better care.

*(16:00)

Now, what did they do in health care? We know. We know what they did in health care. Cutting nurses, cutting doctors, many of them leaving the province, but at the time, of course, 3,000 people a year were leaving this province. And they continued to underfund—I believe the last time they came into Gimli, they cut the budget by—the health budget in Gimli health centre was cut by 20 per cent, if I'm not mistaken. I'd have—I'd—I'll have to check the facts on that; I don't have that off the top of my head. I should know this because I know that that's what they did.

So, if you want to talk about throne speeches as being empty rhetoric, I suggest the members opposite go and look at the throne speeches that they delivered in the 1990s and look about the things that they did in the 1990s, look at the choices that they made in the 1990s and tell me about their throne

speeches as being visionary, tell me about their throne speeches as being a model for what we should be doing as a government here in 2013, tell me that their throne speeches actually made a difference in people's lives. And I tell you, when you look at these throne speeches the empty rhetoric is, indeed, evident in these throne speeches, because we know what they said and we sure know what they did. And the choices that they made as government were not good choices for Manitoba and Manitobans told them that in the 1999 election, and I'm confident they'll continue to tell them that as we move forward.

Yes, we had a hard choice to make. We chose to raise the PST and we have committed in our vision for the province of Manitoba not to cut the services that are important to Manitobans. We're not going to cut health care the way members opposite cut health care, and they haven't learned from those lessons because what are they saying? Oh, yes, we could take half a billion dollars out of the budget. What's half a billion? We'll cut that from the budget. So they're going to take that out of that budget. Really? Half a billion? How many nurses would that mean if you take that as a percentage of the expenditure of health care? How many teachers would that mean if you take it as a percentage of the expenditure for education? How many social workers would that mean when you talk about those vulnerable people who need the most—who are the most vulnerable, who need the supports? How many corrections officers would that mean when we need to look after people who make poor choices in life who need to be incarcerated in this province? How many supports for those incarcerated people would that mean? How many daycare workers would that mean? The list goes on and on.

Half a billion dollars in cuts as they proposed would have a profound impact on the province. It didn't work in the '90s. It set up back a decade when they made those decisions. They were bad decisions then and they're not the types of decisions that we're going to make here on behalf of Manitobans because we're going to protect what matters most to Manitobans.

Now, the other thing that I've noticed about a modus operandi of members opposite is that they don't deal with problems. They didn't deal with the problems in the 1990s. They didn't acknowledge problems in the 1990s, and if you don't acknowledge a problem and you don't say you're going to deal some—do something to deal with that problem, you're not held accountable for not dealing with the

problem. I would rather stand on this side of the House with a government that says wait a minute, there's a problem here. We need to do something to fix it, and if the fix is a difficult and long road, I'd rather be part of a government that tried to fix the problems in our society then to ignore them all together like members opposite.

And I saw that yet again today. I saw that today, when the education critic, who suddenly woke out—woke up after five years of sleeping and finally realized that he's got to ask questions about education, stood up and talked about drugs in the schools. You know what? There was no drug and alcohol policy when we came into office, no provincial guidelines for drug and alcohol policies, no Safe Schools Charter, nothing on bullying. In fact, I remember the MLA from Charleswood saying, and I thank her for this because this is an incredible gift, saying there was no bullying in schools when we were in office. That's like, we move ahead 10 years. We move—

An Honourable Member: Don't be ridiculous.

Mr. Bjornson: I'm not being ridiculous, I heard the member say that. Check Hansard, that's what she said. You guys are giving us gold every time you speak on these issues; it's beautiful. The member from Emerson saying if you're being bullied on the Internet don't go there. Really? This is 2013. Their idea about dealing with issues is to ignore them. Our idea about dealing with issues is to challenge, is to accept the challenge and take them head on and invest and work with the stakeholders to try to make this province a better place. Their agenda has been ignore it and we're not held accountable for it.

And the previous member from Morris—yes, another one who quit. What did—I can say Mavis's name, yes. Mavis stood up and said, well, there wasn't auto theft when we were in office, at least not much, and we saw auto theft rates escalating and escalating, and it was our government that said there's a problem here. We got to do something about this, and we developed the task force and we reduced auto theft in this province by how much? Eighty—

An Honourable Member: Eighty five per cent.

Mr. Bjornson: Eighty five per cent—85 per cent—because we recognized there was a problem and we did something about it.

And I'd rather be on this side of the House saying we're going to deal with a problem and we're going to work towards a solution than sit on that side

of the House and say, ah, doesn't matter. We're not going to do it, then we don't have to held accountable.

Wait-lists—they're talking about wait-lists for hospitals. Was there even a wait-list when they were in office? They didn't put wait-lists up online. They didn't care; they ignored it. And why were they—what would they have been back in the '90s when they're cutting nurses, when they're cutting doctors, when they were cutting services, what would they have been? You know, so when the leader talks about a Throne Speech as being empty rhetoric, he should look at the speeches that were made when he was sitting at the Cabinet table when he was a part of that government.

But you know what, I guess he forgot about it when he pulled up stakes and ran off to run and seek election in Ottawa in the middle of a flood when he was the minister responsible for Emergency Measures. So, you know, we've got challenging economic times, and if, God forbid, the members opposite should form government and he would be leader of the province—I shudder to think—and things got tough, well, is he going to pull up stakes and leave again? I don't know, because he's the one who says that past behaviour is the best example of future behaviours. *[interjection]* That's right. The member from Kildonan—when things get tough, the Tories get going. They leave.

You know, I would much rather be on this side of the House where we acknowledge that there's an issue, we work towards a solution and we accept the outcomes of our efforts to address those problems. So what the Conservatives did in the '90s were not good choices for the province of Manitoba, and those are the choices they made.

We've made a tough choice. We've chosen to increase the PST. Well, what are we going to get for that? We are going to get a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase that will allow us to put every dollar raised from the new point of PST fully dedicated to new investments in core strategic infrastructure over and above what the province spent before—core infrastructure. We're going to build the highways, we're going to build the bridges, we're going to build the strategic transportation infrastructure.

And I've heard the member from Emerson talk a few times in this Chamber, and somebody should point out that Highway 75 runs through Emerson—the largest investment. He should be singing our praises and jumping for joy—*[interjection]*—but don't sing.

Thank you. Yes, we heard what happens if he had a million dollars, what if he had \$215 million to fix your highway? Every cent—every cent—will be going into infrastructure.

Flood protection—the member from Brandon got up and said, well, they might be talking about flood protection. I'm not sure what kind of flood protection. Well, it's not unusual to me that the members opposite would not be familiar with flood protection, because I remember in the '70s when there was a flood and I was a young man in Gimli, it was the Schreyer government at the time that said, we have to invest in protecting the province and we're going to invest in flood protection around the south basin of Lake Winnipeg. It was the Schreyer government that did that. What happened between then and 2003? Nothing. In fact, they allowed—the previous government allowed some of those flood protection measures to be compromised. So we had to do an assessment of the south basin again, and we reinvested \$15 million in the south basin to protect the people in south—the south basin of Lake Winnipeg. So, you know, members opposite talk about flood protection, but what do they do? They talked about it—empty rhetoric, as the Leader of the Opposition says, when he's talking about the throne speeches. There were—those throne speeches had a lot of empty rhetoric.

Our Throne Speech has vision. Our Throne Speech is going to help every Manitoban in every corner of this province. Our Throne Speech is also—I'm very proud now to be the Minister of Housing and Community Development, because you probably heard the reference to the fact that we're going to build more social housing. And, as I said, I went through those throne speeches—no reference to social housing—nothing. No social housing built by members opposite. No improvements made to those social housing units.

* (16:10)

So you look at what we've done, we had a commitment that we've almost achieved already in terms of 1,500 more affordable housing units—1,322 are already completed or committed as of February of 2013; renovating existing social housing stock to the benefit of more than 26,500 households; assisting in renovations to 1,747 private households; providing up to \$2,520 per year to eligible low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities. I mean, the list goes on and on in terms of what we are doing for social housing, just like the list goes on and

on in terms of what we've done for education, just like our list goes on and on in terms of what we're doing for health care, just like our list goes on and on and on and on and on and on for many, many kilometres in terms of what we're doing for infrastructure, and our list goes on and on—thank you, Brandon West member for what we're doing in super-infrastructure.

So I couldn't be more proud to be part of a government that has a vision for the province. I couldn't be more proud to be part of team that says if there's a problem, we're going to tackle it. We're going to do something about it. We'll be held accountable for it. I couldn't be more proud to be part of a team that stands up for Manitobans from every corner of this province and I couldn't be proud of a more team—more proud of a team than I was this summer when we went through the exercise in Bill 18. Because we are a party that believes in every person in this province having a safe and secure place to go to school and we are a party that's going to continue to work on behalf of every single person in this province to make Manitoba a better place, and though I'd love to use my last eight minutes, I know that there are many who would like to speak to this vision that we have for the province of Manitoba. And I look forward to hearing some more gems from the members opposite that we'll be able to use in the doorstep and I look forward to hearing more facts from my colleagues as we present on this Throne Speech.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): It's great to be back in this Chamber and I welcome all my colleagues from both sides of the House. It's an honour to work with everybody here, so I welcome you all back. Also, the Chamber staff, without the Chamber staff we probably wouldn't be able to function very well in this House. And for all the new pages, I welcome you here and hope this experience is one that you will remember for the rest of your life.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It is once again an honour to be here representing the constituency of La Verendrye. I may be a bit biased about La Verendrye, but I feel La Verendrye's probably one of the nicest and finest places to live in this fine province of Manitoba. La Verendrye is a very large and diverse riding. All freight travelling by road or by rail, whether it's going east or west travels through La Verendrye. La Verendrye is also home to a number of pipelines,

hydro lines for export and also even a number of hydro-generating stations. La Verendrye also plays a key role in being a playground for Manitobans: the Whiteshell, Lake of the Woods and other facilities that make Manitobans happy to be Manitobans.

Manitoba is all about the people in it. I've talked about La Verendrye, and now it's time to move on to the Throne Speech that this government has presented. The Speech from the Throne was the longest one I've had the honour to listen to. I was always under the impression that a Throne Speech was to outline what the government was going to do over the next year. This year's Throne Speech sounded more like a Christmas wish list than a Throne Speech. There's a pile of things in there, and everything in there is great for Manitobans as long as it gets done. This Throne Speech contains a number of projects and programs that are important to Manitobans, but with this government's track record, how can Manitobans believe a word this government tells us? How much of this speech is just fluff? This is a government who in the election of 2011 went door to door and promised no tax increase. Read my lips: no new taxes. The ink was barely dry on these promises when the NDP started to break them. This NDP government brought in some of the highest taxes since the Pawley government.

Mr. Speaker, it's a very interesting thing to be a part of this House, but we all have to be honourable here and it's very tough to stand here and listen to people who are not being proper with the truth.

In Budget 2012, they expanded the PST—the items that were charged PST. They added PST to home insurance, haircuts and many other items that are essential to Manitobans. More Manitobans are without house insurance now than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, we listen to the news and we hear about fundraisers for families because they've lost everything in their home because they couldn't afford house insurance. This is the result of people getting some of the largest tax increases in decades forced on them, to their essential needs. These taxes were not necessary.

In Budget 2013, the NDP raised the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. That's a 14 per cent increase. They broke the law by doing this, even against the advice of their own staff. The director of taxation advised them against this. Why did this NDP government not call a referendum? How can Manitobans believe a single word that this government tells them?

One of the things that in this Throne Speech, there's a lot of mention of public consultation and public input into whatever this government does. Unfortunately, we know that does not work with this government—no public input. They may call meetings, but they never listen to what Manitobans have to say. This government has called Manitobans howling coyotes. They disrespect their right to vote. They take a my-way-or-the-highway approach, which is odd when they can't even get highway projects done in this project. We're still looking at projects from 2008, 2005, that have never been done.

I mean, did this NDP government get input from the municipalities before they told them that they had to amalgamate? No, they didn't get consultation from the municipalities. Did this NDP government listen to all the people that presented at Bill 20 about the tax increases? No, definitely not; they did not listen. This NDP government does not listen to Manitobans. This NDP government is more like a top-down dictatorship than a government. The NDP does not listen to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that has come up time and time again when I visit with constituents or travel across this province, is people are very upset at what this province's debt is and the government's inability to balance the budget. In this Throne Speech, there's no mention of fiscal management, no mention on plans for this government's debts, only a plan to borrow more money and increase the debt.

We all know the youth of this province are our future, but yet this NDP government is willing to saddle our youth with extremely high debt. Manitoba has an extremely high percentage of youth, one of the highest in Canada—26 per cent of Manitobans are 19 years of age and under. If our youth had to pay off Manitoba's debt today, it would cost each one of them close to a hundred thousand dollars to do this. We're having a hard time keeping our youth in this province with this government's high-tax policy. The NDP government does not care about our youth.

Mr. Speaker, we've been living the last number of years with low interest rates, record high federal government transfer payments and a reasonable economy. Even with global recession, Manitoba seems to be holding our own, but our debt keeps increasing. You would think that with all those good things, things going right, why is our debt increasing?

* (16:20)

Can you imagine if interest rates were to go up by two or three points? In order to service the debt, this government—a 1 per cent tax increase would really do nothing. It would have to increase the taxes all over the place. This would kill more small businesses. This would put more people on unemployment insurance, more people unemployed. If this were to happen, the NDP government would have to build a fence around Manitoba to keep Manitobans in here. I mean they'll be—if that happens, they'll be leaving for Alberta and Saskatchewan, where their debt load is nowhere near what it is in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is Canada's child poverty capital. Twenty per cent of Manitoban youth live in poverty. This is 6.4 per cent higher than the national average. Manitoba has been near the top for quite some time. Five thousand more children live in poverty in Manitoba than did in 2005; 62 per cent of Manitobans' First Nation children live in poverty. Manitoba leads the country in food bank usage and nearly half of those are children. This is not a record to be proud of. We need to look after our youth a lot better than we are. Experts agree that getting more income into the hands of low-income Manitobans directly helps our youth.

Mr. Speaker, raising the basic personal exemption would be a good start. At the very least, bring Manitobans up to the national average or to that of Saskatchewan, Alberta, the provinces that are taking our youth. They're going there because they can make more money in those other provinces than they can here. Bring the EIA rental allowance to 75 per cent, the median market rate, to help low-income earners put more food on the table. This, in turn, will help our youth.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech tries to justify the need for a tax increase. This government failed miserably when Bill 20 was introduced. They tried using floodproofing the province. That was supposed to be the all answer. Well, that didn't wash with the constituents. They tried infrastructure. They tried schools and hospitals, but this didn't fool Manitobans. Now with the Throne Speech, they're trying to justify it again by promising the world, like—now, I guess being close to Christmas, they're using the Christmas wish list approach, but everyone including Santa knows that NDP are getting lumps of coal in their stockings because for all the untruth that they've told Manitobans over the last two years, they deserve a lump of coal in their stocking.

Mr. Speaker, this speech is full of projects and programs. With the NDP's record, this would be a 20-year list to get it all done. If you look carefully at it, how many of these programs and projects have been announced before. I mean, are we going to announce and reannounce and reannounce them again before we do them? It's my understanding the Selkirk hospital has been announced nine times. I mean, is that something to be proud of? Announcing a project nine times, is that true? I mean, it'd be interesting to find that out.

Does this government need new money to do old projects? I mean, there's all kinds of projects in there. We talk about the Shellmouth Dam. We talk about a number of projects. How are we going to pay for them when they were announced? Like, if they were supposed to be built five years ago, where was the money then? Now we need to raise the taxes to pay for these five- and 10-year-old programs? That makes absolutely no sense to me.

With all these things that they are promising, does the government even have the engineering staff? We talked about some major projects with roadwork. Does the government have enough staff to do the engineering? From my understanding, we've asked for lists that are ready to go, ready to be built, but the government can't provide any of these lists because nothing has been engineered, and that takes a few years. So I can't understand what all the excitement is that we need this money today, when they have absolutely nothing ready to go.

This NDP government needs to be realistic on what they can and can't do. They should quit trying to fool Manitobans. Again, this government is full of promises, but will they deliver? And, again, this speaks to their credibility because the more promises they make, the less they accomplish, the more Manitobans know that their credibility is lacking. What this government needs to do is pick a couple programs and projects that they can get done, get them ready, get them engineered, then present them to the people and say, this is what we're going to do this year. It's—I mean, the Throne Speech happens every year, so let's look at what we can do in a year, not what we want to do in the next 20 years.

I mean, one such project is the Gardenton Floodway. The Gardenton Floodway I know a little bit about because it's in my home community. This project has been on the radar since 1976. It's been advised back in '76, yet that work needed to be done on it. The floodway—this Gardenton Floodway was

built in the early 1900s with technology and equipment from the early 1900s. It was built with scrapers and horses and men handling the scrapers. And over the years it has served very well. But the years have taken their toll; there's not much left of the garden floodway in some places and it is in bad need of repairs.

I mean, during the floods of 1997, 2002, 2011, over 1 and a half million dollars was spent on shoring up the floodway. We were hauling sandbags with airboats and helicopters to keep the water from going over the dike. Talk about costly, that alone was over \$600,000 that year.

In October of 2012, I received a letter from MIT acknowledging the fact that at least eight kilometres of the Gardenton Floodway were in terrible condition and needed to be replaced. That was great news, but that's as far as it went. The government knows they need to do it. They talk about all the flood infrastructure, and what's happening?

In Budget 2013, when this government first started talking about the PST and the need for it, flooding prevention was No. 1 on their list; they wanted to do something, you know, to help the province be flood-proofed. They talked about several areas of the province, but not once was it ever mentioned about the Gardenton Floodway. The Gardenton Floodway, anytime, if there's another major flood, it could break; it could put two feet of water into the community of Vita. You know, the hospital, the school, the old folks' home—all this stuff would be under—within two feet of—would have two feet of water in it. So we know that it's an important project.

But how serious is this government about flood protection? Is it really important or is it just really, really important? Like, what's—what it—like, where are—where is the government with this?

The government, if they were really interested in flood protection, they've had a whole year. This past winter, last winter, was a great time to work; it's lower land, it was dry. And this coming winter it looks like it's going to be the same type of weather where it's—the soil is dry. You can get in there with equipment and you could do the job and you could do it properly, at an extremely lower cost, because when stuff is wet you just can't work with it. But yet I hear nothing about—from the government, yes, we're going to do this project, we have a plan ready to go. Where is it? There's no plan. I guess they're

looking for some photo ops when the Gardenton Floodway goes over and floods.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech references talking to Manitobans and getting their option. This government talks about front-line services a lot. Where were these meetings and where was this consultation when 24 Hydro—district Hydro offices are scheduled to be closed? Where was the minister when this is happening? What about front-line services for the people of rural Manitoba? Hydro workers will be forced to move into the centres. They will be, you know, have to move to where it is. Today, when there is a hydro problem, if there's somebody in the area, it—sometimes it takes as little as 15 minutes for the Hydro worker to go flip a breaker or switch and power's back on.

But, when the Hydro workers are forced to move to the larger service centres, it could be hours before hydro gets turned back on. And I can give you an example of this: a good—like, the community of Vita, and for whoever understands hydro, hydro is fed from a different—number of different directions to different communities. So Vita's hydro is supplied from either Dominion City or from Piney, depends on where the switch is turned on from. Dominion City is 30 miles away; Piney is 30 miles away. Should something happen to the line west of Vita, somebody hits a hydro pole, knocks hydro out, well, now we have a hospital out of power, a school out of power, a number of—and the community is out of power in other communities. Now, somebody will have to drive from Steinbach, all the way to Piney, to flick the switch, which, if there was a Hydro man in Piney, that would just take a matter of minutes. Now, it's going to take hours.

How can we say that we're going to service our rural communities better? Where is our front-line staff? I mean, you talk about saving some money, move the bipole line from west side to the east side. That'll save a billion dollars, not a few dollars. This is one example from my constituency but there's several others, right across the province. I mean, when Hydro does this, they will close the community offices, relocate the staff, at which point they'll have to pay for relocation, and the front-line workers won't be available to do what they should be doing. It's going to take not an hour to get hydro back on, it could take two and three hours to get hydro back on. And also talk about overtime. How much more overtime is it going to cost, for these workers when

they're only—when they're driving two and three hours of driving? They only have a couple of hours left to do their work, so there's going to be a lot more overtime.

Not only that, how about the excess fuel these trucks are going to be consuming by doing all this extra mileage? Whereabouts is this province's green plan? I hear a lot from opposite: oh, we want to be green, we want to be green, but what they're doing is they're not even looking at being green because it's going to cost how many more dollars, how many more litres of fuel are going to be consumed by what this plan is doing?

It's—there was a very interesting article written in the Brandon Sun. It was written by a former Hydro customer service operation manager, Mr. Bob Graham. And in there—I would recommend that everybody across read that article because it talks about customer service, it costs about—the ability for—that Hydro won't save any money on this because in the end, it's going to cost them more. It's something that—I will table this eventually. I'll give it to—some of you guys can read it, but that's something that makes common sense.

Common sense is something that we seem to be lacking in this government, to do things that are there. I mean, it was Hydro's own word, it was government's own word that Hydro's important to these small communities, the people working there. Now, they want to close it all down.

Another great promise of this government, the ER closure at the Vita hospital. The ER has been closed for 13 months, over a year. When it was closed in October, early October of last year, the minister said, oh, just going to be a matter of weeks and everything will be run—running up smooth again. We'll get doctors and we're going to be running. Well, where's our ER? Talk about, again, front-line service for people, it's not there. The minister says that, oh, the hospital's not closed; the hospital's open. But yet at each entrance to our town, we have big signs with a big H on it. What do they have over those signs now? We have green garbage bags because the hospital, according to the government, is closed. They put sign—covered the signs up so you can't—there's no hospital there. Does that make sense if the hospital is not closed? Some more broken promises from this government.

And, Mr. Speaker, this speech is full of promises, and I think the people of Manitoba are tired to listening to promises that will never come to

be true. The government is famous for, well, we'll give you this, we'll give you this, we'll give you this, we'll do this. But half the things that they promise don't seem to ever come. And the Manitoban people are tired. They don't want to listen to what this government has to say. They want some honest answers, and they want things to happen, which is something that this government does not seem to be producing.

This Throne Speech, to me, was full of fluff, and the NDP government needs to do a lot more than produce speeches like this. They need to show the people that they're willing to do something, not just talk. A good example was we talked about our gas tax that was brought in the last budget—2 and a half cents a litre. That money didn't go to fix up our roads. Where did it go?

Well, I know that there's a lot of people who have been chirping away there, are looking to come back and have something to say, so I thank Mr. Speaker for the time.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to be able to put some words on the record on the Throne Speech. I don't know if you know, but I've spent an incredible amount of time travelling our incredible province, listening, talking, sharing with Manitobans. I did that through healthier and safer community consultation, crime prevention consultations. I've been spending a lot of time talking about and listening to people on their ideas on the early years, starting early, starting strong, public dialogue and how we can support families.

You know, and what I hear over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker, is people want us to work together. They want us to work with the City of Winnipeg. They want us to work with municipalities. They want us to work with parents and grandparents. They want us to work with teachers and law enforcement. They want us to work with young people. And that's exactly what the Throne Speech is all about, is our ability to work with one another.

I know members opposite are great at highlighting hardship and struggle, but very few ideas on the incredible potential our province has, the incredible possibility our province has, the incredible talent that we have in our neighbourhoods, in our families, in our communities, and I got to say I think it's important that we spend some time talking about not just our investments, but this incredible

opportunity and potential that we have in the province of Manitoba.

I hear from parents and grandparents and other caregivers who are incredibly proud of this province and who are incredibly grateful, and they say, look, you know, we want our children to work here, raise their families here, and be here, and that's what the Throne Speech is about—giving young people opportunities, creating employment, access to post-secondary learning, so their families, their grandchildren are here living and working in the province. I hear lots about building healthier and safer communities, Mr. Speaker, and that's what I did. It's one of the first things I did is on public consultations.

So the Throne Speech was very clear. It's a 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar commitment over five years in core infrastructure, and all these that grow the economy and create jobs and gets those young people working and raising their families here. You know, in my new responsibilities as the minister responsible for the City of Winnipeg, I know that our contribution is not only broad with the contributions we give and generous, but, as we look across the country where we're seeing less support to municipalities and to cities from provincial governments, ours has continued to increase, in fact, increased to 12 and a half per cent, \$22 million in capital projects alone, Mr. Speaker, close to \$200 million in capital projects; close to 300 in capital and operating. You know this leads to things like 47 streets being redone, Polo Park redevelopment, where we see hubs of activities, families. You see all the wonderful things going on in the Polo Park area. You know, people have asked for improved water and sewer. Well, we're investing in water and sewer upgrades. You know, investing in those essential services that people depend on—police, fire, paramedics, all of those kinds of things working in partnership.

*(16:40)

Now, we also deeply believe in investing in places where young people and families have places, safe places, to play and participate in the province. And that's why when I was travelling the province I could see recreation facilities, community centres being invested in, whether I was in Morden or down in Dauphin or right down here in the inner city at our new field house, you know, recreation facilities where young people can go and develop those skills and talents, where families can go to build the sense

of belonging in their own neighbourhoods, where people can go, our seniors go to have great places to have healthy lifestyles and activities and continue to build relationships. And so we continue to build on, not only on those core infrastructures, but we continue to build families. We continue to build the talents of young people in the province of Manitoba.

Now, there's some things we've done in the past when it comes to this idea of build. You know, the member from Thompson does a great job of talking about all the infrastructure, all of our investments, what we're doing on our highways. *[interjection]* Yes, he says you can smell it, you know, you can see it. Those—you can even taste it. Now, I'm from Winnipeg. The member from Thompson says you can even taste the investments, Mr. Speaker.

But, you know, we have seen something like the MTS Centre being built, you know, and I was talking to my good friend Mark Chipman, and what Mark Chipman said to me, is that he can go anywhere in North America. He can go to any game anywhere in the NHL, and what he says is that the loudest arena in the NHL is right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba. You know, what does that say? That says there's an excitement. That says there's enthusiasm. That says people says this is a great place to live, this is a great place to raise a family. And, once again, we built that with Manitobans. We built through the leadership of Mark Chipman. But we built it. Make no mistake about it, we built it together.

My son is three years old, and we get to go to the Children's Museum. And so we get to go there. It's a great place, you know. Children deserve—you know, you got to give children the opportunity to play and develop relationships. And we would go to the Children's Museum, and he gets to go, and I get to do that with all the other families. It's wonderful.

And I think we should all be proud of the Manitoba Museum. I think most of us that went to school here got to go to the Manitoba Museum. And not only has it enriched the curriculum, taught us about the history, but it was a great place and continues to be a great place for families to go. But, on top of that, now we're saying the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the first museum built in—a national museum outside of the nation's capital, right here, you know, Mr. Speaker.

And so we continue to invest. And I want to say something about the Museum for Human Rights,

because not only do we—do I believe it's going to be a great place for learning and for people to come and go, but I think young people and families are going to emotionally connect to human rights. And I got to see that. I got to go up with a group of young people to Washington, and many of them were touched by what they saw at the holocaust museum. Not only did they learn, but they were emotionally touched; it had a profound impact on them. And I think when people come from all over the country, come all over the world to visit the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, they are not only going to learn, but they are going to be emotionally touched by that—by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Once again, we built that together, Mr. Speaker. We invested in that. We built that together.

And today I got to say: Very proud. One of my first official announcements was on rapid transit. Great announcement today. People have said, look, we want you to work together. We want you to get things done. And that's what the announcement was today. We were with the mayor. We were with our partners, and we went with the idea of a shared co-operation to get things done. People said, get moving on rapid transit, and that's what we're doing. It's a—*[interjection]* How many jobs? Great question. Up to 4,000 jobs being created with that transformative, progressive, and a state-of-the-art transit. And the reason that we're building it, one of the reasons—there's many, but one of the reasons is the unprecedented growth that we see here in our city. By 2030, they're expecting to have over a million people living in our city. Once again, we're building rapid transit, but we're also building on the enthusiasm and the excitement that we see in the spirit of our people.

Also, it's an integrative project. So there's a lot of practicality to this project. Not only is it a corridor to the University of Manitoba, but it's also going to help with traffic backup at the Pembina underpass at Jubilee by adding a lane. It's going to make traffic move more smoother, faster and more efficient. It reduces the construction. Because we're combining this together, it reduces construction by two years, and it promotes and encourages active transportation with the emphasis on safety, resources going in for water and sewer drainage and, like it's been said, up to 4,000 jobs.

Now, once again, Mr. Speaker, things that we are building, rapid transit—now here's what's interesting. As we move forward and we build

these things and we build on this excitement and enthusiasm, we know what members opposite are going to do, what they always do, they're going to oppose it and they're going to oppose it and they're going to oppose it. Now that won't be good enough. What they'll do then is they'll vote against it and they'll vote against it and vote against it. But, make no mistake about it, what we know, after these things are built, they never forget to show up to celebrate it with us. They never forget to go and celebrate these accomplishments, these things that we do with Manitobans. They oppose, they vote against, but they're there to celebrate with us. And that's okay, because we're building this together with Manitoba families.

Mr. Speaker, talking to so many parents, grandparents and having this opportunity the last number of months to travel the province and listen to what people have to say as part of our starting early, starting strong public dialogue, I got to say is I was always inspired and touched by people's willingness to share some of the struggles that they faced, to share some of their hardships, but to always give us the reasons of how they're over to—come it. And they talked about our investments. They talk about our partnerships, and they talk about how we need to move forward together.

When we look at the kinds of things that we're doing to support some of our most vulnerable families, the Prenatal Benefit giving low-income moms the opportunity to get proper nutrition for themselves and their babies, the National Child Benefit, which members opposite clawed back, we reinstated, of course, once again putting money into the pockets of families, and the Manitoba Child Benefit. Mr. Speaker, these things are giving resources back to the families who need it the most. But that's not the only thing that people we talked to said; they said there's a lot of services and resources that are in our communities. But co-ordination of these services are important, and when we invest in things like our parent-child coalitions, they make a huge difference.

And the member from Lac du Bonnet and the member from La Verendrye, one of the first things where I sat with them is at one of the parent-child coalitions, and they heard first-hand some of the latest research and science and data that's coming out in Manitoba. And they also heard—and they know this—they also heard some of the incredible things that are being accomplished through the parent-child

coalitions in their very own riding. They heard that directly from their constituents. They heard that from moms and dads. They heard that from grandparents. They heard that from school trustees. They heard that from business owners. And we sat together and we debated together and we learned together, and that's what parent-child coalitions are supposed to do: continue to invest to support families, to support our communities, to support our neighbourhoods, Mr. Speaker.

We also continue to invest in family resource centres, and I think this is also very important—is investing in the research and the data and evaluation; some of it we do ourselves and we also do it in partnership with independent people who do research so that when we're sitting in the House we can have good debate. You know, members opposite have good research that they can reference. They don't often do it. They—I don't know what they actually use to—*[interjection]* Yes, they look back. I'm not sure. But there is current research out there that—in which we could debate. But, you know, it's these kinds of investments that bring people together, and we have seen some incredible people come to the table.

We have seen the leadership of people like Dave Angus who represents the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, who's standing with us in our—on our approach there earlier—to supporting some of our most vulnerable families. In fact, Dave went so far as to make sure some of these families got to go on BOLD Radio on CJOB to tell their stories. We've been able to draw in national attention on these investments and how we're making a difference with families. And we're seeing people like the McConnell foundation who can invest anywhere in the country but are looking to invest here and said there's a golden moment here in Manitoba to make those kinds of investments. We're seeing people and the leadership of people like Jim Carr working with us on this, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:50)

Now, I got to say that we continue to invest. We continue to work with communities. In one budget—when members opposite were in government, in one budget, 56 organizations cut in one budget. In that budget not only did they cut 56 organizations in that budget and basically wiped out all the friendship centres in Manitoba, but in that one budget those cuts to those organizations hurt the most vulnerable families. That was their approach, let's cut these,

let's—and then not only did they cut them, but they had a tag line that they created, that they went around the province and they told people, here's what they said, anyone who asks about what these cuts to the most vulnerable children and families they said, sorry, everybody has to share the pain. That was their tag line in that budget. Fifty-six organizations cut, wiping out friendship centres, family resource centres, YMCAs being closed.

And we have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, now we bring up what they did when they were in government. We have a responsibility to remind people what they did, and that's why we have to make sure that we not only talk about the successes that we're having with Manitobans, but remind people the kinds of approaches and the policies that members had when they were in government because they cut 56 in one budget and wiped out like our friendship centres.

Now I heard the member from La Verendrye talking about, you know there's nothing new, you know there doesn't seem to be anything new, so I got new stuff I want to talk to him about, of course. We just announced and we believe deeply in investing in classrooms, so our students and our families are getting A-1 education, but we also believe that learning happens outside of the classroom as well: lunch hours, before school, after school, weekends, summer.

So we continue to make investments for young people to build on their talents, on their skills. Whether they come from Winnipeg or from the North, we deeply believe that all young people have an opportunity and deserve the opportunity to feel generous and make a contribution in their communities, Mr. Speaker. And so we're very proud to partner with the Winnipeg Jets foundation and our After School Leaders program and to bring in at the same time, to bring in Right to Play, where we have our very own Clara Hughes as an athlete ambassador.

Now what is After School Leaders doing? As we have expanded it, it is exposing young people to jobs, to jobs that they may have never thought of got. In fact, we're pushing on close to 20 young people; 20 young people as part of that program will have jobs with True North Sports and Entertainment. They'll get to go there; they've been able to learn first-hand to see the kinds of different jobs that are available to them. And now what we're seeing is

True North Sports and Entertainment hire these young people, giving them and exposing them to jobs that they never thought of before, Mr. Speaker.

Right to Play, we got to work with Chief Crate, Fisher River, Chief Boucher in Pine Creek, and bring in some of the most incredible athletes and ambassadors.

We have programs like Bright Futures Program that not only extends a school day to provide academic support after school, but to start getting young people to think about the different careers that they can have, Mr. Speaker.

So exposing them to the kind of jobs, building a sense of belonging for them inside the classroom, outside of the classroom, making sure that they start to recognize that post-secondary is for them in the province of Manitoba—one of the most affordable in the nation by the way, Mr. Speaker—and having people like Mark Chipman stand with us on these kinds of programs, well, that's new, and these are the kind of programs where we're not telling young people they have these opportunities, over and over and over again we're showing them that these opportunities exist in partnership with families, and partnerships with the private sector, and partnerships with community stakeholders.

Now we also believe that it's really important that, if a young person gets their first job here in the—our province that that first job leads to them thinking about the kind of career they have. Often we see, over and over again, they get their first job here, they start to think about a career here, they establish a career here and they raise their families here. And that's why we have—we've continued to invest in, as an example I just want to use this one program as an example, our Green Team Program where we have close to four, five hundred organizations that we're partnering with, Mr. Speaker, touching close to 1,000 young people every summer for summer employment all throughout the province in—and smaller communities, in smaller rural areas and municipalities, here in the city.

We're continuing to invest in jobs that young people can do with sports, with recreation, with cultural activities, Mr. Speaker, and every summer from our direct investments alone over 60,000 young people get to stay busy every summer in enrichment, summer enrichment programs, mentorship programs, summer employment opportunities. So we continue

to not only invest, but we continue to establish and build partnerships with families all throughout the province, and neighbourhoods all throughout the province and with the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, I was able, very proud to do an announcement with the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and as part of our Brighter Futures and Dr. Hildahl, exposing young people to jobs in the area of health. And these are young people who typically wouldn't think of jobs in health. And we got to hear some incredible stories. We partner with the alliance sector councils of Manitoba. That program in itself touches 4,000 young people in mentorship opportunities and touches over 500 employers.

We want to make sure that all young people know that post-secondary is for them, that there's meaningful ways in which to give them a tap on the shoulder to say post-secondary is for you. That's why we continue to invest and partner around bursaries. We continue to invest and partner around scholarship opportunities. We make sure that we're innovative in our approach, in how we do that, in how we reach our families. But young people know, and their families know, that post-secondary is for them.

As I said, I got to travel the province of Manitoba as one of the first things I did and talk about how we build safer and healthier communities. And I want to thank members of law enforcement who did that with me. You know, members of law 'enforcent' often are seen as to use ways to suppress crime in our neighbourhood. So, you know, they arrest and they charge and they use the law to make sure that the most violent people are put away. But, with law enforcement, they are deeply, deeply committed to prevention. And so, when I was travelling, when I was outside of the city, often the RCMP were with me travelling to hear first-hand what families and what individuals had to say about healthier communities and safer communities. And, when I was in the city, members of the Winnipeg city police came and participated in that with me.

And, you know, when I was growing up in Winnipeg's North End, we had a North End Y that was there, and me and my friends, you know, we—you didn't have a lot of money, most of us were pretty poor growing up, but we could always count on the YMCA being open. And at that time, KFC used to give out free basketballs if you bought a bucket of chicken, so we used to get a free rubber basketball, and the YMCA'd be open, and we could

go and play basketball and develop our skills and get a sense of belonging there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, in the 1990s—I know members opposite don't like to talk about that—but that was—those programs, those doors were shut. They were closed. So where could young people go? So, the exact same place, on the same corner, on Mountain Avenue and McGregor, if you go there now, what's going on there now? Once again, a new facility, brand new facility built, in partnership with the private sector, called—it's called the Wyn Gardner centre, right? So that was a building that we used to go to that had to close its doors. Now it's a brand new building in partnership with different levels of government, the private sector and community organizations. Now, what goes on there? There is—the YMCA is in there, thriving, thousands of kids going in every month, thousands of kids using it.

The first QuickCare clinic opened up in that same facility; health centre is in there. Our seniors and our elders participate in there, so they can come and not only have a sense of belonging, but they can actually continue to do a lot of social activities. They get to use it as a place where they can walk and have healthy activities. So not only do you get young people using it, but you got our seniors, which has a huge intergenerational impact. And it's a facility that is thriving in an area that is—that deeply needs it, Mr. Speaker.

Now, huge contrast to what happened there in the 1990s. That's what investment does. It has engaged a community, and everyone knows services and resources work best when a community's engaged, when people are going there for their health services, when their grandparents are using it for healthy living activities, when young people can go there and play and participate in a very safe way. That's when our services work best. That's why we continue to build in terms of our core infrastructure, which leads to building healthier families, healthier children, healthier neighbourhoods. We're going to do it person by person, family by family, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, community by community, Mr. Speaker. That is what's represented in the Speech from the Throne. That's what we continue to invest in year after year. And we're not going to stop that. Once again, huge contrast from members opposite.

I was very proud to do an announcement with our Premier (Mr. Selinger), our Block by Block initiative that takes into how we can reduce violent

crime in areas that struggle with this. We had the mayor of Winnipeg there; we had our Premier there; we had the chief of police there. And, by the way, the chief of police said that was his proudest day on the job, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief) will have six minutes remaining.

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

CORRIGENDUM

On November 18, 2013, page 124, first column, fifth paragraph should have read:

So this money being spent on infrastructure will move us forward, create good jobs in Manitoba for young people, strengthen our economy. It will benefit the private sector who ship the majority of their goods down Highway 75 into the United States market, and the member opposite will notice that was our first major announcement. We spent \$125 million on Highway 75. We—now we've committed to another \$215 million on Highway 75.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 19, 2013

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