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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	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	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	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
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Thomas, Hon.	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	NDP
ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
SARAN, Mohinder, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	St. Paul	PC
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	NDP
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: On a matter of privilege.

Mr. Helwer: With a matter of privilege, it is important that the matter be raised at the earliest possible opportunity and that the matter represents a prima facie case of privilege.

The matter I'm concerned about arises from statements made by the MLA for Brandon East on Tuesday, November 18th, during my reply to the Speech from the Throne, when he said in this Legislature that I was a fascist.

I'd made reference to this fact yesterday afternoon, and it appears on page 45 of the Hansard published by this Chamber on November 17th of this year.

I submit that this is the earliest opportunity I could bring this matter to your attention, having had a chance to review Hansard earlier this morning.

I would further submit that this matter represents a prima facie case of privilege based on the following considerations: According to the second edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, the proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order, and any member who feels aggrieved by a

remark or allegation may also bring the matter to the attention of the Speaker.

I would reference a May 29th, 1996, Speaker's ruling where Speaker Dacquay advised, in finding language that I won't repeat in this House to be unparliamentary, that language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken and a word which causes disorder can be ruled unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the word fascist is anything but temperate and is indeed unparliamentary and now unworthy of the respect this House should be afforded.

Mr. Speaker, the member who uttered this word and called me a fascist has been elected several times to this House and accorded the respect of an elected member. Words that he speaks, people pay attention to.

And he is also a member of the Crown. Even more important, Mr. Speaker, when members of the Crown speak, people pay even more attention to the words that they use.

The word fascist conveys anger, many emotions, hatred. It is a filled-word filled with emotion, and I have many friends in the Jewish community, and I now have to answer to them when someone has called me a fascist.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Brandon last night and this morning, and it is the topic of conversation amongst friends, supporters, people that I meet on the street, opponents. They're talking about this. That has an impact on my integrity and my reputation and how people view me of the member—as a member of this Legislature. It impacts on how I do my job. Do they call into question now what my integrity is, what my intentions are? Those are the questions that are out there now.

It also appeared on Twitter, so it's gone to a much broader audience, and people have commented on it. I can't say enough about how this horrible word uttered by the member from Brandon East has had an effect on my reputation as a member of this Legislature. I have worked very hard on my reputation, Mr. Speaker. It is

something that is near and dear to me and to my family. I have heard words such as this in the playground because Helwer is a German name. Our own premier—or Prime Minister Diefenbaker was often slurred because of his German name and background. Now, my great-grandparents came from Germany after the First World War. They were immigrants to Canada, finding a better life, and as many, I'm sure—the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) styles himself as a historian; I'm sure he knows that those immigrants came as agrarians. They came here to farm; they came to find a better life for their families. Fascism was not a part of their world at that time. This was just after the first Great War, Mr. Speaker.

So I was raised to be tolerant of all communities, and especially when we see what has happened in Paris most recently we need to be even more tolerant, Mr. Speaker. We need to be aware of what might be discriminatory language. We need to be aware of labelling and cautious of labelling people because now we have much unrest in the world, and we have people calling us daily. I had some yesterday calling to talk about the Syrians that may be coming to Canada because of the fear of how those people may be perceived.

So in this language, Mr. Speaker, I was indeed labelled by the member for Brandon East, a member of the Crown, an officer of the Crown, and indeed was quite dismayed upon my visit to Brandon last night and this morning that it was such a topic of conversation. I don't know how this is going to go, how far it's going to go in any forum. I can't stop it. It was started by the member for Brandon East, to my dismay. It took me aback when I was speaking. I halted for a moment to—was I sure about what he said—and continued on with my speech. I consulted with my colleagues following that to see if they had heard the same thing and, indeed, they had.

Now, the member from Brandon East, his comments do not appear in Hansard. My comments reacting to them do. I know this is a question that you will review, Mr. Speaker, and you are the first Speaker I have had the privilege to serve under, and I have great faith in your judgments and how you approach matters of this type. You have ruled very well from what I have seen, very consistently, and with compassion. So it is in that regard that I submit this matter of privilege to you, Sir, and for your judgment.

It is a sad state that I have had to rise in this House to speak about this. I thought about it long and hard on the drive back to Winnipeg, whether I would bring this up to take the matter further, but it has gone further without this happening, Mr. Speaker, because of the word uttered by the member from Brandon East.

* (13:40)

So it is out of my hands at this point, and the people of Manitoba and other places are dealing with it, and I don't know how that I can work with things that have—the damage that's been done to my reputation, but there has, indeed, been damage done, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same matter of privilege.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): On the same matter directed towards all members, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the formal apparatus of the matter of privilege, I want to indicate that in the gallery are students that I've just met with and I've advised them that what we do in this Chamber is that we fight with words, and that's what we do. However, there are certain words, whether they're on the record or off the record, whether they're on the list or not on the list, that I think are frankly reprehensible, and clearly that word directed at a member is not appropriate.

And, Mr. Speaker, the particular member at this moment isn't in Chamber. I don't know if I can say that. *[interjection]* I can't say that. I will apologize on behalf of our side of the House for that and I'm sure on the occasion when the member has an opportunity from this side of the House, he will do the same.

Mr. Speaker: On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) this is a very serious matter. I understand what the honourable member is saying in his comments and I appreciate him raising this matter at the earliest, I hope the earliest, opportunity.

I'm going to review this matter. It might have been better after listening to the Government House Leader in this matter that if there was an apology that was to be provided to the House, it would come directly from a member that is alleged to have made the comments, and should there be an opportunity for that to occur perhaps at some point during this sitting day or perhaps before I

bring back a ruling to this House, because I'm going to take this matter under advisement and I'm going to review Hansard.

I also caution all honourable members with respect to the debate that occurs in this House. I have said many, many times in this House, this is our workplace. I want to have a respectful workplace. I understand there are strong feelings held by most members of this Assembly on a variety of matters, but we want to make sure that we conduct ourselves in a dignified way and that we act with respect toward each other and in the performance of our duties of this House.

And so I'm going to take this matter under advisement and I'm going to review Hansard and—to determine whether or not there are comments that are attributable to the honourable member that has been indicated here, and perhaps during that—before I bring back a ruling that we'll perhaps have the opportunity to have some resolution of this matter in the fashion that I've already indicated. And I'm hoping that that would be adequate and sufficient for the honourable member's concerns that he has raised here during this matter of privilege. So I'll take this matter under advisement and I'll bring back a ruling to the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to routine proceedings and we'll do introduction of bills.

Bill 3—The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 3, The Post-Secondary Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policies Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislative Assembly for first reading Bill 3, the post-secondary violence and sexual harassment policies act.

Mr. Speaker, we partner with students, we work with students and we listen to students. As

committed to in the 2015 Speech from the Throne, we will partner with students in our post-secondary institutions to make our campuses a safer place for everyone.

This bill builds on our efforts already under way at many Manitoba post-secondary institutions to proactively address the issue of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Through amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act and to institutional enabling statutes, this bill will require post-secondary institutions to develop and implement policies that prevent and respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that Manitoba students know that they are safe on our university and college campuses. This bill ensures that all institutions will have the policies in place to help foster a safe learning environment for every student.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mining Industry Sales Tax Rates

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Under the NDP, Manitobans are paying more and getting less. They're paying more in personal income tax, which is the highest in Canada west of Quebec, and in hydro rates that are projected to at least double over the next 20 years. Manitobans are paying more as well because of NDP untendered contracting that does not provide value for hard-earned tax dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the mining sector in Manitoba faces these same challenges and is declining under the NDP. Investment goes where it is wanted. Mining is struggling because of NDP policy that discourages investment and threatens competitiveness. According to economist Jack Mintz, Manitoba mining is the most heavily taxed of all provinces. Manitoba's mining tax regime is among the least efficient in Canada.

We are only one of three provinces that collect sales tax on mining implements and services. The other provinces that do so, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, offer lower tax rates and a number

of exemptions. From 2007 to 2013, sales tax accounted for more than \$134 million in Manitoba. Those are costs that Ontario companies do not incur.

Consistency and clarity for parks and protected spaces as well as a codified process in dealing with disputed land claims are other issues desperately in need of attention being ignored by the NDP. The Progressive Conservative vision seeks to create a flourishing mineral resource sector by addressing these issues while providing much needed support for the Manitoba Geological Survey and the promotion of Manitoba as a world leader in mining and exploration investment.

Manitoba's mining community is tired of the same old NDP broken promises and wants a change for the better. I am confident that on April 19th, 2016, that change will come.

Thanks.

Field & Forest Nursery School Program

Hon. Deanne Crothers (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): The concept of kindergarten, developed in the 19th century, literally meant the children's garden. A new preschool program being offered at Discovery Children's Centre in my constituency of St. James is incorporating that idea by taking some preschool-aged children out into the garden to receive part of their early child-care education.

Kim Crockett, an early childhood educator at the centre, has trained as a forest nature school practitioner. In September she implemented the Field & Forest Nursery School program at Discovery Children's Centre. This program focuses on learning in the outdoors, encouraging unstructured, self-directed outdoor play. It provides children the time and opportunity to follow their own instincts to explore and investigate what is of most interest to them in the outdoors and the natural world around them. The program includes not only time spent in their own adventure playground at the centre but also one day a week in the forest at Living Prairie Museum.

Kim has been working at Discovery centre since she was a teenager and has a degree in developmental studies and a diploma in early childhood education. She has been a huge asset to the centre's executive director, Ron Blatz, and his team. Her keen understanding of the benefits of this program, combined with her patience and

energy, makes her a wonderful guide to the children enrolled in the field and forestry nursery school. Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad to have her here as a guest joining us in the gallery today.

I'm thankful that we have educators like Kim who are finding innovative ways to help us keep our kids healthy. Kim's dedication and hard work has not gone unnoticed, and I know families in St. James have seen the difference her outdoor education makes for their kids.

Thank you to Kim and Discovery Children's Centre for contributing to the educational development of our preschool children, which not only helps them to be school ready but is ensuring that they remain connected to the natural world around them. The wonderful work that early childhood educators like Kim do in this province will have positive implications for years to come.

*(13:50)

2015 Throne Speech

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): On Monday afternoon, as the Throne Speech was read by the Lieutenant Governor, and that was the—for the Third Session of the 40th Legislature in this province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans weren't fooled.

Mr. Speaker, they saw a government, a tired, arrogant government that had all kinds of brand new, wonderful things on the agenda that they should have done over the last 16 years that they've been in government. It didn't sound like a Throne Speech from a government that had been in power for 16 years. They promised the world to absolutely everyone, with every indication that they should have been a brand new government with their first Throne Speech, not the 16th Throne Speech. And Manitobans weren't fooled because they have seen, time after time, a government that promises the world and doesn't deliver on those promises.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) promised before the last election campaign that he wouldn't raise taxes, that it was nonsense; he would not raise the PST. And we know full well that around their Treasury Board table, around their Cabinet table, they had discussed raising the PST not only to 8 per cent, but they had discussed raising it to 9 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, there was no mention in the Throne Speech on Monday afternoon that they are looking at raising the PST again after the next election. That's the hidden agenda that this government has because they can't continue to spend the way they're spending and not dig further into Manitobans' pockets for the spending addiction that this government has.

So, Mr. Speaker, don't let them think that they have fooled Manitobans, because they haven't. And Manitobans will let them know loudly and clearly next April—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time on the statement has elapsed.

Open Circle

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, Open Circle is a Mennonite Central Committee program that puts faith into practice by connecting volunteers with prison inmates who request a visitor.

I first became aware of Open Circle through my constituent, Dianne Cooper, who's in the gallery today. Like other volunteers, Dianne was inspired by the fact that many people who are incarcerated lose their social and family contacts.

Dianne's life demonstrates her incredible social conscience and commitment to social justice: She co-founded Project Peacemakers, travelled to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace to document war zone experiences and represented the United Church before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, to name just a few accomplishments.

Glenn Morison, who's also in the gallery today, is the director of Open Circle and a former Corrections chaplain. Open Circle volunteers work with an—without an agenda, providing companionship and non-judgmental support. This helps inmates restore trust and mend relationships, making communities safer for everyone by letting people in prison know there are other possibilities for them.

If nothing changes for inmates while they're in prison, nothing will change for them when they are released. Tamara Traverse is the daughter of residential school survivors and a former inmate. She can attest more than anyone to the value of this program. Dianne Cooper has been Tamara's—in Tamara's corner for over two years. Now Tamara

is working on her GED so she can become a licensed esthetician.

Thank you to Dianne, Glenn and to all the Open Circle volunteers for your compassionate efforts on behalf of inmates seeking to overcome adversity and start a new life.

Mr. Speaker: Further members' statements?

River Heights Community Forum— ER Wait Times

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the members of the River Heights community who gathered together on Thursday, November 12th, for a forum I hosted on emergency room waiting times.

Emergency rooms are very critical parts of our health-care system, and, as always, it was evident that the people of River Heights care about the services inside and all around our community. Not only was the room filled with residents, but everyone in attendance contributed to a very vibrant and thoughtful discussion to seek out possible solutions to improve the care and to decrease the wait times in emergency rooms.

Panellists and attendees shared personal experiences and some very valuable insight into some of the factors affecting the flow of patients and the paramount importance of the quality of care in an emergency room. We learned that because people care, concerns raised by a family can result in changes in the operations of an emergency room.

The attendees were very interested in the presentation of panellist Dr. Jitender Sareen as he discussed his research as co-principal investigator for the Mental Health Commission of Canada's research demonstration project in homelessness and mental health. There was a great deal of interest expressed among residents for the concept of providing housing first for those who are homeless due to mental illness as a successful external intervention to reduce demand on emergency rooms.

Community members were enlightened by Member of Parliament Dr. Doug Eyolfson's presentation describing ER delay causes like access to needed diagnostic tests and specialists for consultations.

Mr. Speaker, the engaging discussion from community members recognizing our aging and

increasing population and the lack of available personal-care-home spaces and home-care services, which influenced how an emergency department functions. One resident also observed that as our population has grown, the accessibility of hospitals, hospital beds and of personal-care homes has not grown.

It was a very productive and enlightening evening, and I thank the many residents of River Heights who came out to share their experiences, demonstrating once again how much they care.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And prior to oral questions I have a—quite a number of guests to introduce to the House.

First, starting in with the—our guests who are in the Speaker's Gallery, we have us the Premier of Nunavut, Peter Taptuna, and Teresa Hughes, the executive assistant to the Premier.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery today, we have with us Kim Crockett from the Discovery Children's Centre, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors (Ms. Crothers).

And also seated in the public gallery, from the Canadian Federation of Students, we have Michael Barkman, chair; Laura Garinger, women's commissioner; and Brianne Goertzen, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us, who have travelled a considerable distance to be with us today, the Maori Nation from their homeland of New Zealand. We have Katie Murray, Rima Witanga, and Nana Trebilcock [*phonetic*] and David Rawiri, who are the guests of the honourable minister of—and I'll get it in a moment here—the guests of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross).

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon. You've travelled a great distance.

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us today the Honourable Michelle Stilwell, minister of social development and social innovation in British Columbia, and the chief of staff to the minister, Valerie Richmond.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon as well.

And those folks are the guests of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have with us from Garden City Collegiate, we have 21 grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Paul Longtin, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources (Mr. Chomiak).

And also seated in the public gallery, we have from Garden City Collegiate, we have 20 grade 9 students under the direction of Meghan Rauch, and this group is also located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Mineral Resources.

On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here as well.

Welcome to all our guests here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Now it's time for oral questions.

City of Winnipeg Partnership Throne Speech Pledge

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans remember full well that this NDP government promised, on the eve of the last election, not to raise taxes, and they know full well that the NDP turned around and raised the PST.

Well, now the NDP is promising something else, \$1 billion to the City of Winnipeg by way of an enhanced and flexible partnership. Well, Mr. Speaker, would these be—[*interjection*] Yes, and Manitobans want to know what exactly enhanced and flexible means.

* (14:00)

Would these be enhanced ribbon cuttings just prior to the next election, Mr. Speaker, with the flexibility to stiff the City of Winnipeg with the bill just after the next election?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, I want to thank the member for Tuxedo for the question

because it allows us to highlight there's only one political party in this Legislature that's committed to creating good jobs through investments in infrastructure in Manitoba.

The billion dollars will allow us to address issues of sewer and water treatment so we can protect Lake Winnipeg. It will allow us to address issues of fixing up neighbourhoods where we need better streets. It will allow us to address issues of major thoroughfares in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, it could also be available for rail relocation in Manitoba. The City of Winnipeg is looking up to \$1 billion of underpasses and overpasses to deal with rail lines in Winnipeg. We will launch an initiative in partnership with the City of Winnipeg to look at how we can relocate rails outside of Winnipeg, have safer neighbourhoods, more land available for urban renewal.

And we'll partner with the City of Winnipeg and the good citizens of Winnipeg to ensure we have a safe community with economic growth and good jobs for the young people of Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, this story sounds all too familiar to the taxpayers of Manitoba: ribbon cuttings prior to the election and broken promises to follow.

Mr. Speaker, after 16 years of neglecting basic infrastructure in the city of Winnipeg, the NDP has miraculously found \$1 billion.

I ask the Premier: Where did he find the billion dollars?

Mr. Selinger: I just ask the member of Tuxedo to remember when they were in office, the skyline of the downtown was barren. There was no such thing as a building crane. It was an extinct species in Manitoba.

We built the new Hydro building, a fantastic asset that brown-brought thousands of people to the downtown. We worked with True North to bring back the MTS Centre for the downtown, and that provided the platform to bring that low-key team called the Winnipeg Jets back in Manitoba, and then—and now we see the Moose back in Manitoba as well. So we go on, we see the Red River campus built downtown by City Hall in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, thousands of students getting an education in new media downtown.

And the story only gets better, Mr. Speaker. The new Convention Centre is due to be completed very soon. It'll be ready for the Grey Cup which is coming to Winnipeg because we got a new stadium—

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

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Premier should just come clean and admit that he has no idea where he's going to find \$1 billion.

And he should just admit that he is more concerned with his own re-election than doing what is in the best interests of Manitobans. That's something that his own colleagues accused him of.

And, Mr. Speaker, if his own colleagues can't trust him, then why should Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: This side of the House has voted for a program of economic renewal which has given us the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker. They have—we have supported a program of infrastructure and jobs and training for people which have resulted in the highest job creation record in Canada. We have built schools for young people to have skills. We've built personal-care homes to look after the elderly. We have proceeded and pursued a policy of reconciliation with the indigenous peoples of Manitoba.

There's a lot of good in this Throne Speech. There's a lot of good people in Manitoba. There's a lot of opportunity for young people, Mr. Speaker.

And the only naysayers, the only nattering nabobs of negativity, are the members of the opposition. They want to put their head in the sand and kill economic growth in Manitoba.

We want to make it go to the next level, and we will.

Prebudget Consultations Spring Budget Intentions

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, I think he took it to the next level of rhetoric, and that's the same person who said he wouldn't raise the PST prior to the last election, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at a prebudget meeting in Ile des Chênes earlier in the year, the Minister of Finance was asked a very good question. He was asked a question about whether or not there would actually

be a budget in the spring, because, after all, it was a prebudget meeting.

And the Minister of Finance answered: We are committed to bringing in a budget in the spring as required, but we're still weighing our options in terms of that. We could also bring in a fiscal update, but the government is weighing its options.

Like many things the Minister of Finance says, that makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. If they're committed to bringing in a budget, how can they still be weighing their options?

Why won't he just commit to bringing in a budget prior to the election in spring, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the member for Steinbach, he showed a great deal of disrespect for those individuals who showed up at our budget consultation meetings. I just want to—he mocked those who attended, and he—I want to thank those individuals who attended, both in Ile des Chênes and throughout the province. I want to remind them and thank them for their input. I will use what they provided us in the next budget.

The member said that a member of the public posed a question at that meeting in Ile des Chênes. He was the one that posed a very partisan question to me, Mr. Speaker. He stood in the way of other members who wanted to ask their questions. He popped up and asked a very partisan question to me.

I also want to remind this member and all members of the House, Mr. Speaker, when they were in office their budget consultation meetings were closed, behind closed doors. They—

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

Mr. Goertzen: I don't know what meeting he was at, Mr. Speaker. Actually, nobody was asking questions, so the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) asked me if I'd ask a question. I was happy to do it, and I've got another one, I have another one.

The minister said that there's lots of challenges in terms of why he might not be able to bring forward a budget in the spring. He said that, well, there was a recession a number of years ago; there was an upcoming federal election, they didn't know who would be in government. He had lots of excuses, but, you know, there's been other

governments who were able to bring forward budgets in the spring.

In 2007 there was a spring election, but a budget came forward in May. I remember in 1995 there was a spring election, but a budget came forward in March. One was under, of course, Premier Gary Doer; one was under Premier Gary Filmon.

So where is the problem? Is it with this current Premier (Mr. Selinger), or this Minister of Finance? Which one of them is incapable to produce a budget prior to the next election, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Dewar: I will remind the members they—we had—I do want to thank all the individuals who attended our budget consultation meeting. We had, Mr. Speaker, a very successful telephone town hall event. We had over 12,000 people phone in to give us their advice. I meet almost daily with—today I met with two groups who—the Federation of Students up there, university students; with—I met with the Retail Council of Canada today to talk about issues that are important.

Completely contrast that to what they did when they were in government: invitation only, behind closed doors. The Finance minister didn't even attend. Our meetings are open to the public. Even MLAs could attend. The member for Steinbach stood up and he blocked—he stood in the way of legitimate people who wanted to ask him—important questions to ask his partisan question.

As I said, our members are—our meetings are open to the public, not closed like their—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Before the member for Dawson Trail begged me to ask a question, Mr. Speaker, he gave an apology. He opened the meeting giving an apology, apologizing for himself and for his Premier for not previously listening to Manitobans before bringing in a budget.

But it doesn't seem like anything has changed. He apologized for not listening before, for hiding things around the PST, but now they won't actually admit that they're not going to bring forward a budget.

What are they hiding now? Are they hiding the fact that the deficit is going to be much higher? Are they hiding the fact that they're going

to increase the PST now from 8 per cent to 9 per cent? Of course, they'd say that was ridiculous, but they said that before, Mr. Speaker.

Why is it that they refuse to bring in a budget? What are they hiding from Manitobans? Stop apologizing and start telling Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dewar: I'll remind the House about our process. It's a very open-door process, Mr. Speaker. Members from the public came and they asked good questions, unlike the member from Steinbach; he asked a very partisan question.

But I'll remind, as well, they—just last week they held their so-called speech from the throne, again, behind the closed doors. The public was not invited, not like our process.

I want to remind the member that Brad Wall from Saskatchewan, on the same electoral cycle as we are, Mr. Speaker, they're not bringing in a budget.

*(14:10)

I remind the member that there's been a change in office at the federal level. We have to wait for them to bring in their budget so we can see how that will impact our own provincial budget.

Again, you know, Mr. Speaker, we take—we need no lessons from that member when it comes to accountability.

Prebudget Consultations Spring Budget Intentions

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech continues a long-standing NDP tradition of broken promises and overspending. It's full speed ahead on spending, even though the headlines read: NDP promises the world but has no money to pay for any of it.

Mr. Speaker, just weeks ago the Finance Minister held a budget consultation meeting in Kirkfield Park, and while there were only eight people there when you subtract the minister and his entourage and our candidate, a budget consultation meeting still strongly suggests that the NDP intends to bring a budget.

Can the Finance Minister just clear up this issue, clear up the confusion he's created and commit today to deliver a budget to pay for

this Throne Speech's billion-dollar spending extravaganza?

Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance): I had the, as I said, the great honour and the great privilege of attending several budget consultation meetings across the province, Mr. Speaker. I also had a chance to meet one-on-one with leaders throughout the province.

I had the great chance to—opportunity to go to Morden, Morden-Winkler area, and the fine people from Morden came out. The member for—the MLA for that area decided not to attend that meeting, Mr. Speaker. Had he attended that meeting, he would have found out that the fine people of Morden-Winkler, they support this government when it comes to investing in schools. They support this government when it comes to investing in health care. They support this government when it comes to growing the economy.

As the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We've got some of the strong job growth. And had he attended that meeting, he would have found that out that—there as well.

Mr. Friesen: Let me help the Finance Minister with the math on that. When he says the fine people of Morden, it was four fine people of Morden who took the opportunity to come to that meeting when you subtract the minister and his entourage.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister also held a meeting in Gimli. And there were a handful only of people at that meeting, but nevertheless, by holding a budget consultation meeting, you're sending a message that you are intending to deliver a budget. Why else tell Manitobans to come to the meeting and provide feedback to the Finance Minister?

When he delivered the budget this spring, the Finance Minister said there would be a budget. Weeks ago he said, I was misunderstood. Now more recently he said, you misunderstood us again.

Would the minister take this opportunity today in the House, clear up the record and show how is he going to pay for this cornucopia of Throne Speech spending? Is he going to do it with a budget?

Mr. Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to attend the meeting in Gimli, as the member mentioned. The member for the Interlake was there as well.

And their candidate was there, Mr. Speaker, and afterwards, during the question-and-answer period, he stood up and he endorsed our plan to spend more money on infrastructure. He thought it was a good idea. He said, you know, I'm really happy to see all the great things that are happening in the Interlake, great things that I'm happy to see in the Gimli area, investment in roads and bridges in the Gimli area.

Again, we're—we lead the nation in economic growth, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

The only ones who want to kill that plan is the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. They want to fire nurses. They want to fire teachers. They want to fire doctors. And we're going to stop them.

Mr. Friesen: Rhetoric from a government that is just out of gas.

Mr. Speaker, the government has delivered an ostentatious, billion-dollar Throne Speech spending extravaganza which Manitobans are widely condemning as simply not believable. But the Finance Minister refuses to do the work to bring a budget to indicate how he would pay for any of this even if he could be trusted.

Mr. Speaker, he's out of choices. His back is against the wall. He's staring down credit downgrades, rising debt and a deficit that he just can't reduce.

Will he admit that the consultation was a sham, he has no plan to balance the budget and the real message he's not delivering is that the payment for all of these spending promises will come on the backs of Manitobans who will pay more with a 9 or 10 per cent PST?

Mr. Dewar: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the only one talking about raising the PST is the member opposite.

And, interesting, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to eliminate the deficit in a responsible way while growing the economy. The members opposite, they have no plan to eliminate the deficit. That was revealed yesterday by their leader, and I'm sure if the leader had a chance to hear what this member said, he'd be kind of, you know, he would be a little bit perplexed by the comments by the

member from Morden-Winkler had his leader had a chance to hear what he said, because it's completely opposite from what his critic just put on the record just now.

Personal-Care Homes Placement Wait Times

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has created a bed crisis because they have failed to build the number of PCH beds that are desperately needed. Now they're trying to mislead Manitobans with spin and rhetoric, so let's start with some facts.

They announced Holy Family personal-care home renos almost five years ago. It wasn't open—Mr. Speaker, it won't open for at least two years, and then it is only going to add 44 more beds to the system when there are already 1,200 seniors on a PCH waiting list.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell Manitoba seniors: Why have photo ops been more important to her than actually putting shovels in the ground?

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

And, yes, it was wonderful to get together with the folks at Holy Family and make that announcement, because we know how much it means to that community and the hard work that has been done, and it is about hard work, working with the community to provide what's needed for seniors, and that's what we've done on this side of the Chamber.

We have built more PCH beds. We have more PCHs in place and more beds, and maybe if she talked to her seatmate about Morden-Winkler, just this past weekend at the Dental Foundation dinner I got compliments from a handful of folks all in from Morden-Winkler about the wonderful work being done at Tabor Home. So we're building, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, in a news release five years ago, this government announced a new PCH for Lac du Bonnet. Since then they've mentioned it numerous times; however, in three years of FIPPAs about capital projects, this PCH has never been approved to proceed. So how can it be under development as this minister keeps saying?

Knowing that it takes five to 10 years for a capital project, can this Minister of Health tell Manitoba seniors: When will there be shovels in the ground? When will that PCH open? Are we looking at 10 years down the road?

Ms. Blady: I can tell Manitobans that we are working, that we have several projects, including that one, under way. We are working with communities across the province.

What I will say, as well, is that we have no intention of privatizing as members opposite did with home care and cutting home-care services. We're about working with seniors of--all across the province in a variety of ways to support them.

And, again, building PCH beds is one part of a holistic strategy to work with and support our seniors.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the problem is they're not building them; they're just doing the photo ops and then they do not put the shovels in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, there was another announcement and photo op a year and a half ago, and it was for a Transcona PCH. Again, in those FIPPAs about capital projects approved by government, there is no mention of this PCH. It has not been approved. These photo ops are not turning into action.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health to tell Manitoba seniors: How many more photo ops is she going to have? How many more promises is she going to break? And when can they see all these beds open, because they're not on the horizon for at least five to 10 more years?

Ms. Blady: No one on this side of the Chamber has anything to learn from members opposite.

I remind them of the quote of Dr. Adrian Fine, speaking of the health-care policies of the PC government of the '90s: Several years ago when ERs were overflowing, the government decided to close many acute medical beds in the city, at the same time to considerably expand PCH beds, the latter part being part of an election promise. But guess what? After the election, they cancelled the PCH development but maintained the cut in acute medical beds. This dishonest and stupid decision has had the entirely predictable result in ER overcrowding that would continually worsen. Total government liability right there. Dr. Adrian Fine said it.

We have nothing to learn from them.

Hydro Executive Salaries Rate Increases

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Six months, \$15 million in 1999, and it's as worse as it was then and it's no better.

*(14:20)

Mr. Speaker, salaries in executive offices of Hydro were projected to increase more than 22 per cent in 2016-17. At the same time, Hydro is going to Manitobans asking for more in the form of rate increases.

Why does this minister think it's appropriate? We're padding salaries at the top end of the Hydro spectrum while asking Manitobans to pay more.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member for the question. We have continuously said that Manitoba Hydro is in an exciting phase in our history here in the province of Manitoba, and the construction of creating new jobs and new opportunities for northern Manitoba has never been heard of.

At the same time, having said that, we're also going through a period of reconciliation in making sure that the things that we did wrong in the past are not done again into the future, and we are developing partnerships that are unique in North America and, indeed, in the world in creating partnerships with First Nations and other indigenous peoples in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the consumers' coalition of Manitoba is concerned about the rate increases. At the last rate hearings, the consumers' coalition asked why Hydro identified those salary increases that are more than 4 per cent. Only one division to see increases more than 4 per cent was that of the utility's executive.

I'll ask the minister again: Why does he think it's appropriate that salaries are being increased at the top while Manitobans face the real prospect of seeing their rates double because of this NDP mismanagement?

Mr. Robison: While I was telling you about the advantages of Manitoba Hydro and the many unique things it's doing in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, allow me to carry on by saying that we're investing, I believe, responsibly

and reasonably in the current day in programs that we believe will help all of Manitoba to save on their bills as we step into the future.

So I would recommend to the members opposite—sometimes a couple of them tend to talk a little too much and listen too little to some of the things, the positive things that are happening in the province of Manitoba with respect to Hydro development and particularly as it relates to the original peoples of this land.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are also concerned with these increases. In fact, increases were brought to light. Manitobans described these facts as shocking, and that just as rate—customer rates are on the rise, so, too, are the salaries of the utility's executives.

Will the minister just admit that rising Hydro rates will result in fewer dollars in the pockets of Manitoba families and less—and more in the executives' as they get more rate increases?

Mr. Robinson: What I do believe, Mr. Speaker, is that if Manitoba continues to make the right decisions and the right investments today, that we will continue to have a low-cost, reliable source of homegrown green energy for decades to come for our grandchildren and the generations to come.

Gillam Mall Appraisal Value

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): At Hydro committee this September, I asked Manitoba Hydro about the Gillam mall built in Gillam, Manitoba. No answers were provided at committee. To date, no response has been received as to why the Gillam mall, built in 2014 for \$16 million, is now appraised at being worth \$2.6 million.

Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro provide the Legislature with the answers to the questions concerning the Gillam mall? And I have a document to present to the minister.

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, this was a question, I believe, that was raised by the member when the Committee on Crown Corporations occurred, and I would suspect that the number of questions that were asked by the opposition will be responded to in due course.

Mr. Schuler: On October 12th, in a letter sent to Manitoba Hydro president Darren Rainkie—and I wish to table that letter for the Legislature—I asked

when the questions would be answered. No response to date has been provided.

Manitoba Hydro built the Gillam mall in 2014 for \$16 million, and today it's appraised at being worth only \$2.6 million.

Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro provide an answer to my question?

Mr. Robinson: Several questions, as you know, Mr. Speaker, were taken under advisement by the chair of the Manitoba Hydro board, and I'm confident that Mr. Rainkie and Mr. Fraser will be—and as members know, a new CEO of Manitoba Hydro was just recently hired, and I am confident that the people from Hydro will be responding in the next short while.

Mr. Schuler: On September 24th, 19 FIPPA requests were sent to Manitoba Hydro regarding the Gillam mall. Six days later, on September 30th, all 19 requests for information were refused. I want to repeat again: All 19 were refused on why a \$16-million Gillam mall is now appraised at \$2.6 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, to recap what we know, at committee, Manitoba Hydro board chair Bill Fraser said, and I quote: "We'll undertake to get that." So far, no information.

Darren Rainkie, president of Manitoba Hydro, won't answer his mail. Valerie Gilroy, Manitoba Hydro FIPPA officer, says there is no duty by Hydro to answer the questions. The minister responsible has no clue.

It is clear why a \$2.6-million building—

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

Mr. Robinson: As I pointed out, a number of questions were asked by the opposition at the Crown Corporations meeting which involved Manitoba Hydro. A number of questions were taken under advisement. And we have just gone through a changeover with the chief—the CEO of the corporation, and along with the chairman of the board of Manitoba Hydro.

I'm quite sure that they are providing and getting prepared with the responses to the various members that had questions of the corporation itself. And I would just recommend that—I would just ask the members to be patient. These things

take a bit of time, especially when they come in those volumes.

Liquor Pricing Sales Model Addiction and FASD Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased yesterday when the Premier acknowledged that a Liberal government in Manitoba will address the fact that under the NDP we now have the highest prices for liquor in all of Canada. The Premier may also want to note that all but one of the other provinces has lower rates of alcohol addiction than Manitoba, regardless of their liquor sales model.

If the Premier believes his current alcohol sales model is more socially responsible, why does Manitoba have the second highest rate of alcohol addiction in Canada?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I remember when the member from River Heights was advocating that we put special labels on bottles to warn people of the dangers of alcohol. That was before. Now under his—now under the new Leader of the Liberal Party, they've abandoned that policy and they're promising cheap booze to Manitobans as an election gimmick, similar to what the Conservative Party is doing as well.

Low-priced alcohol does not lead to social responsibility, Mr. Speaker. It does not lead to social responsibility. We have a policy with our Crown corporations of 2 per cent of the profits being invested in social responsibility. That's the best policy in the country. And we will continue to work with community organizations and families to make them aware of the dangers of overconsumption of alcohol and indeed all drugs in Manitoba.

That's why we will keep Liquor & Lotteries a public Crown corporation, owned for the people of Manitoba. And we will not follow the policy which we have just seen in Saskatchewan, where they are going to privatize all of their liquor stores.

*(14:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, 11 provinces which have lower prices for liquor than Manitoba also have lower addiction rates.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier accused Manitoba Liberals of reducing support for the prevention of addictions and FASD, and yet the

NDP approach of just throwing money doesn't bother to assess if there is even a net effect in reducing addictions and FASD. The evidence-based approach of Manitoba Liberals will actually measure if spending effectively meets social objectives.

Can the Premier table today evidence that his current approach is effective in the net reduction of addictions and FASD?

Mr. Selinger: We have a very strong commitment to young families in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, including prenatal benefits, including a Families First program which provides home visits to new families when they're starting off to give them the support they need. We are going to ramp up those programs to support even more families in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we've expanded—doubled the number of daycare opportunities; we call it early childhood learning now because there is support for families there. We have family resource centres in Manitoba that we support under the Neighbourhoods Alive! program. We do a lot of work with families at the neighbourhood level. We have a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program to support young families and families in Manitoba.

All of those programs we've improved upon and expanded in the budget, Mr. Speaker, and the member from River Heights has consistently voted against all of those measures in our budgets, and now he wants to lower liquor prices.

There is no research anywhere that he can show me that lowering liquor prices leads to greater safety and security and better results for families when it comes to alcohol consumption. I challenge him to put forward the evidence that lowering 'liquor' prices will make families safer in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier forgot to table the evidence I asked for. Maybe, as Scott Forbes said recently, this Premier doesn't believe in science and evidence.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right that Manitoba Liberals will reduce liquor prices through changes which include allowing more competition and more choice on price, quality and variety. Such changes in liquor policy are long overdue in addressing the gouge and no-choice approach of the NDP. The Premier can scream at the Liberals if he likes, but the reality is that

Manitobans want choice and affordability, and that's what Liberals will ensure.

Why are the NDP stuck in the belief that they know better than Manitobans so that their government must control choice?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba funds world-class research on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Dr. Chudley is a part of that. We're been very supportive of his research. I've met him. And countries around the world where he's there doing research with other parts of the world, that research is being—the leadership on that research is coming out of Manitoba. We have funded that with the profits we've made out of the liquor and lotteries.

We have responsible programs. We train everybody in a hotel to be responsible servers in Manitoba. We train our staff in the Crown corporation that provides choices to Manitobans, among the best choice anywhere in Canada. We train them on how to help people make responsible choices. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

We have reduced the red tape on all the regulations with respect to liquor, Mr. Speaker, but we have not abandoned social responsibility. As we make more choices available to Manitobans, we've also increased social responsibility and dedicated more money to that.

I ask him, where's the research that shows lowering liquor prices makes Manitoba families safer? There is none. He's making it up on the fly, Mr. Speaker.

Pan Am Clinic Facility Relocation

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): It seems to be a theme developing here on the other side of the House that they hate ribbon cuttings, Mr. Speaker, because the only thing that they had when they were in the House was cutting of jobs.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe in creating strong partnerships and developing innovative top-quality health care to Manitobans.

That's why we're proud to support initiatives like the building of the new and expanded Pan Am Clinic adjacent to the Reh-Fit Centre. I can't wait for that ribbon cutting, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Health please inform us of how this collaboration and ribbon cutting will help families get better service in injury prevention, treatment and rehabilitation?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question, and I was very proud today to stand alongside our Premier (Mr. Selinger) to announce that our government and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority will work with the Reh-Fit Centre as well as the Pan Am Clinic to create an innovative community health and wellness campus which will relocate the Pan Am Clinic to an expanded centre at Waverley and Taylor Avenue.

We know that Manitoba families want the best in health-care services, and we need to make strategic investments, and the combination of the Reh-Fit Centre, which focuses on health promotion and injury and illness prevention and rehabilitation, while the Pan Am Clinic focuses on treatment and rehab, by bringing these two organizations together we're going to be bringing together the best of both worlds in so many ways with such strong, innovative leaders and partners in the delivery of specialized health services. It's going to be about how we can bring health service providers together with researchers and, again, we are going to be able to expand and build capacity for the future to look after the health care of all Manitobans.

Wildlife Health CWHC Grant

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): The Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative is a collection of highly qualified people within a cross-Canada network of partners dedicated to wildlife health, including internationally renowned wildlife researchers, experts in population control, skilled educators and policy advisers.

The Manitoba government had been supporting this work for a number of years through a modest annual grant of \$10,000.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister advise why Manitoba is now the only jurisdiction in Canada not contributing to the CWHC? Are the Province's finances so shaky?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, wildlife populations are very

important to me personally as a rural Manitoban and to our party on this side of the House here. Wildlife is an extension of our environment, Mr. Speaker, and a government that dedicates funds toward the environment is a government that cares on all fronts.

Members opposite, of course, their recent conversion of the member opposite to environmental issues is very heartening to see. However, I make note that at their last policy convention, Mr. Speaker, not a single resolution, not one resolution, over the entire weekend on the topic of the environment was discussed by them.

We have no lessons to learn from members opposite when it comes to maintenance of the environment—

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

Mr. Martin: The CWHC has identified cases of bluetongue, avian botulism and bat rabies in jurisdictions which border our province, including Ontario and Saskatchewan.

The minister—indeed, this government's attitude towards conservation has been to cut, cut and cut to the tune of \$20 million since 2011.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister of cuts explain how his non-support of the CWHC supports his government's goals of detecting and assessing wildlife health issues?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's amazing to hear about cuts from members opposite. Their leader would cut half a billion dollars out of the budget. Imagine the impact that that would have on budgets across all departments of government.

Look at Lake Winnipeg as a classic example, Mr. Speaker. Our government recently announced 100 million additional dollars to put toward waste-water treatment at the North End plant in Winnipeg to take care of the needs of Lake Winnipeg. What would members opposite do in that regard? They referred to that as a waste of money. That shows how dedicated they are to the maintenance of our lakes and streams in this province.

So, once again, no lessons to learn from members opposite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the minister's staff are at a loss. The CWHC is at a loss. Most days the minister is at a loss.

This minister's inability to stand up for his own department threatens Manitobans' ability to identify emerging wildlife health issues. The minister says budgets are complicated.

How could he find \$670,000 for political payouts to pay for his internal rebellion, but he can't find one 60th of that amount to support some of the most pressing wildlife issues facing Manitoba and Canada? Whose priorities are these ministers fronting?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, the next thing you know, members opposite are going to be rising up and declaring their support for David Suzuki's Blue Dot declaration. I'm waiting with open arms for that conversion on the road to Damascus toward the care of our environment.

*(14:40)

So on this side of the House we have concerns for our environment. We care about climate change. Climate change to members opposite is still a myth.

Mr. Speaker, when you want to talk about climate change, the position of the Liberals is no better. When they recently announced that addressing flood mitigation around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, that was not a high priority to them, that's disgraceful. The Liberal Party should apologize to rural and Aboriginal people in Manitoba for their lack of care for flood mitigation.

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

Manitoba Interlake—Request to Repair and Reopen Provincial Roads 415 and 416

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

The reasons for this petition:

(1) The Interlake region is an important transportation corridor for Manitoba but, unfortunately, is still dealing with serious underinvestment in infrastructure under this provincial government.

(2) Provincial roads 415 and 416 are vital to the region but have still not been repaired or reopened since sustaining damages during the 2010 flood.

(3) Residents and businesses in the Manitoba Interlake are seriously impacted by the—and inconvenienced by having no adequate east-west travel routes over an area of 525 square miles.

(4) The lack of east-west travel routes is also a major public safety concern, as emergency response vehicles are impeded from arriving in a timely manner.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as Manitoba as follows:

To urge provincial government repair and reopen provincial roads 415 and 416 to allow adequate east-west travel in the Interlake.

Presented on behalf of G. Farthing, J. Davis, D. Goodman 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.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by K. Wilson, C. Worm, D. Loewen and many other fine Manitobans.

Community-Based Brain Injury Services and Supports

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Signed by K. Longstreet, R. Paulishyn, G. Kirkland and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there's leave for the House to consider condolence motions on Thursday, November 26th, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., for private members' time to be waived on Tuesday, December 1st, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in order for condolences to be considered that morning as well?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to consider condolence motions on Thursday, November 26th, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, and for private members' time to be waived on Tuesday, December the 1st, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon in order for condolences to be considered those mornings? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I thank the House.

Mr. Speaker, would you also please canvass the House to see if there's leave to waive rules 31(2) and 31(3) requiring all private members' resolutions to be submitted within 14 days of the Throne Speech and to be prioritized

within a further seven days? *[interjection]* Pardon? Not be prioritized within a further seven days. I knew that didn't sound right.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to waive rules 31(2) and 31(3) requiring that all private members' resolutions to be submitted within 14 days of the Throne Speech and to be prioritized within a further seven days? Agreed? To not be prioritized, pardon me. That's agreed? *[Agreed]*

That's it?

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, we'll move on to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert, who has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise. Yesterday, when I finished off in the House, I was talking about how we owe our freedoms to those who served and are serving in the Armed Forces, and I want to once again start off on that by saying that in our Throne Speech, we're recognizing them by making Remembrance Day a full statutory holiday.

And I also want to say that the member for—the minister, last week, actually had—they created a Hall of Honour here in the building for the members of the Armed Forces, and I think that it's really important that we remember why we're all here and able to debate what we're debating in a very cordial manner, most of the time, and to recognize those people who came before us to do that.

I'd also like to talk about how we're investing in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in things like rapid transit, which we know that the members opposite wouldn't do. And do you know why we're investing in that? Because Winnipeg is a growing city. It's going to be over a million people, unlike the times when the leader opposite was in power and 33,000 people abandoned this province. Two Steinbachs disappeared from us.

My area is going to have more than two Steinbachs coming to it in the next few years. It's already increased by thousands of homes, and we're going to be building things like rapid transit, and that creates jobs, Mr. Speaker, because all

those construction workers needed to do it. The buses are sold right here in Winnipeg and manufactured here in Winnipeg at New Flyer Industries, and every dollar that we spend on infrastructure creates jobs.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Even when we're talking about roads, the members opposite talk about cuts all the time and they say that we're not creating any jobs. I saw hundreds of people working on roads this summer and a record amount of construction—over a billion dollars. Our long-term plan and our long-term vision that we're talking about for our province, the \$10-billion-now 2020 vision, was touted by Chris Lorenc at the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association as the best in the country, Madam Speaker. He said no one has a 10-year infrastructure plan like this, and doing it and releasing the tenders early makes sure that more work gets done and the industry is able to plan for it.

* (14:50)

Terry Shaw from Manitoba Trucking Association said that we will cut down on greenhouse gases and emissions and make commuting faster and getting our goods to market faster by things like we saw the announcement the other day where we're going to be eliminating the lights on the south Perimeter.

The Leader of the Opposition and actually the Liberal Party would slam the door shut on these ideas of building and creating jobs that we were talking about in the Throne Speech.

Health care is one of the top priorities for us in Manitoba, and as I asked the minister today, we're going to be building a state-of-the-art health-care centre in conjunction with Pan Am Clinic, attaching it to the Reh-Fit Centre. They cannot do that under the members opposite plan, and that includes the member of the Liberal Party who wants to cut a half a billion dollars in payroll tax, because they will not be able to fund those kinds of investments.

The member opposite also said something else interesting in the last few years. I wonder if he's going to backpedal on that one or do the, as Dan Lett calls it, the flip-flop where he talked about having two-tiered health care in this province, where the rich get to jump the line and everybody

else has to wait, Mr. Speaker. He wants people to use their credit cards instead of their health cards. Is this—that's his idea in the past; let's hear if that's—if it's his latest idea. Is he going to flip-flop on that one?

I see the member opposite raising her hands, wondering what's going on. Well, we're wondering, too, because the member opposite keeps flip-flopping on every idea he has. First, it's cuts; then it's not. Is it privatization of home care like he once proposed when he was a minister, or is he going to keep that public, or is he going to privatize health care and create a two-tier system? Nobody knows, and that's the scary part of the members opposite. And that's why our Throne Speech has a vision for this province to build this province, and their throne speech was nothing, not one word about building. It was all about cutting.

We're going to ensure that we hire and train more professionals here, and we've increased the spots in university for doctors. We're hiring more doctors and nurses. Underneath them, doctors and nurses, the best year they had in this province was that they netted zero, Madam Speaker, of doctors. They never gained any. They lost more doctors than they ever gained, and all of these things lead to a bleak 'fleature'—future for Manitoba.

But under our plan we've been hiring more doctors, hundreds more doctors coming to Manitoba. Their short term—the Liberal and the PCs' short-term austerity measures would mean that people would be leaving this province once again. It would be a short-term vision that I don't want for my child and I certainly don't want for my constituents.

We have an—we are opening more ACCESS centres, QuickCare clinics. Everything that we're doing in this province is about building. Right next to the Health Sciences Centre there's a brand new mental health facility. The new women's health centre is being built because we care about Manitobans. On the other side of the House, the PC and the Liberal plan is nothing but cuts.

Our government has made education a priority. You want to talk about education? We would—they had—we have a 60 per cent tuition rebate. When they were in power across the floor, it was minus 2, minus 2, minus 6, zero, minus 2 and zero when they come to funding for education.

So projects like my South Pointe school where there's going to be 114 child-care seats and a dual-track K to 8 would not happen underneath the Leader of the Opposition and his cuts. Luckily, we're building for tomorrow today in Manitoba. That's our vision for the province and that's our vision in the Throne Speech: more child care, more schools, more teachers, more childhood educators working in the system. The lower class size initiative has seen us hire more teachers again.

We've invested millions in trade schools and colleges across the province. We're helping women become instructors in our system and we're going to be doubling the amount of women in trades and even more after that, Madam Speaker, because that is a good job for people to have and we want everybody to have great opportunity in Manitoba.

And what we saw the last few years, a record number of people coming to Manitoba, people coming back to Manitoba. People from where they used to tout, back in Alberta and Saskatchewan, are actually moving back to Manitoba. Why? Because we have the lowest unemployment rate and the highest job growth in the country, something that we are very proud of. But we hear every day the negative nellys across the floor saying that everything is terrible here. Well, if it's so terrible here, why is everything being built across this province and why are more people than ever coming back?

The Leader of the Opposition has sets his sights on hydro. He wants to cut. He wants to stop the export of hydro, billions of dollars' worth of sales out of this province, which would hurt Manitobans. That's what the Leader of the Opposition's plan is, and that's why I ran as an MLA is to stop his plan in its tracks. We are not going to accept those kinds of cuts. We are not going to accept the Hydro being sold off. We are not going to accept no development in Manitoba.

Manitoba is growing. We need to build for the future, and our plan does that. And I'm proud of the—our government for doing that, and we're committed to working with all of our partners on that.

Madam Speaker, St. Norbert is a fantastic place to live, work and raise a family, and St. Norbert is home to so many ethnic backgrounds and has a history dating back to 1821. It's the original Forks. From attractions such as St. Norbert arts and cultural centre, St. Norbert

Provincial Heritage Park, Duff Roblin park, the rich history of the monastery and, of course, the much renowned farmers' market, where now we have invested in a washroom facility that has running water, so they can now expand their vendors and sell more Manitoba homegrown products. Over 10,000 people visit that market every Saturday and shop local and buy local and listen to local musicians.

This wonder area is diverse and I love living there. And I'm afraid that if the members opposite get in power that that area will see no investment and we will see what happened back when in the '90s when they were in power and people were leaving this province and our areas would all suffer.

What we see now, we see splash pads, two of them now in my area, one in the northern part, up in Waverley Heights, one down in St. Norbert. We see families enjoying free, fun activities with their kids and their family because of investments our government has put in place, Madam Speaker. And I'm very proud that we do that. We wouldn't see that under the Leader of the Opposition's cuts. We wouldn't see any of that.

We're expanding a school in St. Norbert. The École Noël-Ritchot is getting 74-seat child care in the expansion and a new gym and a new library. We've got a new school being built. You can hear the theme, Madam Speaker: we are building our province.

On this side of the House, we believe in building. On that side of the House, the only thing they believe in are deep cuts. And Canadians and Manitobans rejected that in the last election, and that's why we saw the Leader of the Opposition yesterday pull what Dan Lett called a flip-flop, because he's realizing that we are the party of building and people are actually liking our plan. They don't like the reckless cuts being proposed by the opposition. They're actually enjoying the fact that things are being built here. Roads are being fixed. Bridges are being fixed. We've refused to sell off Hydro. We have the lowest hydro rates in the country, Madam Speaker.

You know, the members opposite talk about, oh, hydro rates are going to go up in 50, 200, 300 years. Well, what hasn't gone up, Madam Speaker? What hasn't gone up in the last years—houses? No, my house has gone up, you know,

30 per cent since I've owned it. Some houses have doubled and tripled in value. Things happen to go up.

But you know what's funny is the hydro rates are cheaper now than when they were in power because we put the rates the same across the province, which they didn't support and they didn't vote for. People in northern and rural areas paid more and the Winnipeggers paid less. We stabilized the rates across the province, and the rates are the—actually on average lower than they were 16 years ago when they were in power.

And the other thing we saw from the Leader of the Opposition was that he talked about having wage freezes, Madam Speaker. He said that he would slice back a little bit. Well, how is he going to give people fair wages? He wouldn't do that because his plan is all about cuts. People would lose their jobs just like they did the last time they were in power, and that's all we see from the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party member who wants to sell off our crown jewel that generates money to health care, education, sports, and they—he wants to sell that off, and that is not acceptable to us. And that's why we're going to fight hard and we're going to win this next election because we've got a visionary Throne Speech.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I know that government can't solve all of our problems, but we work—are going to work together with everybody in our communities and make Manitoba a better place. Manitobans have put their trust in us because we have a decent minimum wage, great affordable child care, free cancer-care drugs, the strongest job growth in the country and the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We have chosen a different path that looks after front-line services. Our path is about services that Manitobans need and want.

And I reject that cutting is the way to go, and I'm proud to work with my colleagues and I will continue to work to put families first, working to continue having Manitoba being the best province to live in, work and play. While the opposition cries about things that we haven't done yet, well, let me tell them this, and I'm going to quote the Minister of Transportation: they ain't seen nothin' yet, Madam Speaker.

And I would like to thank all of the people for St. Norbert for giving me the great honour of being

here to represent them today. And I tell you, Madam Speaker, my voice will be heard, that we reject the cuts of the opposition, we will reject the cuts that the Liberal Party is calling for and we will continue to build this great province for every Manitoban across this province.

Thank you very much.

* (15:00)

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): It's my pleasure to be up today and respond to the 2015 Speech from the Throne as the MLA for Morris, and I have the great pleasure of representing that community and that constituency and the many communities that fall within it.

It's interesting, Madam Speaker, the conversation earlier on that started question period, because it reflects on the government's own Throne Speech when they talked about rejecting the politics of pessimism and division. And yet we have to deal with a situation in which the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) referred to an honourable member of this House as a fascist—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. That matter has been taken under advisement by the Speaker when it was raised as a matter of privilege, and therefore it can't be referred to in the House until the Speaker has ruled.

Thank the honourable member for remembering that in his speech.

Mr. Martin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that.

I can tell you that my grandfather Jack Martin joined the military on February 11th, 1943, at a Vancouver recruiting depot. He had seen what was going on overseas. This was just a mere two months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and he realized that our world was under siege and under threat. Our way of life was under threat. And you may have heard me telling this House before how he left his young wife and three young children behind, including my father at the time, and took a train across this great country of ours and found himself on the east coast and shipped off across the Atlantic through U-boat-infested waters and landed in the United Kingdom for training. He ultimately landed in North Africa and fought in North Africa, and he fought in Italy as part of the Italian campaign led by the Canadians. And it was there that an exploding artillery shell wounded him and ended his military service to this country.

My grandfather told me—though not particularly an individual who wanted to talk about his wartime experiences, did share some of them—he talked about the fighting. He talked about those that would take away our rights and freedoms, Madam Speaker. He talked about, you know, the indiscriminate killing that he came across and that horrified him as a man of God.

And so, Madam Speaker, it's regrettable that members of this House continue to use words that are clearly unparliamentary and cast aspersions around. The issue, as well, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) was up recently, talking about comments that we've moved past. He said, you know, we've moved past views on sexuality from 150, 200 years ago, and I absolutely agree, and that's why it was especially disheartening that in 2013 that member's own Premier (Mr. Selinger) had to come out and say, look, it's not okay to make those comments in any context, quote. I think this is an opportunity for all of us to take an honest look at homophobia in our everyday lives, comments we hear that need to be confronted and condemned. And I agree with the Premier on his comments and I—in 2013 and in those comments made by the member for St. Norbert are—need to be confronted and condemned.

Madam Speaker, the Throne Speech isn't so much what's in it; it's really what isn't in it. It appears that the government has thrown a great deal against—of policy spaghetti against the wall and pre-election spaghetti against the wall in trying to see what will stick.

But the one thing that always stands out in relation to members opposite actually has less to do with them and more to do with one of my favourite comedy troupes. Premiering on HBO in 1989, Kids in the Hall, Madam Speaker, was a phenomenal Canadian troupe, and it introduced us to a veritable Rolodex of original characters in absurd setups that bordered on Monty Python. One of my most—one of the more memorable characters was actually introduced in season 3, the King of Empty Promises. And it featured a masterful Dave Foley and Kevin McDonald duet about lying. In these series of sketches, Dean constantly promises his friend Lex items or favours to make up for the previous day's broken promises. And every day, Dean would fail to deliver on his original commitment, and every day, he would renew that commitment plus add additional commitments.

Exasperated, Lex, at the end, declares Dean to be the King of Empty Promises.

And, Madam Speaker, I think that that skit from all those years ago from that great Canadian group, Kids in the Hall, actually exemplifies and symbolizes what we have before us across the way with the NDP party with their PST hike.

Although not an elected official at that time, I, obviously, like many Manitobans, watched the electoral process unfold, watched the debates, read, Madam Speaker. And, you know, and there was an assertion by the then Mr. McFadyen, the leader of the opposition, suggesting that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) had plans to raise the PST and would be completely unable to balance the books.

Now, of course, we all know now, Madam Speaker, that the Premier said that that absolutely not, that that was total nonsense and ridiculous. And, again, his words; not mine.

He went on to say in relation to the ability or their ability, the NDP's ability to balance the books, that one of their core commitments to voters and to Manitobans was that they would balance those books by 2012, Madam Speaker. In fact, the Premier went on to say that not only were they on track—and again, that's a direct quote from the Premier, but they were, quote, ahead of schedule, end quote.

But we all know, of course, looking back, Madam Speaker, that the NDP had been not only looking at raising the PST from finally settling on the 8 per cent hike, but to actually—they had looked at it at 9 per cent hike, as the Minister of Conservation likes to say after every crisis occurs that they've decided they may consider doubling down on the PST hike.

And we all know all too well, Madam Speaker, the result of their broken promises on balancing the books by 2012. They've pushed those dates back to 2014 to 2016 to 2019, and now the Premier has publicly stated that there is no commitment to balance those books and, as a result, in those 30 years we've had the first credit downgrade in the province of Manitoba, a downgrade that will ultimately affect the interest costs associated with the phenomenal borrowings undertaken by this government.

And so, while the Premier can talk about, you know, it's now's a good time to borrow, borrow,

borrow, and spend, spend, spend, there is not the—he's not closing that loop, Madam Speaker, that these funds need to be repaid eventually, and while we all benefit and all—most of us here are homeowners and have mortgages and we all benefit from these historic low rates, there will come a time when these rates will increase.

In the Department of Finance, the minister's own Department of Finance will tell you in its budget papers, that a 1 per cent increase in interest rates on an average—on an annualized basis will increase the borrowing costs by \$25 million. This is not a small amount of money. It's almost equivalent to what the Minister of Conservation has cut from his department since the last election, monies that we could have used to fight zebra mussels, perhaps to deal with the big game crisis that we have, to deal with the fact that in 2013 or the—Lake Winnipeg was declared as the most threatened lake in the world, that most recently, that their friend, Mr. Suzuki's organization, declared that Lake Winnipeg was one of the worst managed fisheries on the planet. And I was talking to one of the individuals involved there, Madam Speaker, and they said, you know, we've been to China and it was quite a shock to see that in print that this lake is what should be a jewel and really is a jewel here in the province of Manitoba, one of the largest freshwater lakes in this entire country, would be declared as the worst managed, and that's truly, truly, unfortunate.

When I read the comments and read the Throne Speech, Madam Speaker, I thought, you know, obviously I've been around; I've followed politics for a number of years, and I recall that the NDP used to beat the drum consistently about the life sciences sector. The life sciences was a critical component of Manitoba's future economy. And former Premier Doer went on to say that life sciences is part of the growing—Manitoba's growing role as a life sciences leader and our recognition as a leader in the biotechnology field. He talked about the growing momentum of our dynamic biotechnology sector, bringing new opportunities to build the infrastructure and environment to grow our knowledge-based economy.

*(15:10)

What caught my interest though, Madam Speaker, is that since my election, my long-delayed election by the way, the longest

delay in Manitoba's history, and I do recall one government minister, when I brought to their attention and was curious when the by-election would be called, they indicated that democracy for the people of Morris was, quote, not a priority, end quote.

But it's interesting that the government had hitched its wagon to the life sciences sector, a day didn't go by the minister or—the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) wouldn't make some sort of life sciences announcement. But I took a look at news releases and I did a quick scan; the last time that I could find any reference in a government news release to the life sciences is in June 2004. So what is that? Eleven years ago, so it leads one to wonder what happened to this. I mean, at the time the government was signing MOUs with the state of Minnesota to promote bilateral exchange and technical commercialization in the life sciences sector in all sorts of lovely buzzwords, whatever, but I don't recall the—any minister on that side of the House during any of their comments on the Throne Speech or on any previous budget speech giving any kind of update as to the status of our—of life sciences here in Manitoba.

The other memory I have of my days gone by, Madam Speaker, was that of the hydrogen economy. The former Premier Doer, in fact, before he became premier, when he was leader of the opposition, that was another drum that this—the NDP used to beat with such ferocity and that was that of the hydrogen economy. Every other day they were talking about the—attending the international conference in Washington to discuss the hydrogen economy, how they were releasing a provincial hydrogen strategy and being part of the global discussions.

They talked about a—that Manitoba's hydrogen steering committee and that the government in the province was pursuing transportation and hydrogen refuelling initiatives. Well, I look around the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba and I'm not aware of any hydrogen refuelling initiative, and if there is, then I'm more than willing to stand and be corrected by any MLA in this House, Madam Speaker.

I also note that they were—they promised a stationary fuel cell demonstration to be powered by unused by-product hydrogen, the establishment

of a hydrogen research of excellence, the commercial electrolysis unit at the Dorsey Converter Station to produce industrial-grade hydrogen, and the list goes on and on.

They talked about hydrogen development has a global focus and advances in technologies and how they were seeking partnership, Madam Speaker. And what, again, what caught my interest was that this most recent or the last announcement was from November 18th, 2003, so, again, 13 years ago. Thirteen years ago, the hydrogen fuel cell strategy of the NDP doesn't even note even the barest of mention in the 2015 Speech from the Throne. It's just another dead end that this government has gone down that allowed them to cut a lot of ribbons, to issue a whole lot of news releases, and I have no doubt that a few trees were felled in the issues of those news releases.

Again, if any MLA from across the way wants to follow me and provide an update to this House about the great work that Manitoba's hydrogen steering committee has done in the last 13 years, and about the location of these hydrogen fuel cell stations and the stationary fuel cell demonstration projects, and so on and so forth, and where I could find that budgetary information on to the economic impact it had on our province, I'd be more than willing to take that into account.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, that I always find of interest, and I'll be honest, with amusement, not just with this Throne Speech but with any speech or any comment that comes from the members opposite, they love to comment that under their benevolent rule that we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, that we have the strongest economy in Canada, that things are all sunshine and roses.

And, Madam Speaker, so I hear that, and yet I'm having—I struggle to circle the square when HungerCount 2015 releases an annual report on food bank uses prepared by Food Banks Canada. And it showed that 63,791 Manitobans used a food bank in the month of March. I mean, that is a phenomenal 'munner'—number: 64,000 Manitobans used a food bank in the month of March in 2015. And as noted—and that's enough people to fill the MTS Centre more than four times over and accounts for one in 20 Manitoba adults and one in 10 Manitoba children, the highest proportions in any jurisdiction in this entire country. And that the

total food bank use in Manitoba, in March, was up 3 and a half per cent over the year before and a whopping 57.6 per cent compared with 2008.

So, again, Madam Speaker, I don't see any reference whatsoever in this entire Throne Speech from—read the other day by Lieutenant Governor Filmon to the government's goal of reducing our reliance on food bank usage. I find no reference to the fact that one in 10—which, again, should be a shocking number to every MLA in this House—that one in 10 Manitoba children rely on a food bank, that 64,000 Manitobans rely on the use of a food bank to provide those nutritional requirements, much less, you know, food—or much less shelter and anything else and clothing and so on that we—all MLAs—have the great benefit of taking for granted.

And, instead, we have a government that will more than happily reach and pat themselves on the back about economy this and unemployment that, and yet there is no reference or no explanation if that things are so rosy how 64,000 people in this province have to go to a food bank every single month and ask for help. That's one in 20 adults in this province of Manitoba have to go to their local food bank and say, can you please help me; I have no food; I have no money. And, yet, if members opposite happened to be there, I am sure they would fill their bellies full of tales of low unemployment and strongest economies and so on and so forth, Madam Speaker, but unfortunately, those things don't really have a high nutritional content.

Madam Speaker, what was also interesting in the government's Throne Speech, again, in things that they do not mention, is their war, their ongoing war—or maybe that's too strong of a word; we'll say conflicts and disagreement with the cottagers here in this province of Manitoba. There's almost 7,000 cottagers in this province probably representing close to 25,000 Manitobans who, by family or friend extension, enjoy that. These are individuals that have been vilified by this government. I know the Whiteshell Cottagers Association has been leading the charge in this fight against the 750 per cent service fee increases and 250 per cent lease increases imposed by this government.

They noted in recent correspondence to the Premier (Mr. Selinger) that we are deeply troubled by the Premier and the former minister's public

betrayal of cottagers as, quote, fat cats, end quote, who freeload off the public purse. The truth is that cottagers have a median income that is no different from that of average Manitobans. Cottagers pay far more into provincial coffers than the costs the province attributes to us. Who is subsidizing whom? Cottagers are prepared to pay park service fees that are fair, supported by data and implemented in accordance with the parks act, but we refuse to be railroaded into paying for services we don't receive and do not have a chance to comment on as required by the act.

* (15:20)

So, once again, we have a government that has legislation that binds it to a course of action, and despite very clear legislation, they choose to ignore that legislation, Madam Speaker. And I guess, I mean, considering their decision to completely ignore the referendum provisions within the taxpayer accountability act, it's no surprise that they would continue to ignore legislation surrounding the concept of accountability when it comes to cottagers. But instead they decided it's easier to vilify cottagers, to place all the province's woes on those cottagers.

In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they don't go to those 64,000 Manitobans who are using food banks every single month and say, well, if it wasn't—if it was only—if only the cottagers would pay their fair share, then we could work on your situation. But these cottagers, Madam Speaker, instead of being fat cats, these are individuals that have made choices, choices to divert funds, and instead of going on vacations perhaps to another province, to another jurisdiction and such, which many individuals do and that is their right to do, they choose instead to put those funds into a lifelong legacy of cottage life. And it's a life that is now under jeopardy by this government.

The other point that's quite striking within the Throne Speech, Madam Speaker, is the government appears to have simply just thrown up its hands when it comes to the economy and the idea of fiscal balance despite running on a commitment to balance the books by 2012, by—despite extolling the virtues of returning to balance and putting that into a legal framework and then changing that framework and then changing that framework again. And I understand we'll be changing that framework again because it's—the

government finds it—the NDP find it far easier to change the laws than to live within them.

And so we find no reference whatsoever again, and if members opposite can point it out, I'll be more than willing to stand and rise and correct the record, but no reference to the fact that the NDP have posted seven straight budget deficits. And, in fact, since the MLA for St. Boniface has become Premier (Mr. Selinger), in his short tenure as Premier in the last several years, he has literally doubled the provincial debt that it has taken 128 years to accumulate to date.

And the issue, Madam Speaker, isn't—is more than just the debt; it is where the debt is. And it is a structural deficit that this government has, in that they are simply on a daily basis spending in excess of \$6 million more than they are taking in in terms of taxes. And apparently they have—this government is clear in announcement after announcement, in spending announcement after spending announcement, that they have zero interest in actually reining in their spending.

And they'll rise today, and the member today in their daily planted question of news release of the day, Madam Speaker, talked about infrastructure announcements and they mentioned some of the proposes, their proposed changes to interchanges around the Perimeter. And I listened to that with great interest because one of those interchanges is in my own area: Highway 3, McGillivray right by Oak Bluff. It is a godawful intersection, resulting in a number of accidents, a very, very busy intersection and a number of my constituents were quite excited when they heard this announcement. But the challenge was when they pressed for details—can we find out any information as to when this will occur? Well, apparently, according to the NDP, this will—there is a commitment to begin construction no later than 2022. So it isn't even that there's a commitment to complete it; there's only a commitment to start it sometime down the road, not even within their next mandate but it would have to be their next, next mandate.

And not only that but the same government that has shown a complete inability to manage this province's books reinforced that view of their fiscal ineptitude when they gave a dollar range for these projects, ranging from 400 to 800 million dollars. I mean, that is a phenomenal spread, Madam Speaker—a \$400-million spread, essentially

a doubling of the budget, and it only makes one wonder what it will ultimately be in 2099. I'm not sure when the NDP will ultimately get these projects done, and yet the situation is almost, unfortunately, laughable in that a lot of these interchanges that they need to fix are of their own making. I look to my own residence of—where 330 hooks into the Perimeter, and the government solution? Put in a set of lights. Go down two, three miles down the road where Route 90 is now punched out to the Perimeter. What's there? More lights.

In my community of Niverville, there's been an atrocious number of very horrific accidents at 59 and 311, Madam Speaker, and only by the grace of God was the most recent one, in which an individual was literally pulled from the burning wreckage, was there no loss of life. There's been protests or demonstrations within that community demanding action by this NDP government—long, long overdue action on that section of 59.

So, again, what is the government solution? Set of lights, Madam Speaker. So, again, it's always interesting that the government wants some sort of credit and, obviously, they're looking for political credit to take this action on starting a project in 2022. So, again, it's quite unfortunate that we have to do that.

The government also puts out, Madam Speaker, on an annual basis, a financial report, and in those financial reports they talk about how one of the key measurements of a province's fiscal health is that of its debt-to-GDP levels. But again no mention—no mention whatsoever that the debt—this NDP's government debt-to-GDP ratio has increased every single year since 2007, and that its debt as a percentage of revenue has increased the past six years and now stands at 128 per cent; that, again, that things are so bad that the credit agencies which warned and warned and warned this Premier (Mr. Selinger), this government, this Cabinet, and every single MLA around that there needed to be seen a willingness to reign in your finances or there would be consequences, ignored that advice.

They thumbed their nose at that advice and, again, it's not that my generation will pay the price. Unfortunately, it's my children and their children that will ultimately pay that price, because as I noted, that interest rates will go up. I'm sure we've all heard the stories from our parents about the

mortgages in the '70s and the '80s and the 18 and 19 per cent mortgages, so you can only imagine if, according to the Department of Finance, a 1 per cent change in interest rates adds \$25 million to debt servicing costs, what a, you know, a 10 or 20 per cent interest rate will mean, and if you think—if Manitobans think that times are challenging now, I can only imagine how they will be when that chicken comes home to roost, unfortunately, due to action or inaction by today's NDP, Madam Speaker.

But a lot of those Manitobans have made the decision, Madam Speaker, to simply make their way away from Manitoba, and I note that on November 10th in 2015 the most recent Manitoba economic highlights says, and I quote: The net interprovincial out-migration for the 12 months of June 30th, 2015, totalled approximately 7,800 persons.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So that's 7,800 people, almost 10,000 Manitobans who made that decision to leave this province because they were just tired of this NDP government, tired of its broken promises, tired of their inability to contain their spending, tired of their inability to fulfill commitments they had made. One of those constituencies, Mr. Speaker, was that of the Manitoba Metis Federation, which noted that the Speech from the Throne barely mentioned anything about the province's Metis. To think that this NDP government has not consulted—

* (15:30)

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Order. The honourable member's time on this matter has expired. Thank you for your remarks.

We now recognize the honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I always take pleasure and I'm always delighted to be able to stand up and put some facts on the record. There are some facts that have been ignored throughout any of the speeches that there been delivered by the opposite side.

Number 1 is that they still deny climate change. They still believe that there's no global warming, and they're stuck because to do so would be to flip and flop. To change their position is to flip and then flop some more. And one of the

things that I researched on are the effects of climate change that are in the forefront of all our minds—I withdraw that—maybe only on this side's minds. On the other side of the Chamber there appears to be a denial that human health and well-being could be affected by global warming.

While climate change is predicted to result in fewer deaths related to extreme cold events during the winter, warmer summer temperatures, which will be nice, will likely increase the occurrence of heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Extreme weather events such as heat waves and floods can lead to higher incidences of sickness and loss of life.

We have seen it happening all over the world and we have seen it devastate some of the Asian countries, and just last night a windstorm that approached about 110 kilometres per hour hit Vancouver mainland and there were about 50,000 hydro customers—BC Hydro customers who lost power. And the other side, meaning the Conservative side of the House, would still not admit that it should be one of our greatest concerns in our lives, that we need to protect our people and our kids and their kids from this threat of natural disasters that are caused by the human ignorance of preventing the effects on climate.

We have also drinking water supplies that could be affected. It may become contaminated if heavy rainfall events and floods result in bacteria, sewage, fertilizers and other organic wastes being flushed into waterways and aquifers. We have seen that in 2007 and prior to that in 1999 and prior to that in 1997. And then in 2011 we have witnessed extreme excess precipitation.

And the warmer weather could also expand the favourable habitats for diseases and speed up the pathogen development rates. Mosquitoes, ticks and fleas may spread vector-borne illnesses such as West Nile and Lyme diseases to areas where they were not prevalent before.

Let me go to another topic. During the recent federal election, Manitobans and Canadians rejected the politics of pessimism and division. Pessimism in the sense that we were told that we should fear the refugees and we were told that we should exclude people from coming over. Instead, Manitobans and Canadians chose inclusiveness, diversity, a focus on families and respect for environmental and indigenous rights. I'll say that again. Manitobans and Canadians chose

inclusiveness, diversity, a focus on families and respect for environmental and indigenous rights. These are the values that represent Manitoba today, and these are the values that my party, the New Democratic Party, has always promoted, espoused.

We will work with the federal government to lift the cap on immigrants and refugees which has been imposed on Manitoba for too long. We are ready to work with the new federal government to bring refugees to Canada, and it is something that I'm very happy because I have put my name in to adopt a family. And I wish everybody else in this Chamber could do the same thing. Enough talk; let's just do it. We will work with our partners in Settlement Services to ensure refugees get supports when they arrive. Newcomers will get language and literacy training to ensure that they have the tools they need to succeed and feel welcome in our communities.

When I first came here as an immigrant in 1980, I felt really good. At first, I was shocked by the weather. It was -28° with a wind chill factor. I didn't even know what wind chill meant. And then I came to realize that that's the same as being put in a freezer with an air conditioner and a fan on, on high. I didn't know that. And I was dressed only in some of the cheap jackets that I was lent when I first arrived. Being a newcomer then, I realized how welcoming our communities have been. I lived in the North End, and the North End has a special flavour. Most of my neighbours were on social assistance, and most of my neighbours recognized that I was an immigrant because I spoke with a very different accent. And I tried to mimic how they said the Fs and the Ps and the Vs and the Bs because it was a difficult transition for me even if I spoke good English. Pronunciation in the American English style was a little bit difficult for my tongue.

* (15:40)

But then I chose to stay in this province because I saw the resiliency and the love and the warmth of the people that we have here, not only in the North End, also in the West End, also in Tyndall Park. That's where I grew old: Tyndall Park, Weston and Brooklands. That's where I grew my nails. I could have said hair but then I'm losing it, too.

The welcoming mat that was spread out when we first arrived here, my family stepped on it and

became part of the fabric that has made Canada and Manitoba a very different place to be in. We are so different from any state in the US. We are different from any province in Canada. We are very unique in the flavours that we offer. We are very unique in the accents that we have. So when you speak to me and I speak in some English that you might be unable to understand right away, just open the ears in your heart because I will assure you that at least I spoke another language and I'm trying my best to speak yours.

And I have been blessed that I was elected when I was 65—now you know my age—and when I was elected, I didn't realize that I have to contend with politics that are fascinating and both aggravating and also exciting. I take pleasure in the needling that we have between both sides and, of course, the Liberal. When I receive any of the pokes, I think the other side also are expecting some pokes back. And I like that because or else it would be so boring in this Chamber if we did not interact among ourselves.

But, when we get out of this Chamber, we become friends again or at least civil acquaintances. I would always enjoy a drink or two, not because they are cheap but because I just love to drink Scotch.

Some Honourable Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marcelino: You're on.

We have a very strong economic foundation to build on. The Conference Board of Canada projects we will have the strongest economy in Canada in 2016, and that's the truth and that's a fact. It also affirms that our 5.5-billion plan is creating nearly 60,000 good jobs, well-paying jobs. Winnipeg is approaching a population of 1 million and we are committed to a series of forward-looking investments in our capital city to make Winnipeg an attractive and affordable place to raise our families.

I just came from the Sharks right at cityplace on a weekend and I saw, Mr. Speaker, the vibrancy of our downtown—people parking right across the parking lot of cityplace, then going through the shopping mall and then going up to the Shark to eat—not just drink, to eat. And then I said, it's about time for us to go to Mass, too, and St. Mary's Cathedral is right there in the middle of the bustling downtown. Or is it uptown? I'm not sure anymore.

Our downtown has relieved, revived itself. It has been recovered. It used to be dying. *[interjection]* In the '90s. And then we chose to build the MTS, and some folks hated it. I don't know why. Maybe they just didn't like development. They just love to cut. And it's a shame. It's a shame that they still live in the era of those austerity measures that they said, well, we'll balance the budget, we'll balance the budget, and we'll balance the budget. And it's as if the only focus of what their programs might be is austerity. It was rejected, and it was proven to be wrong in Greece. Greece and the Greeks have suffered because of it.

The fear of the other side, the doom and gloom that they seem to enjoy and relish in fostering, is so pessimistic. On this side of the House, we have hope. And we have the good business sense of balancing—balancing—the needs of the economy. No ideology dictates that. It only dictates that we have to look after Manitoba first, not our friends.

As we ramp up our plan, we will strengthen the partnership we have with the City of Winnipeg. This will be an enhanced and flexible partnership totalling \$1 billion over five years of critical infrastructure including roads, public transit, waste water treatment plants and recreation centres. I think one of the recreation centres is now being built and it will be used soon, right at the Garden City. It's huge. I was there. And it's so nice to play soccer indoors. I don't do that anymore.

We will move the rail lines out of Winnipeg to provide new options to address aging infrastructure, make neighbourhoods safer, help families save time on their daily commute and reimagine urban renewal in Manitoba's capital city. We know the effects of severe weather and flooding can have on our communities and recognize the important role surface water management must play in flood control and protecting water quality. The new partnership will modernize public transit that many families rely on while keeping it affordable.

We will invest in more community schools, early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city. We will develop more mixed-use housing for students in partnership with post-secondary institutions such as the University of Winnipeg.

* (15:50)

The Leader of the Opposition should take note of the things people rejected. He is well advised to take note, as in take note, write it down, the idea that you have cut front-line services to balance the book, or the books, at all cost, because during their time there were two sets.

Divisive politics that pit families against each other never worked. Next April, families will choose between two very different futures for Manitoba: the failed policies of deep cuts and privatization that hurt families or a smart, strategic, forward-looking plan grounded on the values and priorities of Manitoba families.

The Leader of the Opposition does not represent average Manitobans. He does not. He's out of touch with the values of everyday families and he's working hard to hide his extreme conservative views—ideologically driven, conservative views. He's in it for his wealthy, well-connected insiders and big business, and there's no doubt about it. His reckless plan to balance the books before it's reasonable to do so means he will be forced to choose between deep cuts to our schools and hospitals—which hospital do you want closed?—cancelling infrastructure or selling off our Crowns like Manitoba Hydro.

The Leader of the Opposition's plan to privatize Manitoba Hydro would cause rates to skyrocket, just like rates skyrocketing after the Conservatives—remember this—privatized MTS and would threaten the affordability that gives our businesses an advantage. His agenda for cuts to services would cancel many of the projects that are making our province an exciting place to live in and visit and providing Manitobans with good jobs.

It's also dismaying to see that the new Liberal leader is leading her party to the right, abandoning the traditional Liberal values that the MLA for River Heights has advocated for too long. It's especially concerning that she's taking a page out of the Leader of the Opposition's Conservative playbook—Conservative playbook script—on privatizing our Crown corporations and cancelling important infrastructure projects that would help revitalize downtown Winnipeg.

I predict that I'll be speaking again during the 2016 Throne Speech and I will praise the programs of government that we have promoted for so long, which is to balance the needs of our people with what we have and what we could gather. It is not a

miracle, it is well designed, it is well thought out. People of the same magnitude of imagination and adventurous spirit have been leading this province for the last 16 years, and we will be leading this province 16 more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Now recognize the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's certainly a pleasure today to enter into debate on this Throne Speech.

First of all, Mr. Acting Speaker, I do want to thank the good people of Spruce Woods for giving me the opportunity to represent them, and it certainly is a great opportunity and I really respect the people in southwestern Manitoba. And certainly there is a lot of good things to see in Manitoba, and I hope members will take the opportunity to visit the southwest part of our province.

I think it's important that you get off the main highways and actually take the opportunity to actually view some of the great scenery we do have and some of those great places that we have and some tremendous places for tourism here in Manitoba as well. I do know that the province is embarking on a pretty major undertaking in Spruce Woods Provincial Park. Obviously, it's going to take a little bit of time to get that completely developed but, hopefully, that will attract tourists back to that particular region.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's becoming very clear that we're getting close to a provincial election, and we can tell with debates in the House that there appears to be two extreme views here, and that's—quite frankly, that's probably a good thing. You know, Manitobans in five months will have the opportunity to decide who they're going to put their trust in, and I think that's really what this election is going to be. It's going to be about which government can they trust.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we've seen this Throne Speech deliver a multitude of promises. Clearly, this speech is designed to be an election—pre-election speech so everybody is going to be awarded something. The question that we have, and I think the question that Manitobans are asking, is: How are Manitobans going to afford all these promises that are on the record? And that really is the context of the decision.

You know, we've seen where the NDP have taken us here. Clearly, they've—under their watch, they've doubled the provincial debt in the Province. Under this current Premier (Mr. Selinger), he's actually taken that debt and doubled it again in six short years. So we have a \$36-billion debt and there's no sign that the NDP are even acknowledging that we have a huge debt to the tune of \$36 billion.

Now we know, Mr. Acting Speaker, that currently we're paying over \$800 million in debt-servicing costs each and every year, and Manitobans recognize that that's \$800 million that can't be used for education; it can't be used for health care; and it can't be used for infrastructure. So, clearly, Manitobans have a right to be alarmed because this particular Throne Speech did not address the fiscal reality that the province is facing.

Clearly, the bond-rating agencies have signalled to Manitoba that there's an issue here, and the government has failed to take notice of those downgrades in our rating which we know, and Manitobans know, will ultimately cost us as Manitobans more money. Clearly, interest rates are going to be changing in the near future and this again will have a major bearing on the finances of the Province.

Today, in question period, Mr. Acting Speaker, we were asking the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) if he was going to provide a budget. You know, to me a budget would go hand in hand with all the promises they're making in today's Throne Speech, because Manitobans will want to know what does it mean to the bottom line. We can make all the promises in the world and everybody gets everything they want, but at the end of the day, taxpayers have to pay for that, and there is only one taxpayer whether they're paying municipal taxes, provincial taxes or federal taxes. There is only one taxpayer, and they ultimately want to know what they're going to be on the hook for. So that's why we've been asking the Minister of Finance is he or is he not going to provide a budget so we know where we're at here in Manitoba.

Now we know they were out doing the dog-and-pony show travelling across the province, saying they were having pre-budget consultation meetings, but we're not sure that they're really serious about providing a budget to Manitobans.

So that is the interesting part of the debate, Mr. Acting Speaker. Clearly, we're hearing from the NDP is a campaign of fear, and that campaign has started already. If you can't run on your own record after 16 years, what's the alternative? And the alternative is to try to scare Manitobans into believing that they're the only party to vote for.

* (16:00)

Now, we are going to put our record on the line versus their record over the last 16 years, and we'll let Manitobans decide which party they trust and which party they will trust for the next four years going forward. Manitobans are a trustworthy group. They believe in taking people's word for it. And, unfortunately, this government, this current NDP government, has been misleading Manitobans. And I think the time has come that they have recognized that they have been misled over the years.

And, clearly, the provincial sales tax increase and the broadening of the sales tax on a lot of goods and services still has an issue with many Manitobans. And, when many Manitobans go to vote next April, I'm sure they will be reminded of the broadening of the provincial sales tax and certainly the increase in the provincial sales tax and the fact that this government took away their legislated right to vote on major tax increases.

We know under this government Manitobans are paying more tax than ever before. And the unfortunate part is they're getting less back from the taxes they pay.

If we look at the record of the NDP, it's not a rosy picture. And I'll talk about education for a minute. You know, we have a lot of great educators involved across this province who are educating our children, and I have a lot of respect for the teachers, administrative staff, the assistants, principals, and certainly the administrators and school boards that do a lot of good work around our province. But, certainly, it's direction from the top that I think needs a sober second thought. I think some of the things, the policies, some of the curriculum, are hamstringing the educators in this province to provide, you know, a quality education. And some of those policies can be fairly easily changed—I think would certainly—should help us out in the future.

You know, we look at the results. And that's something the—this particular Throne Speech

doesn't really address. You know, the Throne Speech addresses a lot of spending in a lot of different areas, but it doesn't talk about results. It doesn't talk about how we're getting results and what kind of results we're getting, especially compared to other provinces. So, for instance, on education, when we look at the results, you know, we know we're 10th in reading and writing and the sciences and math. I mean, it's pretty clear; it's time after time. So we have to look at the money we're investing in there and the results we're getting out of it.

And it's not just in education, but the same thing can be said for health care as well. You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're spending more and more money on health care each and every year, but the results aren't there. And that's the unfortunate part, and that's the sort of thing that Manitobans come to expect because Manitobans are a compassionate group, and they're also very, very frugal shoppers. They like to get value for their money. And I would suggest to you that many Manitobans are feeling they're not getting the value for their tax money. And that's why I believe Manitobans are looking for a change, and I think we will hear that message loud and clear come April.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, clearly, when we talk about value for money, we've seen this particular government fail to actually tender a lot of goods and services that they are purchasing on behalf of Manitobans. We certainly have had a lot of debate, a lot of discussion, a lot of questions around the Tiger tubes and the lack of the tendering process therefore. Clearly, the laws are in place where if the government does not tender contracts, they are to be put on the public record so that the information is made available to Manitobans. They, in fact, broke their own law by not putting those untendered contracts on the public record. And that's something that Manitobans, I think, are becoming more and more aware of.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, if we reflect back to just prior to the last provincial election, the biggest untendered contract of them all was for an air ambulance service, \$143 million contract that was not tendered certainly has left a lot of questions with many Manitobans, and I think Manitobans will be remembering that when they go to the polls next April.

And we want to talk about common sense as well. I just want to mention that because Manitobans, I believe, are—some of them have some of the most common sense of any Canadians across our great country, and the issue that keeps coming up in my area, and I think it's becoming more and more readily available across the province, is the whole issue of Manitoba Hydro. Clearly, the NDP are driving Manitoba Hydro and making decisions at Manitoba Hydro as opposed to the administration of Manitoba Hydro. If we look at the Bipole III fiasco, Mr. Acting Speaker, clearly Manitobans who have common sense would recognize putting a hydro transmission line on the west side of the province going almost to Saskatchewan and then back to the east side of Winnipeg is the wrong move.

Now, we're optimistic that it's maybe not too late to turn that back. But we really don't know what kind of contracts the NDP have signed on our behalf, so it may be a situation that's hard to get out of. But many Manitobans will recognize that as certainly a boondoggle, one of the biggest boondoggles of all time, and, again, billions of dollars at stake on that particular issue alone.

I did hear the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino) talk about overland flooding, and certainly a lot of people have been impacted by flooding the last few years, and certainly the producers in the Assiniboine Valley downstream from the Shellmouth reservoir have been impacted, I think, three out of the last four years, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, the NDP government appear to be hiding behind their own legislation. So they're not actually paying claims due to the artificial flooding at Shellmouth Dam.

And certainly the artificial flooding was caused by this government themselves, and I believe they're not dealing with those claimants in an upfront manner, Mr. Acting Speaker. In fact, the—my understanding is the claims were just opened for the 2014 flood, so there's a lot of catch-up work to do from 2010, '11, and '12, and then now we're not even dealing with the flood of '14 as yet. So certainly a lot of work that has to be done there.

The other thing I do want to talk about in my critic role in terms of mineral resources, I had to go back; I thought maybe I'd missed something completely in the Throne Speech. But I had to go back and have a read through it just to see if I

actually did hear the speech wrong in case there was actually no mention of mining. But I did actually—went through the speech and I did find a line in there and mining was actually mentioned once. It was mentioned in regard to a few other things, but in—the whole principle of mining was really not addressed in the Throne Speech.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, the—I'm looking forward to getting over to the mining conference that's on just a few blocks over. It just started this afternoon and I'm looking forward to getting over there to have a visit with the folks in the mining industry. But we certainly have been having conversations with the folks in the mining industry over the last several months and several years and, you know, we are hearing from the industry that there are pretty grave concerns in that particular industry, certainly that commodity prices are very poor at this point in time, but it's also alarmingly clear that NDP policy and government policy have a tremendous bearing on the investment of—in the industry.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, we talk about exploration, for example, which, in my view, is the lifeblood of the mining industry. You know, if we can't attract investment for exploration here in the province, it's hard for us to find a new mine if we can't have the money here to explore and determine where the next mine could be.

So, when we look at the picture—you know, we're down about—compared to the rest of the country, we only take in about 1.6 per cent of all the exploration dollars across the country are actually invested here in Manitoba—1.6 per cent, Mr. Acting Speaker. Now that—that's an alarming statistic because we, in Manitoba, have some of the best resources available across the country.

* (16:10)

So, obviously, the mining sector is not coming to Manitoba to explore, and there has to be a reason for that. And the reason for that is government policy, and it's government policy that has to change so that investment is more attractive here in the province of Manitoba. And the industry has been telling us this for years.

You know, clearly, the province isn't providing any direction in terms of clarity around parks and protected areas. Certainly, there was talk about more protected areas in this year's Throne Speech, but what it does now, it creates more

uncertainty for the industry because they don't know which parts of the province are going to be established and protected, so it adds more uncertainty to it because the government has never come out and said and never offered a real area and opportunity for discussion about what those protected parts would look like and what it could mean for mining and what it could mean for exploration in the very near future.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we also have a—and the province has a duty to make sure that they have a consultation process to First Nations, Aboriginals, Metis and the business community, and it's up to the province to make sure they develop that framework. And because the government here has failed to develop a framework, it's left a lot of uncertainty with First Nations communities and the business community, and it's the old adage that money goes where it's wanted. And this government has not shown that money and investment in exploration in mining is not wanted in Manitoba. And that's a sad state of affairs. You know, it wasn't many years ago we were one of the best—actually, the best province for mining in the world. And, unfortunately, under the NDP, we've dropped the ball there, and we've slipped way down.

I do want to mention, too, the tax structure here in Manitoba. In fact, we have people like Jack Mintz, economist Jack Mintz, saying that Manitoba mining is the most heavily taxed of all the provinces. And he goes on to say that Manitoba's mining tax regime is among the least efficient in Canada. Now, when you compare that to other jurisdictions, and that's what mining companies do when they look to invest in jurisdictions, they have to have a look at what the tax regime is. And, clearly, our tax regime is not competitive with other jurisdictions. And I know the mining association has talked to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar); they've talked to the Minister responsible for Mineral Resources. And they've asked for some changes; at least have a look at these changes, review these changes for the industry. And we've asked for these changes as well, but the government has failed to address any changes on the mining sector. So it's the same old story, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's broken promises in the mining sector. And it's unfortunate.

And I know we have a court case on the go right now. I think, actually, there's a couple of legal proceedings going on with the Manitoba

government relative to the mining sector. And the one that I will speak of is because the Province dropped the ball on a permitting application. You know, five and six years later, there has been absolutely no response to the permit application. There was not a yes or a no or a maybe or we'll wait and see. It was just no response at all. So, unfortunately, you know, the investors there, because of some of the tax rules, actually lost money that they had sitting on there to invest in Manitoba. Unfortunately, that pool of resources ended up going to Ontario because even the Ontario government had a better permitting process than what we have in Manitoba. So, as a result, we've lost that investment. We have prospectors that are so frustrated with the NDP government they've had nothing left to do but to take them to court. And that is just a terrible way to do business in Manitoba, and that's the sort of stories that get spread around other jurisdictions throughout the mining industry, and that's just a red face for Manitoba in terms of investment, trying to attract investment dollars in Manitoba.

And it's pretty clear that the investment dollars are global in nature. You know, it's not that we're competing with just other provinces, but we're looking at countries, multinational companies that are looking to invest around the world. So we have to do everything we can possibly and, from a policy perspective, to make sure that we can attract that investment in the mining industry here in Manitoba, and, clearly, we have to work in conjunction with stakeholders, all stakeholders. And we have to be doing mining investment and mining operations in a prudent manner, certainly with respect to the environment, and I think those things can be done hand in hand. But we have to have a framework that reflects a positive environment, a forward industry, and we hope that the government will take a serious look at some of those things that we think can be done.

And I'm hoping that when the minister's at the mining conference this week as well that he will be listening to the people within the industry to hear what they have to say, and I'm hoping—I know there's a section on First Nations and relations there—I'm hoping he will get a read from the First Nations community about how frustrated they have been as well without having a policy framework established for the consultation package.

There's an opportunity here, a win-win for everybody; the problem is we have to get the NDP

back on track. The NDP has to get back on track to make sure that we have the full potential of Manitoba realized here, and certainly this is one of the sectors I think can be a positive for Manitoba. But we have to have the framework there to do that. And those are the kinds of signals that both the industry and First Nations communities and Metis communities are looking for. They're looking for a signal from this government to get the job done.

Ms. Jennifer Howard, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair.

Madam Acting Speaker, you know, we look forward on this side of the House to working as a team. We work as a team together, and clearly the NDP are not; and not only can we work as a team, but I think we could work well as a team with all Manitobans and all Manitoba stakeholders to move this province forward.

You know, we obviously—as legislators, we have chosen to raise our families here, and we want to ensure that our families have the opportunity to stay in Manitoba, to live in Manitoba, to work in Manitoba, to prosper in Manitoba. I think we're all—have the same idea; we obviously have differences of opinion in terms of how we want to get there. But that really is—at the end of the day, it's about developing a better Manitoba not just for us but for our kids and our grandkids to come, and that will be the challenge and that will be the discussion, Madam Acting Speaker, as we move closer to the April election.

So we certainly look forward to more discussion and an opportunity for us to lay out our platform as we get closer to the election, and we'll let Manitobans decide next April which direction they want to take and which type of government they will put their trust in.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): It is truly my pleasure to make some comments for the record on the Throne Speech. Obviously, as we listen to the members opposite, it almost feels like they should consider an acting career because there's doom and gloom and there's horror stories of all kinds, kind of like the Halloween story I sense that we tend to focus on once in a while.

But truly, you know, first and foremost, I'm very proud to come from an agriculture farm

family that existed for 35 years and continues to exist. Obviously, the members opposite choose not to talk about agriculture whatsoever. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition, when he had the alternative throne speech, he indicated that he was born and raised on a farm, and that's all he said. He had no alternative solutions what they may do. If they were so lucky to get elected in the next term, what would they do different as far as what the NDP party has done for the Department of Agriculture and for the rural farm families and the rural economy in the province of Manitoba?

Let me just—let me share some actual documentation that maybe the members opposite should be made aware of. Agriculture is 8 per cent of the provincial GDP, a major driver of the economics that we have in this great province, and we continue to grow because food and economic development have hand in hand. We have a world population that is starving for the great food we grow, locally processed food, locally manufactured food, locally machinery manufact—this all plays into the beauty of what agriculture contributes to the province of Manitoba.

*(16:20)

And yet I don't think members opposite really feel like other than them doing a survey, and when we talk about 34,000 Manitobans that are employed or off the farm, they took a survey by four individuals and they deemed agriculture was not being properly served. I wonder if they happen to have those forty individuals on speed dial that they maybe refer to on a regular basis—give me some negativity news so I can use it politically to deswine how the agriculture situation is or how our party, the NDP party, is doing in the province of Manitoba.

You know what, Manitoba is truly blessed with 18 million acres of farmland. And there's about 19,000 farms that represent an investment of \$31.5 billion in land, building and equipment. You know what, last year, in 2014, \$5.9 billion was in farm cash receipts. That is what we've contributed, and we continue to work with agriculture producers when we talk about the importance—not when the members opposite sat on their hands and they chose not to support the Canadian Wheat Board. You know, here we go, we've lost great economic employment opportunities that existed in the city of Winnipeg and throughout the province of Manitoba. And

now we see the price of wheat—and if you may recall, now let's go back on some memory of 2012 when the federal Agriculture minister was in Perdue, Saskatchewan, the big announcement in the western producer: producers across Canada guaranteed \$8 to \$10 a bushel for their wheat, right. You don't have to start your augers in January, February, because all your grain's going to be moved to the appropriate ports.

Today we talk to producers in Swan River, we talk to producers in the valley area: what are they getting for their wheat? They're lucky if they're getting \$5 a bushel for their wheat. That is the sad reality that we talk about. The Conservative, the Harper government, the Pallister comparisons of where we see similarities—*[interjection]*—my apologies, my apologies, okay—Leader of the Opposition chose to go on that side of the fence.

So I am somewhat disappointed that we know the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba and we continue to fight for the importance of the farmers. Let's go back on the grain movement, when we were told in the transition of the separation of the single-desk opportunities. At least when the single desk—Canadian Wheat Board was there, they were able to supervise and maintain the opportunities of the maintaining proper movement of grain in the province of Manitoba. But, once we had the demise of single desk, there was nobody left to somewhat police it.

Unfortunately, producers in the province of Manitoba and Canada suffered because unfortunately, what we had was vessels waiting at the west coast, and we refer to that—demurrage charges, as ships are being ordered to come in and to bring—and rail to co-ordinate grain movement into the ships. And the longer they wait for a designated arrival of the ships or the opportunity to offload the grain into the ships, is that what we have is producers will be faced or be penalized because the grain was not loaded appropriately on the ships. So those are referred to demurrage charges.

Now, based on the survey that was done by a university prof from Saskatchewan said producers probably lost close to \$2—a Mr. Gray—lost to \$2 a bushel a week. Just in the Swan Valley alone that was close to \$2 million lost in revenue to producers in that area.

And what we see, opportunity of the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba, and we talk about the doom and gloom that members opposite refer to. And our Throne Speech, Deputy Speaker, refers to the importance of agriculture, and I'm very proud to say that I spent 35, 40 years of my life in the agriculture industry and I still am quite involved in it. And I see, I truly see the hard-working farm families that continue to work for the betterment of small communities and rural communities.

I've witnessed the challenges that the producers face when MTS was sold, the cellphone service. But it took the Throne Speech that was announced that we're going to provide the opportunity to expand cellphone coverage and to the areas that obviously, on the greed of private shareholders of MTS, chose not to invest into areas that cellphone coverage is very important and broadband service is the key to our economy in the province of Manitoba.

We've taken the initiative, and that was announced in our Throne Speech, and the importance that they choose not to consider and will not want to consider that, to me that is troubling, because what we see on that side of the House is a two-tier health-care system. We see the chance of destroying the rural economy that is being developed over the last number of years of good opportunities, and I'm very, very disappointed.

But the other thing that's very key in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is the investment that this government has taken towards highway infrastructure. With the challenges that we face in rail movement, the best alternative is to continue to put large dollars and smart investments into highway infrastructure.

Ironically, newly elected Prime Minister, the Liberal government, says, we have to start investing in infrastructure. Hello, the Province of Manitoba thought of that two years ago. What we have is people following the lead that we've invested. We come up with the idea, and we continue to invest in the importance of the highway infrastructure as we continue to work forward.

And you know what? Unfortunately, I hear that members opposite are somewhat chirping on the sidelines, as I see it.

And you know what? Paving to Steinbach, paving to Neepawa, paving down to No. 1 Highway, paving down to No. 10 to Swan River to north. And let's go back—let's go back—into the '90s when highway budgets were set aside. Today, Mr. Speaker, is what we see is what was invested when—in the '90s was at about 2 per cent of the provincial money was spent in probably central and northern Manitoba. Today we have exceeded 15 to 18 per cent. We've set our priorities to share highway infrastructure throughout the whole province of Manitoba, and we will continue to work with the importance of it.

We all know the importance of safety, the opportunities of movement of cargo and the importance how that plays into rural and agriculture economy in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. *[interjection]* Well, it's ironic that members opposite should say that, but you know what? As we talk about surface water management and maybe what we have to talk about is the opportunity that people are moving the province, well, maybe part of it is due to some water that probably wasn't properly controlled in jurisdictions that are probably in the surface 'waterment.'

And it was quite ironic, and I'm sure the MLA for Brandon maybe read the last week's article in the Brandon Sun where we had some producers talk about the Assiniboine valley and was quite opinionated when we refer to a speaker from Saskatchewan talking about, we have to deal with our surface water management in the Province of Saskatchewan; we're going to sign an MOU with the Province of Manitoba, but it's going to take us 10 years—it's going to take us 10 years. And I'm sure the MLA from the Russell area is quite familiar with what I'm talking about, and the individual, she knows personally.

But you know what? It's too bad that it took that long for that to be recognized as our province has to deal with watershed problems, watershed management, that should've been done years and years ago, but as the landowner says, Mr.—the Premier from Saskatchewan wants to look after his big buddies and they can do whatever they want to do and start digging wherever they want and bring water out in this area. That is too—that is totally, totally unrespectable when it comes to watershed management.

And if—I sense by the 'positive' comments that the members opposite are talking about, they

support that 'idology' of doing that type of surface water management, and we talk about the importance of working together in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Obviously, I'm sensing it's only their way, no other way. So it's really too bad that we have to go into that form of a conversation.

You know, when we do a comparison between the federal and the provincial governments, and we talk about Mr. Harper and members opposite, and let's do some fair comparisons. Let's talk about community pastures. Let's talk about community pastures that they chose. I did not see—I did not see—one hand come up and support the fact whether they wanted community pastures. It took this government, it took this Province, to stand up for the young generation individuals in the cattle operations to provide—to provide—an opportunity to use community pastures.

*(16:30)

But also, Deputy Speaker, the other key 'imponent' is the ecological and goods opportunities that community pastures serve as a retention pond area for wildlife management. We talk about climate change; we talk about restoration of trees, the native grasses. I did not hear one chirp from members opposite, so, in other words, what they're telling me, they supported selling off of community pastures, not being involved to save farm families, whether you're in the cattle industry.

Mr. Speaker, I went through the BSE crisis—13 years of challenges, and there's a few of them on that side experienced it as well. Unfortunately, they're not on the side of trying to help out the young beef producers to come back into existence because the challenges still exist and the scars still exist with that, to get the young producers back into the industry, and I'm very disappointed that they chose not to support it. What we talk about, the BSE crisis continues to happen, and the challenges we face. Unfortunately, our numbers, our cattle numbers are what they were in the 1960s, and there are the challenges to get them to rebuild.

Now I do know that they tend to bring up the province of Saskatchewan on a regular basis, and I do want to share some documentation that indicates, truly, about the great program we've got in the province of Manitoba called crop insurance. Crop insurance has the greatest uptake across

anywhere in Canada. We have in excess of 90 per cent of our landowners that are involved in crop; 92 per cent I believe are enrolled in crop insurance, and the reason being is that when you are to compare a program that exists with Saskatchewan crop insurance and the Manitoba crop insurance, identical programs that are offered when we talk about excess moisture insurance coverage and hail coverage, there is, Deputy Speaker, there is a \$20 per acre difference of a premium. They're paying \$46 an acre in Saskatchewan; we're paying \$22 an acre. That is what this government is committed to help out producers sustain an insurance-based program to provide some financial stability for them. And yet they favour the other side.

That is totally, totally uncalled for. And we talk about the importance of agriculture. We talk about the importance as Agriculture Minister. I stand up here today on behalf of the NDP party that we will continue to support agriculture and a number of factions, whether it's small-scale food processors or whether it's opportunities to provide additional programs, and we know full well—we know full well—there is financial risk continues to evolve, but do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We cannot—we cannot—afford to see what's happened with the single desk and farmers trying to sustain a living at \$5 a bushel of wheat, because that is not going to be enough to keep them in existence, and I hear nothing from the members opposite about the challenges that we faced and the producers faced when single desk because nobody's been monitoring it and nobody chooses to monitor it in whatever way that they choose not to.

What we talked about was back in the '90s, Deputy Speaker. We talk about the '90s when producers, when the members opposite were in government and there was a call for excess moisture insurance program. That side of the House did not consider that at all. No sooner we got into it, we brought the program in. What we see today is the importance of putting various insurance programs that exist today, in fact, to the point where excess moisture program has exceeded beyond their budgetary amount almost to the point where it's a \$200-million deficit right now. But you know what? No, this government still maintains and supports crop insurance and excess moisture and we will continue to move forward in that perspective.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

But, you know, I think what's more troubling is that the visionary of members opposite really don't—really—always want to set the tone of doom and gloom of what exists in the province of Manitoba, and that, to me, is really troubling. What we see on the opportunity to continue to work towards, in partnership with the numerous business opportunities that exist in the province of Manitoba.

You know, we've had the opportunity to talk with municipal governments and, Mr. Speaker, it was truly my pleasure to serve on municipal council for a better part of 20 years, and that is truly the opportunity when we talk about rural economic development and the opportunity of moving forward on the importance of supporting agriculture programs, and we will continue to do that in the near future and will forever and ever.

So I think my time is near an end here, and I will definitely sit back and listen to the opportunities to hear what has been mentioned in the Throne Speech. But I do know this, is that we continue to look at opportunities to provide economic development and rural development. Cellphone, definitely, is definitely the one thing that we are really going to invest in. We talked about opportunities, highway infrastructure development. We talk about partnerships that we work with a number of other departments. And the other thing, we continue to invest in health care in the rural areas. We continue to invest in classrooms and education.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we had a numerous announcements when we talk about the apprenticeship programs that exist today and the opportunity where some families are really financially challenged to be relocating to larger centres. We are trailing those apprenticeship programs closer to home so the young students don't have to travel any great distance; they can stay home and still continue to get a good-quality education and continue to work in the trades industry.

As we all know, whether it be the mechanics, whether it be the carpenters, whether it be the plumbers of the world, the future, we all know there's a definite need for an opportunity of the tradespeople to continue to provide services in small, rural communities. And, in fact, that just indicates the importance of cellphone and high-speed Internet that we see as an opportunity.

I just want to finish my commentary about what the Province of Manitoba has invested in as far as the NDP party, and we will continue to make investments. As we talk about Grain Innovation Hub, which is a new project that we talk about, the Province has committed \$12 million as we talk about research and innovation dealing with new plants and new varieties in partnership with the federal government. The other thing that's very key, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have is the opportunity of CCARM, which is the research laboratory at the St. Boniface hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about flaxseed of the world, we talk about the hemp seed of the world, we talk about the buckwheats of the world, we talk about crops that are traditionally grown in the province of Manitoba. And in the last number of years, we've found alternative uses for them. And, obviously, the word being pharmaceutical, 'nudaceutical' is the true benefit. And we talked about the opportunity of added value of agriculture products we grow in the province of Manitoba and sustaining additional dollars to the niche markets or other producers that exist here in the province of Manitoba. And we know there's definitely a need. And let me say, it was my true privilege to be on a trade mission to China, and when we talked about the opportunity of the flaxseed in the 'nudaceutical' and pharmaceutical world, the keen interests exists with them and continues to exist with them as we continue to network with them to provide opportunities of partnerships moving forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's—it is truly my pleasure to sit back and support—to support the Throne Speech we have, not the negativities members opposite talk about. It's an investment; it's an opportunity to see the economics grow in the province of Manitoba. And I'm very proud to stand here and represent the NDP party, the Agriculture Minister and also the rural economy because how often can we say when members opposite were existed as government that there was a chance that they could stand up and say that we are the lowest unemployment in the province and we are the second best economy in the province of—in Canada. That is a great record that I think members opposite can't really talk about too much. And we still maintain the doctors and the teachers that are so crucial in this economy in the province of Manitoba and the farm families who work so hard in their daily occupation to provide food but also bring the economics benefits that we have in the

province of Manitoba because of the agriculture producers that exist today and the added value through processors.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly my pleasure to stand up and speak on behalf of rural Manitoba, the government of Manitoba and the importance of agriculture. Thank you so much.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): I would like to give—great pleasure to rise today to speak to the amendment of the Speech from the Throne moved by the Leader of the Opposition and the member of Fort Whyte. And, Mr. Speaker, the amendment moves that the Leader of the Opposition is telling in composition.

Before I get into—put some words on the record about the Throne Speech, the—I would like to give condolences to the victims and the survivors of the terrorist attack that happened in France this past Friday. Again, it's just devastating to have anybody who knew somebody who had been there in France to actually be—have exposed to the carnage and the horrifying sights that happened there that last week.

* (16:40)

Also, what I would like to also put on the record here is to honour my colleagues who won't be running for re-election in the next general election on April 19th, 2016, and for the colleagues of the member from River East and the members from Riding Mountain and Agassiz, those three individuals I've been honoured to be part of their team. And, when I got elected, I remember the member from River East phoned me from California to wish me the best just before my swearing-in ceremony, and that meant a lot to me. It's—again, it's being part of a team and us going forward here as the PC caucus. It's great. And I'm honoured to be part of this team and to be actually have experiences working with my colleagues from Riding Mountain and River East and Agassiz.

I've learned a lot from them, and I'm hoping for the best in their future. And, hopefully, we will continue to keep in touch, close in touch, and there's not too many towns of this—the size of Russell, Manitoba, that actually has produced two MLAs that were born in that town, myself and the member from River—Riding Mountain. It's good country, God's country, and I'm proud to be part of there and it's proud to represent Arthur-Virden. And I've been honoured to represent the wonderful

people of Arthur-Virden in my constituency, and being there for over 20 years, I've got to know a lot of people and again having faith in me and coming to represent, to be a voice. And, especially with this dysfunctional government, it's always nice to be—have that support backing me.

And I also want to also give my—all the best to the NDP MLAs who resigned during the last session, the member from Southdale and the member from Gimli. I've actually had great experiences with my—with members opposite to talk about some other issues, especially when it came to education; or, at the time when I first got elected or when it came to health, I was able to work with them and talk with them about some of the issues that happened in my constituency.

And also wish all the best for the members who are not going to be on the other side, the opposite side, that's not going to be seeking re-election, like the member from Seine River and the member from Assiniboia and from Dauphin and I think—

An Honourable Member: Tyndall Park.

Mr. Piwniuk: Yes, I don't—Tyndall Park?

But, anyways, again the Throne Speech, having to listen to that and it was—the message was delivered nicely by our LG. I was so proud to see her up there giving the address of the Throne Speech, but it's too bad about the content. You know, she had no other choice but to read it, and good for her.

And, when I look at this Throne Speech, it was not a throne speech; it was more like a campaign speech. And, again, there's a lot of these—a lot of the items that should've have been done in the last 16 years is now being promised to be done in the next four years, and I think Manitobans are sick of NDP broken promises and they're not going to be fooled this time around.

They were fooled last time when this NDP government knocked on doors and said that they weren't going to raise the PST, and then right after just before that they added items. And I remember being an insurance broker in my office and having to now collect PST on insurance premiums when it came to house insurance, commercial insurance, and one day I just got a bill from one of my properties and I actually had to pay \$425 just in PST. This is added revenue for this province from this NDP government and what I was told after

that there was a—then a year later they raised the PST on top of that. And that's—that was probably about the time when I decided if there was ever opportunity to run and to do anything to make sure that it'd make a difference either to help out the next general election and I was—promised to do as much as I can to have that happened, and whoever thought that I was actually running myself when the opportunity came in my riding. And I want to give my—the best to—my congratulations to my predecessor who actually got re-elected in Brandon-Souris during the Conservative—for the general election where we still are opposition, but Larry will do a great job going forward to Parliament.

And we look at some of these broken promises here. A lot of these—now we get these campaign promises. Now we're looking at the Perimeter Highway and with all the—I know when I first moved to the city back in the late '80s, I remember when the Filmon government came into power, we started getting rid of all these traffic lights on the Perimeter Highway. And, then probably in the last 10 years we've been adding more and more traffic lights to the Perimeter. The Perimeter Highway should have been looked after and been an expressway going—since it was being built, you know, there should have been not one street light.

We see Regina, we see Saskatoon, you get onto that Ring Road or Circle Drive in these respective cities and you don't have to stop. You don't have to stop at any street lights. And our Perimeter Highway should have been looked after for the last 16 years, but now these broken promises—and like my member from Morris has said that these projects may not start until 2022. And that's even after one term of—if they do give the promises made and get re-elected, it's still going to be another mandate before that actually happens.

So I think Manitobans are wiser compared to 2011. And they see it for this whole dysfunctional NDP government. You look at the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the leadership race. Where is the leadership? You know, if you have people thinking that he's not listening to his own caucus, how do you think we feel when we're actually representing, as opposition, to ridings where if you have to be on good terms with the leader in order—the Premier in order to get things for your own riding, and how do you feel when we're actually in opposition?

And for our own riding, you know, again, when it came to the 2014 flood, you know, we had to worry about transportation, the roads, and we had to worry about bridges. You know, I always think sometimes there's crisis in opportunities, but now we feel, for our riding, that this crisis now actually has no other choices than to get some better infrastructure for our riding of Arthur-Virden.

I'd like to see more infrastructure reinvestment but, again, once this government gets re-elected, they're really ramping up the last year and a half of infrastructure and just to gearing up for the election. Again, this infrastructure should have been reinvested way back in the last 16 years, and we wouldn't be in this situation where we're actually spending more money now to fix these roads and infrastructure, like bridges and waterways. You know, we need to—we should have been—this government should have been working on these projects a long time ago.

And now in order to get a contract—bid on contracts now, there's less contractors out there, which is the supply, and there's more demand. And now this less supply, more demand means more expensive—I'm not quite sure if this NDP government understands economics, that if you're going to all of a sudden ramp a whole bunch of construction jobs, you are going to have a lot of higher costs when it comes to these jobs.

If they would have been proactive, like we believe that we're going to be when we form government, we're going to be proactive and we're going to get these things done before we don't have to worry about being reactive to situations like infrastructure and when it came to flooding.

Mr. Speaker, also, there's also, when it comes to education, you know, we are known to have one of the worst records on education. We run 10th out of 10, or last. And again, we spent the most—almost as much as Alberta does, in education—our education system, but we have poor results.

Other things that—the untendered contracts, for instance, that was promised during the last election, I remember, you know, when the floods happened in 2011, we—the MTCC actually got the contract of the STARS ambulance to come to do a short-term contract which would start probably from March 'til June. Then it was extended 'til August. And then finally just before the election campaign, all of a sudden there was an

announcement that was going to be rewarded full-time, long-term, tenured contract which was never tendered, and again, it was rewarded to STARS ambulance and helicopter. And again, no tenders were done, and we pay more than Saskatchewan and Alberta for that same service. This shows example of untendered contracts. And I think we spent so much money as a Province now on these untendered contracts, like the Tiger Dams in—that were untendered, the—some of the bridges that were untendered, some of the infrastructure, and now with the air ambulance.

*(16:50)

When I decided to run for MLA, I was in business. Before I had been in business, I learned finance, and that was from the industry that I came from. And where I really valued finance, I—when I went to high school, I remember taking an accounting course, and I felt that, you know, that was something that I was sort of gifted in. I enjoyed accounting; I enjoyed business. I continued focusing on business opportunities.

But, when I grew up, before that, when I was looking at business opportunity—business programs, I was on a farm. And it was a farm that was a dairy farm. And back in the 1970s, early—I was born in '67. When it came to 1972, we actually decided to start a dairy farm. We did have a mixed farming operation. We—I remember we had to get—we had to do a lot of investment that—in the early 1970s, to dig up our whole yard because we didn't have running water in our house. For the first five years, I remember bathing in a bathtub that was put in the kitchen. And we were, as kids, we were the first ones to bath in it. And then, as the water gets refreshed with water, then my parents were the last ones to bath. There was two other brothers I had. And I remember we had to truck water in from the well just to—for drinking water. And I remember the bath. We had to use the outhouse in the summertime and a toilet in the basement in the wintertime.

But I remember the investment my dad, my father, had put into the dairy farm, was that we had to build a bigger barn. We had to buy more cows. I remember we had to provide waterworks throughout the farm, and I remember it hooked up to my grandma's house in the yard and our house. And I remember it was hooked up to the milk house. We had to build a milk house for the milk tank. And I still have vivid memories, and I always

sometimes surprise my parents how much of a memory I have.

I remember even walking one time in the back woods from our house, and I remember my brothers showing me a fort that they built, and I remember stepping on that log, the last one to step on this log, and then all of a sudden, some hornets came, and I remember getting stung 17–13 times. And I remember my parents rushing me to the hospital because of the amount of stings I got. They were scared that I was going into shock. And I remember Russell was 21 miles. Thank God there was emergency room, which we can't count on anymore since this NDP government. And I remember the first thing—and I can—I remember I was three years old and—two or three years old, and my—and I remember being at the Russell corner where the ski hill is now. And I remember a cop stopped my dad for—I thought he was speeding, but the fact was the reason why he stopped my dad was to check for purple gas. Meanwhile, I'm swelling up with bee stings. And finally we got to the hospital. So that's why I'm sort of telling that story is because I had a really good memory, and I really had fond memories how my dad was investing in the dairy farm operation and all the things that we had to do and all the changes to the farm.

But one thing I—that we experienced in the 1980s was all of a sudden with that big investment that we made—interest rates were low at the time, but, as we were going into the late '70s and early '80s, interest rates were starting to accelerate. And I remember between a drought of the 1980s and the interest rate acceleration, we actually, my dad—my—our operation was getting into trouble. We had a lot of debt that we had to pay, almost very similar to what I feel right now with this NDP government, how much spending and how much more they're getting ourselves into debt. What happens, like we experienced in the 1970s, were interest rates had started to rise. That has a big impact when you have debt, when you're financing debt.

And I remember having—making—having to talk with my dad. I was only about 14, 15 years old. And I remember we had to discuss what we were going to do with the farm because if we continue the way we are, we were going to lose the whole operation. And I remember my father had to make the big sacrifice and to sell the dairy cows and to keep the farm operation intact, at least keep

the land. And I remember the sad day when we had to ship the cows. A dairy farmer from the Red River Valley bought our cows and our quota. I remember the sad day because, again, those cows were like our—like, were pets to us. You know, they all had names and—but those experiences—these experiences really stick in your mind because the fact is, we were so close on losing everything, and I feel that when I came into business for myself, I always remember those days, and those days always follow me, and when I made the decision to start my own business, I remember taking the risk.

My dad took the risk and it actually paid off. I'm glad I did take the risk. When I was 26 years old, I started my—I bought the insurance agency that I sold, you know, six years ago now. For 20—for 18 years I was operating it, and my philosophy was always invest, reinvest in your company, look—worry about rainy days. When you're financing, make sure that you get the possible interest rate that you can get, but worry about those days that we could've lost everything. And that was what was on my mind when I was running my business was those days of high interest rates and not making sure that I was prepared if interest rates do rise.

What I find right now, Mr. Speaker, is that across the aisle they don't care about the interest rates rising. They continue spending. They make these promises that they were going to, you know, continue telling Manitobans, saying that we're going to invest into more infrastructure, we're going to do this, we're going to do that—stuff that should've been done in the last 16 years, more responsible and not now having to pay huge costs for these projects that they were promising going forward here.

Like I said, this Throne Speech was more like a campaign speech. And one reason, when someone asked me in my daughter's grade 5 classroom, they asked me why I ran for politics. And the question—the answer that I gave them was that, you know, responsible in one of my—when it comes to my personal finances, my business finances. And I really do believe in government. We need to be responsible. We need to have, you know, making sure that we don't get into trouble. We saw Greece, for instance. The member from Tyndall Park said that's austerity measures. But why do you have austerity measures when you can be fiscally responsible in the first place? And the

thing is, you guys are doing the same path that the Greece has done. And the way we're going, continuing with these major projects, we're going to have a lot of youth leaving this province for bigger, better opportunities.

An Honourable Member: We are having them, 7,800 last year.

Mr. Piwniuk: Mr. Speaker, 7,800. And what's going to happen is a lot of that wealth is going to leave this province on top of that. I see right now in the town of Virden, with the oil patch; we had so many oil royalties that actually at one time got paid to individuals from the region, and now a lot of those young people, those second-, third-generation individuals who are going to inherit some of those royalties have now moved on to other provinces. I've actually talked to many lawyers who do estate planning and estate settlements, and they said how much money now leaves the southwest region now because so many young people and people who have left Manitoba are living elsewhere. And a lot of those revenues now, royalties, now leave the province of Manitoba. If we were able to retain that population, that for opportunities more in the province here, we would've retained more of that—those individuals who would've gotten those royalties.

And, Mr. Speaker, I still think that with good responsibility, with fiscal responsibility and raising the economy, a focus on—instead of job creation in the government, we should be creating job creation in the private sector. The private sector, if you look at it, most successful jurisdictions, if it's in North America. If it's in North Dakota or it's in Texas or California, the biggest opportunity is driving the economy by private individuals, private, the private sector.

The private sector is now—is the leader of employment. But, when you talk to these private sector individual companies, they're frustrated. They're frustrated with this NDP government. They're frustrated that—with all the red tape. I even talked to local governments that are frustrated with the red tape that this NDP government has created in our economy. And even with local governments not spending the money and giving the—not spending the money, it's creating economic slowdowns in all regions.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Pivniuk) will have nine minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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