

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Inkster	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 6—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), that Bill 6, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Workers Compensation Amendment Act. This act expands the list of presumptive cancers for firefighters to include four more cancers: multiple myeloma, primary site prostate and skin cancers, and, for the first time in Canada, primary site breast cancer. It's interesting to note that Winnipeg has the largest percentage of female firefighters, many of whom join us today in the gallery. We welcome all the firefighters here.

In addition, Workers Compensation Board benefits for all workers are automatically indexed to the rate of inflation. This act ensures that WCB benefits will not be reduced when indexing factors are negative in any year.

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

PETITIONS

Multiple Sclerosis Treatment

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

The reasons for this petition are:

More than 3,000 Manitobans and their families are impacted by multiple sclerosis, and Manitoba has one of the highest rates of MS in the world.

New research indicates that there may be a link between a condition known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, CCSVI, and multiple sclerosis. Preliminary studies indicate that

many MS symptoms can be relieved with angioplasty, a common procedure.

In order to test this procedure for safety and effectiveness, additional research and clinical trials are needed. Manitoba is not testing for CCSVI, conducting research or conducting clinical trials.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be monitoring MS patients who have undergone the liberation treatment and studying its impact. Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with a clinical trial when their research community presents a proposal and has invited other provinces to join them. Meanwhile, Manitoba's provincial government has not taken up this initiative nor shown any leadership on this issue.

We petition the Legislative of Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider making the province of Manitoba a leader in CCSVI research and move forward with clinical trials as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by M. Speers, K. McKay and M. Donald and many, many other very, very concerned Manitobans.

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

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

More than 3,000 Manitobans and their families are impacted by multiple sclerosis, and Manitoba has one of the highest rates of MS in the world.

New research indicates that there may be a link between a condition known as chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency and multiple sclerosis. Preliminary studies indicate that many MS symptoms can be relieved with angioplasty, a common procedure.

In order to test this procedure for safety and effectiveness, additional research and clinical trials

are needed. Manitoba is not testing for CCSVI, conducting research or conducting clinical trials.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will be monitoring MS patients who have undergone the liberation procedure and studying its impact. Saskatchewan has announced that it will move forward with a clinical trial when their research community presents a proposal and has invited other provinces to join them. Meanwhile, Manitoba's provincial government has not taken up this initiative nor shown leadership on this issue.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider making the province of Manitoba a leader in CCSVI research and to move forward with clinical trials as soon as possible.

And this is signed by F. Budzey, J. Budzey, E. Desrochers and many, many others.

RCMP Rural Service

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

And these are the reasons for this petitions:

Manitoba deserves to live in a safe environment and to feel secure in their homes and their communities. Some regions of rural Manitoba have been hard hit by crime, including residential break and enter, property theft, vandalism and other offences that threaten people's security.

In some areas, RCMP detachments are not staffed on a 24-hour basis. Criminal elements capitalize on this, engaging in crime at times when officers may not be readily available to respond to calls for service.

Some believe the current RCMP detachment boundaries need to be redrawn so that service delivery could be faster and more effective.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Justice to consider working with the RCMP, the federal government and communities to develop strategies to address service challenges in rural Manitoba, such as the possibility of having response units that could be dispatched to regions affected by crime waves.

And to request the Minister of Justice to consider working with stakeholders to determine if the current RCMP detachment boundaries are designed to ensure the swiftest and most effective service delivery.

This petition is signed by M. Halliday, K. Brown, W. Cabak and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Bipole III Project

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

In September of 2007, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro directed the utility to abandon an east-side route for its Bipole III project. Five days later, Manitoba Hydro announced that the utility would be proceeding with a west-side route.

Manitoba Hydro staff, technical experts and regular Manitobans have communicated to the provincial government that they would prefer an east-side route.

A west-side route would–will be almost 500 kilometres longer than an east-side route, less reliable, and cost taxpayers at least an additional \$1.75 billion.

The extra cost being forced on Manitoba Hydro and Manitobans by the provincial government will mean that every Manitoba family will end up paying \$7,000 for this decision.

Since the current provincial government has come into power, hydro rates have already increased by almost 20 per cent. If this decision is not reversed, it will result in further rate increases for Manitobans.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to allow Manitoba Hydro to proceed with the shorter, cheaper and greener east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, enabling the utility to keep our hydro bills lower and to ensure a more reliable electricity system.

And this petition is signed by R. Mazarat, R. Veugen, R. LeNeil and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**PTH 15 and Highway 206
Changes—Public Consultation**

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider holding a public consultation process with Springfield residents, present design options and the rationale for the planned changes to PTH 15 and Highway 206 intersection and also in regards to the planned hard median at a public open house in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the businesses affected by the proposed changes, as well as the lives and well-being of the students, seniors and citizens of Manitoba.

This is signed by T. Wachal, R. Chornley, I. Lafrance and many, many other Manitobans.

* (13:40)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Standing Committee on Social and
Economic Development**

First Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on December 6, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 3)** – *The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act (Denying Compensation to Offenders and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes (refus de versement d'indemnités aux auteurs d'infractions et autres modifications)*
- **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail*
- **Bill (No. 5)** – *The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Historic Property Designations)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (désignations de biens historiques)*
- **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Legal Aid Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'aide juridique du Manitoba*
- **Bill (No. 9)** – *The Summary Convictions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires*
- **Bill (No. 10)** – *The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Citizenship Ceremonies)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés relatifs aux cérémonies de citoyenneté)*

Committee Membership

- Ms. BRICK
- Mr. BRIESE
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. DYCK
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Hon. Ms. HOWARD
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF (Chair)
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 4)** – *The Retail Businesses**

Holiday Closing Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail:

*Chuck Davidson, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
Lanny McInnes, Retail Council of Canada*

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 10)** – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Citizenship Ceremonies)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés relatifs aux cérémonies de citoyenneté):*

Sergio Glogowski, MEAAC (Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council

Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 3)** – The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act (Denying Compensation to Offenders and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes (refus de versement d'indemnités aux auteurs d'infractions et autres modifications):*

Michael Silicz, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties

*Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 5)** – The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Historic Property Designations)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (désignations de biens historiques):*

Cindy Tugwell, Heritage Winnipeg Corporation

Bills Considered and Reported

- ***Bill (No. 3)** – The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act (Denying Compensation to Offenders and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Déclaration des droits des victimes (refus de versement d'indemnités aux auteurs d'infractions et autres modifications)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 4)** – The Retail Businesses Holiday Closing Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jours fériés dans le commerce de détail*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 5)** – The City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act (Historic Property Designations)/Loi modifiant la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg (désignations de biens historiques)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 8)** – The Legal Aid Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'aide juridique du Manitoba*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 9)** – The Summary Convictions Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- ***Bill (No. 10)** – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Citizenship Ceremonies)/Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congés relatifs aux cérémonies de citoyenneté)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I'm pleased to table the following reports: the annual report for the Manitoba Opportunities Fund Limited for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2010; and the annual report for the Manitoba Development Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2010.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): I'd like to table two Orders-in-Council made under section 114 of The Insurance Act.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Winnipeg Grenadiers Hong Kong Battle Veterans

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House, a ministerial statement.

In September of this year, I had the great honour of joining the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba in laying a wreath at the Sai Wan base cemetery in Hong Kong where dozens of members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers are buried. We also paid

special tribute to Sergeant Major John Osborne of the Winnipeg Grenadiers.

As some of you might know, Sergeant Major Osborne was awarded the highest honour for bravery, the Victoria Cross, as a result of throwing himself on a grenade to protect his fellow soldiers. There is a special memorial to this outstanding hero in Hong Kong, and I was honoured to visit it in September.

The reason I mention these events is because today marks a very special day in history. As President Roosevelt said, December 7th is a day that will live in infamy.

It was on this date 69 years ago, in 1941, that Japan declared war on the United States with the attack on Pearl Harbour. What is not so widely known is that on the next day, December 8th, a force of over 60,000 Japanese soldiers also attacked and invaded Hong Kong.

Mr. Speaker, a Manitoba battalion, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, were part of the 10,000 allied combat troops stationed in Hong Kong for its defence. The allied forces surrendered on December 25th, and for almost four years, the surviving members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Regiment of Canada were prisoners of war under conditions that can only be described as horrific. Of the 1,976 Canadians who arrived in Hong Kong to assist with its defence, 290 died in the battle and 294 died in the prisoner of war camps in Hong Kong and Japan.

Today, of the two surviving members of that famous regiment, the Winnipeg Grenadiers, who live in Winnipeg and who fought in that battle in Hong Kong and who also spent over four years as prisoners of war, one is here with us as a guest in this Chamber, Mr. George Peterson. *[Applause]*

Regrettably, Mr. Larry Stebbe is not able to attend due to his health, but we are very pleased that his daughter, Colleen Stebbe, is here to represent him.

Mr. Speaker, may I ask that after we hear from members of the other parties in the House, that we again rise and show our appreciation to both men for their courage, their dedication and for their service to Canada.

Well done, gentlemen. This Chamber and province salute you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Premier for his very appropriate and eloquent statement, and support his comments on the record today.

It is a great honour for me, on behalf of my colleagues, to recognize and welcome these—the families of these two brave Canadians, Mr. George Peterson, who's here in person, and representatives of the family of Larry Stebbe. Colleen Stebbe, his daughter, I had the pleasure of meeting in the hallway just before arriving here.

I'd also like to welcome the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer, distinguished former premier and Governor General of Canada, who is with us today in the loge.

Mr. Speaker, in 1941, Mr. Peterson was a 20-year-old corporal with the Winnipeg Grenadiers; Mr. Stebbe was an 18-year-old private; and, along with nearly 2,000 other Canadians, these two gentlemen sailed to Hong Kong to defend the British Colony. The Grenadiers, together with Québec's Royal Rifles, fought valiantly in the Battle of Hong Kong in a battle group that was known as 'C' Force. Outnumbered by 10 to one, the soldiers of 'C' Force fought a fierce battle for 17 days; 290 members of that group died in that battle; 493 were wounded, and the survivors of that battle were taken prisoner. In the prison camps they endured horrific conditions for almost four years before they were freed following the surrender of Japan. Sadly, 267 Canadians did not survive that ordeal.

Today we honour the bravery of Mr. Peterson and Mr. Stebbe and the others who fought along side them. This year marks the 69th anniversary of that battle, which has not, Mr. Speaker, received the attention in our history books that it deserves; however, steps are being taken to rectify this. Last year a memorial was finally established in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the families who, themselves, have contributed to our province and our country in many ways, and who are justifiably proud of these brave men.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank all past and presently serving members of Canada's Armed Forces. Their commitment to Canada in the cause of freedom is remarkable and deeply appreciated. Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join other members of the Chamber in recognizing the heroic efforts of George Peterson and Larry Stebbe, and the many others who served as part of the Winnipeg Grenadiers in the battle for Hong Kong, some 69 years ago.

* (13:50)

It is appropriate that we are gathered today to remember these events, in part because the Winnipeg Grenadiers were a major part of the activities, and in part because it has not been adequately recognized in the past and it needs to be better known and better recognized. And so I'm very pleased that Mr. Peterson is here today and that Colleen Stebbe is here today, along with others, to commemorate this historic occasion and to try and bring more attention to the fact of the valour that was there, of the incredible battle that was—took place, and the fact that that was one of the important battles in the fight for freedom in the Second World War. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: May I ask members to please rise and show our appreciation and thanks to both men for their courage, their dedication and for their service to Canada. *[Applause]*

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us today His Excellency the Right Honourable Edward Schreyer.

And I'd also like to introduce Mr. George Peterson, who served in 'C' Force, accompanied by his wife, Margaret; and Ms. Colleen Stebbe, representing her father, Mr. Larry Stebbe. Both men are members of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Regiment of Canada still living in Manitoba and are veterans of the battle in Hong Kong.

And also in the Speaker's Gallery we have with us today, we have Dr. Michelle Jones, who is the US Consul; Brigadier General Robert Beletic, Deputy Commander, Canadian North American Aerospace Defence Region; Chief Warrant Officer

Guy St-John; Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Bob Vandewater, Chairman of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council; and Lieutenant Commander Paul Stiff, HMCS Chippawa.

And also in the public gallery we have family and friends of the Peterson and Stebbe family, as well as members of their military family.

All these guests are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski).

And also in the public gallery we have with us, we have Alex Forrest, who is the president of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg; Dave Naaykens, president of the Manitoba Professional Fire Fighters Association; Wade Ritchie, president of the Brandon Professional Firefighter/Paramedic Association; Tim Rosentreter, president of the Pinawa firefighters; and Greg Kier, president of the Portage la Prairie firefighters, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard).

And also in the public gallery we have with us from Carberry Collegiate, we have 17 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Raegan Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education System Student Test Scores Ranking

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): One of the most important jobs of government is to ensure that our kids can read, do mathematics and understand science. Eleven years ago, Mr. Speaker, this government promised that education would be a priority.

I want to ask the Premier: Why has his government failed to deliver on this critical promise to Manitoba's children?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): It has been the view of this government since its very beginnings that an investment in education is an investment in the future of this province, not only in its young people but in their families and in their communities.

And that is why every single year we have worked to improve not only the funding for education, we have not only invested in schools, we have not only invested in new technology so that

young people can have access to the materials and the technologies they need to participate in a modern economy, but we have moved forward on all of those things at a time when others have suggested that we need to cut those budgets. We have not done that.

We have continued to make education a priority, and we will continue to do so well into the future.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the numbers released by the OECD show very clearly that Manitoba and this government is failing compared to other provinces. It's failing compared to the scores that students were getting in Manitoba 10 years ago.

I want to ask this Premier: After 10 years, why are Manitoba students doing less well on those tests than they were 10 years ago? Why are we failing compared to other provinces? We started this the last decade in the top half of Canada; we're now at the bottom.

How does he explain this complete failure?

Mr. Selinger: Let's bear in mind more young people are now completing high school. When we came into office, 72 per cent of young people finished high school. We have now moved that to 80 per cent, and that's exactly what we want, Mr. Speaker. We want more people continuing to complete high school, which is why we have brought in legislation to require young people to stay in school till 18 years old, which is something—it's the largest overhaul of our education act in the last 40 years.

We need more young people completing high school. We need more young people entering the trades, going to colleges and universities, and we have seen increases at all three levels. We have more people doing apprenticeships than any time in our history, more people in colleges than any time in our history and more people in university at any time in our history and completing high school. As we continue to widen the net and include more young people in our educational system, we will also improve the quality of the curriculum.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the OECD indicates today that we're falling behind in the three areas that are the most important things that we can teach kids in our school system: we're falling behind in reading; we're falling behind in mathematics; we're falling behind in science, the three most important things that we can teach kids to be successful in today's world. We're falling behind where we were 10 years ago; we're falling behind every other province in Canada except PEI. In fact, students in Manitoba,

because of this government's policies, have fallen behind students in France, Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, Norway, Estonia, Iceland and even tiny Liechtenstein.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is it that Manitoba students are falling behind? Will he admit that his no-fail policies are failing the students of Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when only 72 per cent of young people were graduating from high school, they scored higher on these OECD tests. Now that we have 80 per cent of kids staying in school, we have maintained a position around the OECD average or mean. We are doing better than students in places like Denmark and in the United Kingdom, but the reality is we need more young people—we need more young people—completing high school. We can go with a small slice of Manitobans and have them have better scores and then have the remainder being outside of the system entirely, or we can have a system that's a universal education system that brings everybody into the education system and then lifts them all up with a better performance, and that's where we're going to go.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind members—order. I just want to remind members that we have a lot of guests in here and we just honoured two gentlemen that put their life on the line for us to enjoy the democratic process that we're allowed to practise. And I think we need to respect our rules and procedures in this House a little better than what we're doing. So I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members, please, for the person that has the floor should have the right to be heard. I'm asking the co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Education System Student Test Scores Ranking

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): After 11 years in office, the bottom line on education is that this government is failing our children. The OECD report clearly compares results on reading proficiency from 2000 to 2009. After being in office for—over those years, our reading proficiency has dropped to second last in Canada, just ahead of Prince Edward Island and only ahead of Prince Edward Island.

Why has this government failed our children?

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): I think it would be appropriate to remind members opposite

about the investments that we have made in our public education. We have invested in our public education every year to the rate of economic growth since we got into government, Mr. Speaker. It is 15 times the investment that was made when they were in government.

* (14:00)

We have also strengthened our assessment policy and we've changed the 1997 Tory assessment policy that said that students could hand in their assignments late, Mr. Speaker. We have changed that policy so that we can have students handing in their assignments and being accountable so that they can succeed in the real world.

We will continue to make changes so that our students can achieve academic success, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the reality is Manitoba has the second worst dropout rate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this government has failed to make children a priority. As the OECD report points out, strong reading skills are not only a foundation for achievement in other subject areas within the educational system but are also a prerequisite for successful participation in most areas of adult life.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's quite alarming that this report shows Manitoba had the greatest drop in reading proficiency of any province over that last nine years. Why has this government failed to provide the fundamentals to our children?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fundamentals in our public education are important to us and that's why we've made significant investments in our public education system. We also provide funding to school divisions all across this province in regards to literacy, in regards to reading, and we will continue to work with our education partners, with our parents, with our public school trustees, with our educators in regards to what programs work best for our students in our public education system so that they can be successful.

We will continue to work with them, unlike the '90s when the members opposite decreased funding to the public education system. They claim they will take \$500 million out of our budget, and I think if they're going to take \$500 million out of our budget—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is it gets much worse. Not only did we have the largest drop in reading levels, but we also suffered the biggest drops in math and science proficiency as well. Eleven years of NDP policy is not preparing our children for the future.

Why has this government failed our children?

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it curious strange that this is the first question that I'm actually getting from the Education critic in regards to Education since this session started.

We believe we have a vision for our public education system. We're going to continue to invest in it. We're not going to do what the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) said in 2007 when he said, you know, I don't think the public education system needs any more money because enrolment is declining, Mr. Speaker. That was his vision.

We're going to continue to work with our educators. We're implementing a report card that is going to be a plain language report card, Mr. Speaker, so that parents and teachers are going to collaborate on what their students are learning in school so we can continue to have students succeed in our public education system. That's our vision.

Waverley West

Cost of Acreage for School Construction

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): And following up on their failure when it comes to reading, mathematics and science, Mr. Speaker, families throughout southwest Winnipeg, as Waverley West is being developed, were looking forward to the construction of a high school to provide a good quality of education to kids in that part of the city.

Mr. Speaker, we have been shocked to find—to learn in the last short while that Manitoba Housing, which is the developer of Waverley West, has increased the cost of land tenfold to the school board in order to move ahead on a high school, from \$25,000 to close to \$300,000 an acre for that land for a school.

I want to ask the government: Why are they so intent on penalizing Winnipeg families and their kids when it comes to this needed high school?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it's the government that provides the money to school divisions to purchase the land. The reality is that we buy the land as part of our capital allocation to

schools, and we have a record allocation to schools for capital, \$310 million, the highest number—amount of capital ever available for the purchase and repair and renovation of schools, all of which the members have voted against.

The reality is we're building new schools in this province, over 17. We're building and renovating new schools in this province, and when Waverley West needs a new school the resources will be provided to have it.

Mr. McFadyen: Six months ago the Pembina Trails School Board was under the—operating on the assumption that they could acquire the land for \$25,000 an acre. Within the last couple of months, they were told, after meeting with the developer, Manitoba Housing, that that price had increased tenfold to almost \$300,000 an acre which they would have to front, Mr. Speaker, before recovering those funds at some point down the road if a school gets built. It's clear, their agenda is either to derail the construction of a school or to have a massive property tax increase for people who live within Pembina Trails School Board.

I want to ask the government: Why is the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) so intent on punishing her own constituents?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Manitoba, through the Public Schools Finance Board, compensates the school division for the acquisition of land for a school.

The land is normally acquired at market value. The market value is what is the reality of the development of Waverley West out there, where, for the first time in a decade, we're making available land to build new housing in Winnipeg. And I can tell you, the real estate market in Winnipeg is red hot. We know that. It's doing very well in this city contrary to what's happening in many other jurisdictions throughout North America.

When the school is needed, the school division acquires the land, we compensate them for the acquisition of the land, we provide the capital for the new school and we ensure that families purchasing homes in that area have access to good education.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the way it works is that the school board fronts the money to acquire an option in the land. If a high school is approved, that money then comes back from the provincial government.

They're saying they won't even build high schools in Seven Oaks until 2013 where they're bursting at the seams.

In Pembina Trails, Mr. Speaker, the agenda is very clear. The agenda is very clear. It's to penalize families who live in places like St. Norbert, Fort Richmond, Fort Garry, Linden Woods and other communities in the southwest part of Winnipeg. To penalize taxpayers in the city of Winnipeg through their policies, even as they hold out to residents, who are buying land in that area, that a new high school is coming, Mr. Speaker. That's the agenda of the Department of Housing.

I want to ask the Premier very clearly: Why is his Housing Minister attempting to penalize her own constituents when it comes to education and education taxes?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member from Fort Whyte is missing the point. The point is this: The government compensates the school division for the acquisition of land for a new school. The Public Schools Finance Board, which we finance 100 per cent, provides the resources for land acquisition and new schools, and that is a policy that we've had in this government for many years.

In addition, the bill that we brought forward just a couple of days ago, now requires daycares to be built in schools when new schools are built as well. Something the members opposite refused to do during their term in office.

We have an early-learning curriculum for daycare. We expand daycares in those neighbourhoods. We build new schools in those neighbourhoods. We acquire the land in those neighbourhoods so that we can have a facility for young children and school-aged children, and the members opposite have consistently voted against each of those initiatives. We'll see if they support this bill that we put in front of the Legislature just this week.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Targets

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

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, speaking of broken promises, in April of 2008, the then-elected premier, Mr. Doer, introduced new climate change targets. What he said is that the government was absolutely

committed to meeting those targets for the reduction of greenhouse gases and greenhouse gas equivalents.

I want to ask the Premier: Are they going to keep that promise or will that be added to the list of broken NDP promises?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I'm pleased to say that we chose an ambitious target to reduce greenhouse gases in Manitoba. And, unlike the members opposite who haven't even let us know yet whether they think climate change is a real issue—they're still in denial about that, we have moved very aggressively on reducing greenhouse gases in Manitoba.

* (14:10)

Two coal-fired generating stations for Hydro-Selkirk was removed, no longer operates providing—using coal as a source of energy. The coal plant that provided electricity in Brandon has been put on backup so it doesn't provide greenhouse gas inside this province.

We've moved on landfill, methane gas removal. We've moved on geothermal. We've moved on more funding for public transit within Manitoba. We've taken Manitoba Hydro, that under the members opposite was No. 10 on energy efficiency, and moved it to No. 1 for the last several years.

Manitoba is moving forward on greenhouse gas reduction and I'll give other examples in my next question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, they said they were going to end hallway medicine. They said that they were going to improve educational outcomes. They said that Crocus was strong. I think they also said they were going to balance the budget, if I recall correctly—

An Honourable Member: Reduce crime.

Mr. McFadyen: Oh, yes, they were going to reduce crime as well, Mr. Speaker.

I remember all those promises. And another promise they made two and a half years ago is, we're going to meet these targets. And, in fact, they were so serious about meeting those targets that the premier at the time said, if we don't achieve it, I suggest the ultimate penalty in 2011 will be defeating the government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the current Premier whether he agrees with Canada's Ambassador to the

United States that the ultimate penalty ought to be the defeat of his tired government.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, just last week we provided protection for two additional areas of boreal and tundra forest in Manitoba, 640,000 hectares. In the last year we have protected a million hectares of boreal forest and tundra in this province worth 126 million tonnes of carbon emissions.

The members opposite don't support that. They don't support a UNESCO designation on the east side, which will also protect an enormous carbon sink, which does not emit carbon dioxide but actually emits clean oxygen, and provides clean water, and protects unique species on that side.

If they're serious about climate change, I tell them—I challenge them to support the UNESCO World Heritage designation, to support the protected areas and to support Manitoba Hydro, continued to be a high quality exporter of clean energy, seven million tonnes a year to foreign markets, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we support getting results for Manitobans.

We support actually doing what you said you were going to do, Mr. Speaker. We support ideas like when you say the stadium is going to cost \$115 million, that the stadium actually costs \$115 million. We support when you say you're going to end hallway medicine, that you actually end hallway medicine. We support when you say you're going to reduce violent crime, that you actually reduce violent crime. And when—what we support is when you say you're going to meet your GHG reduction targets, that you actually meet your GHG reduction targets.

Mr. Speaker, does he agree with the last elected premier of Manitoba, Canada's current Ambassador to Washington, who said, if we don't achieve these goals, the ultimate penalty will be defeating this government? Does he agree with him, yes or no?

Mr. Selinger: If the member opposite really supports—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We need to be able to hear the questions and the answers, please.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If the member from Fort Whyte really supports the climate change objective of this government, why does he oppose us removing logging in provincial parks? If the member opposite really supports climate change objectives, why does he want to rip up the boreal forest? If the member opposite really supports climate change objectives, why has he never supported us when we took coal plants off-line that produced electricity inside this province? And if the member opposite really supports climate change, why has he never supported the resources we made available for biodiesel and ethanol within this province?

The facts are clear, Mr. Speaker. The member is chasing headlines. He's chasing after the Auditor General's report. We have a plan that will move Manitoba forward on climate change, protecting our forest, providing cleaner fuels and building Hydro so that they can export electricity into markets where they're using coal. And those objectives will make a difference on the planet, not the rhetoric we get from the member opposite.

Phoenix Sinclair Death Public Inquiry

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, it's been more than 185 days since the deadline expired for an appeal application from the convicted killer of Phoenix Sinclair.

Can the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Mackintosh) indicate how much longer he is going to allow this convicted killer to hijack the start of the inquiry into the tragic murder of Phoenix Sinclair?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Of course, in light of this tragedy, there's been a promise by this government there will be a full judicial inquiry called to deal with this issue, to deal with how we can continue to improve child welfare in the province of Manitoba. And the concern had been, of course, that the idea of moving ahead with an inquiry before all avenues of appeal are completed could actually prejudice the successful prosecution of that case.

I am very pleased we've been working with Legal Aid Manitoba, and we expect that very soon we will have greater certainty on whether or not an appeal will proceed, and if there is to be no appeal, we will move swiftly to call the inquiry so we can continue to improve child welfare in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Over 185 days since the deadline for the appeal, Mr. Speaker, and there's still no justice served for Phoenix Sinclair, and former Premier Gary Doer promised a public inquiry four years ago. In desperation, this NDP government continues to stall with lame excuses and political rhetoric on why justice can't be served for Phoenix Sinclair. Phoenix Sinclair could not protect herself, and Phoenix Sinclair was murdered.

When will this government be accountable for their failed policies and have the courage to call the inquiry?

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, the member from River East is wrong on the facts. There is not a firm deadline with the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada can grant leave for an individual to move ahead and file an appeal. The result of an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada—and this has happened before with cases that have come out of Manitoba, from cases that have come out of every other province in Canada—one of the results of that appeal can be the ordering of a new trial.

And I understand everybody in this House wants to move ahead with this inquiry. Everyone in this House wants to move ahead to improve the child welfare system in Manitoba. But we are not going to roll the dice, and we are not going to be reckless in terms of potentially affecting the successful prosecution of someone who may very well—and we believe—has committed this terrible act. We are not going to put politics ahead of supporting our Crown attorneys and supporting our justice system, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: While this government continues to drag its feet on the public inquiry, more children continue to be killed in the hands of this government's failed policies that put children in unsafe situations. Five years after Phoenix Sinclair was murdered, children continue to be killed in the care of a system that's supposed to protect them but has failed them.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Family Services not have the courage to stand up in this House today and demand that the inquiry take place for Phoenix Sinclair so justice can be served?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Well, that member was the minister, I believe, for about six years, and listening to her now, I think, you'd figure

there were no foster child deaths under her watch, Mr. Speaker, while, by the time she left office, after cuts to foster children, after years of refusing to comply with recommendation after recommendation from a commission of inquiry, an inquest—I believe 12 in all—after formal warnings all the way from front-line staff to the office of the Children's Advocate, foster children, unfortunately, tragically, did die under her watch from suicide, from accidents and from homicide at a rate 33 per cent higher than last year. We don't need lessons from Conservatives on child welfare.

* (14:20)

Protection for Persons in Care Office Reporting of Abuse Investigations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, five months ago, two former staff of the Protection for Persons in Care office made some very disturbing allegations about that office. I sent these concerns to the Minister of Health and to the Ombudsman. The allegations arose after this Minister of Health took control of that office and stripped it of its independence. These two employees said that the NDP-appointed director had issued a gag order on reporting criminal activity to the police, including two sexual assaults, that this director became the only person to decide if a case was founded or unfounded and that she overturned investigators' decisions.

Can the Minister of Health tell us why this director told her staff that their first job was to, and I quote, protect this Minister of Health?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the Protection for Persons in Care office, which was created under this government after considerable advocacy and work and, I might dare say, pleading from the Health critic at the time, now the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). Opposition members, when they were government, wouldn't consider the idea. The Protection for Persons in Care office—as its chief, primary and singular goal—is to protect people.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, after this Minister of Health took away the independence of the office, the number of founded cases of patient abuse dropped by 70 per cent. We were told that these numbers were being manipulated in an effort to keep the numbers of founded abuse cases low.

Considering that the independent Ombudsman never responded to my letter of five months ago,

considering that this Minister of Health never addressed my concerns, can she tell us: Is this how she is controlling patient abuse numbers by deliberately not reporting cases or by having the director change the information?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, evidence to the contrary, in Manitoba, for the first time this year on the issue of patient safety, we've published a patient safety report—again, first time ever—showing the number of critical incidents that have occurred in the system. Not because it is a comfortable thing to talk publicly about, when mistakes happen and there are serious consequences, but because when you speak about errors, that's how you learn from them. That's how you can potentially prevent them from happening again. That is why that we are not only increasing investigations; we're not entrenching in legislation. The errors must be discussed with the patients and with families, but we are creating a culture of openness, a culture far different from a time during the pediatric cardiac deaths of the 1990s. The errors were swept under the rug and no one talked about them.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, we know that this Minister of Health is desperately into spin and rhetoric; in fact, she's even doubled the political staff in her office from three to six in order to manipulate their message. It's stooping pretty low, though, to take away the independence of the Protection of Persons in Care office in order to control the spin about patient abuse in the health-care system. According to the staff, that office is now politicized. It's protect the system first and patients come second.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to commit today: Will she return the independence to that office so that patients are always No. 1?

Ms. Oswald: Well, stooping so low, Mr. Speaker, if I'm not mistaken, I believe that she criticized the Ombudsman in her previous question. I can let the member know that the concerns that have been brought forward—any concerns that have to do with the treatment of people in care—are being investigated. Concerns about the process are being investigated. And as for the issue of politicizing, it was this government that created the office of the Protection for Persons in Care in the first place.

Newborn Screening Government Priority

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, universal newborn screening for many needed

conditions is now the normally accepted standard for developed countries because such screening can prevent suffering, can prevent disability and slow development, and can prevent death.

Manitoba is unfortunately very backward in this respect; it's like a Third World country. I table the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders November 2010 national report card.

I ask the Premier why Manitoba is not screening newborns for 50 or more life-threatening conditions. I ask the Premier, in the last 11 years, how many Manitoba children have become disabled or died because of this government's indifference to the need for newborn screening.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier end this government's indifference to the health of children and act immediately to provide up-to-date, universal newborn screening for Manitoba children?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): First of all, I thank the member for the question on screening. We do screening now. We will continue to expand that screening and we welcome suggestions from the member on how that screening can be improved.

I note here that there are some areas where screening is done on this report, and I think the member is aware of that as well, and where additional screening can be done as we move forward to protect, from life-threatening risks, the young children, we will do that.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, John Adams, who's an authority nationally in this area, has declared Manitoba one of the worst in Canada. We screen very few compared to the large number that many provinces like Ontario and Saskatchewan screen.

Indeed, this is vital to improving the lives of children in Manitoba. From newborn screening—newborn hearing screening to cystic fibrosis, hemoglobinopathies, many metabolic conditions, some of which are fatal often when they're not screened for, Manitoba is far behind.

Indeed, by comparison with the report of the Ontario Ombudsman, we probably have two to three deaths and two to three children with disabilities each year because of this failure of screening.

I ask the Premier why he has not implemented adequate universal newborn screening in Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we have a Healthy Child program in this

province. We, for example, provide a prenatal benefit to young women who are pregnant. We provide home visiting to those people and we provide support to them after they're born. And we make a big investment in young families getting off to a healthy start.

With respect to screening, I note from the report that there are areas where we do screening and some of those areas have universal screening techniques, some of them have targeted techniques, and our view is that as we continue to move forward on maternal health and children's health, newborn health, we are very open to the idea of increasing the range of screening tests that we do to ensure that children are detected—these conditions are detected as early as possible in young children in order that they can be prevented and addressed before they get any older.

So we welcome the report, and we welcome offered suggestions from the member opposite on how we can improve our ability to screen children for these kinds of conditions.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, five years ago in 2005, when the state of newborn screening in Ontario was in the same sorry state as Manitoba's newborn screening is today, the Ontario Ombudsman produced his shocking report, *The Right to Be Impatient*, an inquiry into whether the Ontario government has failed to properly administer newborn screening. The Ontario Ombudsman reported correctly that children had needlessly died and been rendered disabled.

Yesterday, I wrote to the Manitoba Ombudsman to ask her to undertake a similar report in Manitoba.

I ask the Premier, will he act today to implement adequate newborn screening or will it wait for the Manitoba Ombudsman report on the fact that inaction, indifference and poor management by this government has led to the death and the disability of Manitoba children?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question. I was just reminded by the Deputy Premier that when we visited up in the Island Lakes region, they were appreciative of the fact that this Province has extended support programs for young children and families onto First Nations communities, whereas other provinces don't necessarily do that, and we've included the Prenatal Benefit for families on First Nations communities as well.

* (14:30)

And we—as the member knows, we're also proceeding with the new women's hospital in Winnipeg. We are open to looking at all ideas to improve both maternal and young children's health in this province, because—and that's why we've taken initiatives on things like FASD, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and we look for a range of opportunities to improve the health of young children and prevent conditions from developing.

I was recently on a mission with some of my colleagues in this room in Israel, including members of the opposition, where we're doing a very unique research project with Hebrew University on FASD and the role that vitamin A can play in preventing the development of FASD. That research is actually being done here in Manitoba, but it's being engaged in by quality scientists from all around the world, including Israel.

So we will do those kinds of investments to make a long-term—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Notre Dame de Lourdes New Hospital Construction

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Monsieur le Président, c'est ce gouvernement qui a investi dans la première IRM, imagerie par résonance magnétique, à l'extérieur de Winnipeg, deux à Brandon et une à Boundary Trails.

Monsieur le Président, c'est ce gouvernement qui a ajouté des tomodensitomètres à Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, Le Pas, Selkirk, Morden-Winkler, et Portage la Prairie.

Monsieur le Président, c'est ce gouvernement qui a « renouvelé » ou a ajouté des nouveaux hôpitaux à Brandon, à Swan River, Thompson, Le Pas, Morden, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Winkler, Sainte-Anne, Steinbach et de Shoal Lake, et un hôpital qui sera bientôt construit à Selkirk.

En résumé, Monsieur le Président, c'est un gouvernement qui croit que tous les Manitobains ont le droit d'accès aux soins de santé modernes en temps opportune.

En prenant compte de ceci, je demande au ministre de la Santé pour une mise à jour des nouveaux investissements dans les soins de santé au milieu ruraux.

Translation

Mr. Speaker, it is this government that invested in the first MRI or magnetic resonance imaging machine outside of Winnipeg, two in Brandon and one in Boundary Trails.

Mr. Speaker, it is this government that added CT scanners in Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, The Pas, Selkirk, Morden-Winkler and Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Speaker, It is this government that renovated or added new hospitals in Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, The Pas, Morden, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Winkler, Ste. Anne, Steinbach and Shoal Lake, with another hospital soon to be built in Selkirk.

In short, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that believes that all Manitobans are entitled to modern and timely health-care services.

With that in mind, I ask the Minister of Health for an update on the new investments in rural health care.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Merci beaucoup, Monsieur le Président. Je suis très heureuse d'avoir été à Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes ce matin afin d'annoncer un nouvel hôpital de 10 lits, ce qui permettra d'améliorer davantage la qualité de soins de santé offerts aux patients de la région et de fournir un meilleur environnement de travail. En plus d'offrir des services pour les patients non hospitalisés, le nouveau établissement fournira des services d'urgences dans des installations modernes et un plus grand confort aux femmes pendant le travail à l'accouchement. Merci beaucoup.

Translation

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to be in Notre Dame de Lourdes this morning to announce a new 10-bed hospital, which will allow for even better health-care services for patients in that region and foster a better work environment. In addition to providing out-patient services, the new hospital will offer emergency services in modern facilities and a more comfortable setting for women in labour. Thank you very much.

Rural Personal Care Homes Lack of Spaces

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, two years ago the personal care home beds in Neepawa were reduced from 124 spaces to 100 spaces. We are now informed there are 35 seniors panelled and waiting for personal care home spaces. Another

personal care home in western Manitoba has 18 people panelled and waiting for a 20-bed facility.

Why has this NDP government failed so miserably when it comes to providing personal care home spaces for our senior citizens?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): In fact, it is our government that has increased the number of personal care home beds and supportive housing units across Manitoba. It was my privilege, just last week, to be in—not last week, last month—to be in Morden-Winkler to announce an expansion in that region.

But we also know, Mr. Speaker, that there is more that we can do. We know that the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy is completing a report just now on projecting needs for Manitoba, and we have signalled in the Throne Speech that, indeed, we will be coming forward with a revised long-term care plan that will include a new capital plan for personal care home beds, increased support of housing units and, most importantly, increased home care, undoubtedly Manitoba's jewel across Canada.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Elm Creek Curling Club 100th Anniversary

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): On December 4, 2010, the Elm Creek Curling Club celebrated the 100th anniversary of the sport of curling in the community of Elm Creek. In 1910 a one-sheet indoor curling rink was built for the enjoyment of the community. During the mid-1920s, a two-sheet rink was built to replace the original structure.

In 1953, the community upgraded to a three-sheet rink. Members of the community club built the rink with volunteer labour. In fact, the rafters were made by laminating one-by-two boards together. The glue was mixed with a Mixmaster blender which was then cleaned up and sold as part of a fundraising auction.

In the 1950s, week-long community bonspiels were held which routinely had 40-plus rinks entered, curling throughout the day. The cost was \$10 per rink and 32 rinks was considered a full bonspiel, so the Haywood and Fannystelle rinks were quite often used to handle the overflow.

In 1981, the community once again came together to build a steel structure with four sheets of artificial ice to replace the aging structure which

needed major upgrades. The curling rink relied entirely on volunteer help to erect the building, install the refrigeration pipes, and do the finishing work for the club room.

This past Saturday night, December 4th, 150 current and past club members gathered for some curling and a delicious roast beef supper in celebrating a century of curling in the community.

As part of the celebrations a number of life memberships were given out. Included were life memberships to past members who gave endlessly for the maintenance and upkeep of the curling club as well as enjoying and promoting the sport itself.

I had the honour to present a life membership to Marge Dueck, in memory of her husband Bernie, my good friend and former neighbour who passed away on November 8th, 2010.

The 100th anniversary of the Elm Creek Curling Club was an event enjoyed by all those in attendance.

Congratulations to the Elm Creek Curling Club on providing 100 years of recreation in their community and we look forward to the next 100 years of curling in the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nutrition North Canada Federal Program

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, food security is a pressing issue, especially in the areas—in areas of northern Manitoba. Food security means having access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Proper nutrition is the key to healthy families and children's success in school.

With diet-related diseases on the rise in the north, and the loss of traditional food practices in favour of cheap, processed foods, affordable healthy food alternatives are essential. Food insecurity affects the person's ability to thrive and contribute to the larger community. This is especially true in remote northern communities that rely on air, rail or winter road. Fresh fruit, milk and vegetables are extremely costly in remote communities.

As part of the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative the Revolving Loan Freezer Purchase Program has funded over 500 freezers in 18 communities. We supported 600 gardens this past growing season. Additionally, we provided food preservation and poultry production training supports.

This May, the federal government announced a new northern food retail subsidy program called Nutrition North Canada. It will replace the old Food Mail Program. I participated in one of the meetings in Winnipeg. The new program aims to make healthy food more accessible and affordable for isolated communities. The most nutritious perishable foods will receive the highest rate of subsidy.

Ten communities in northern Manitoba are eligible. However, the program excludes six remote access Manitoba communities. I'm concerned by the delay in implementation. The federal program has now been pushed back one year from the original launch date, leaving access to affordable healthy foods for some northern communities in the interim unclear.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this House to urge the federal government to review the communities eligible for the Nutrition North Canada program. The six following remote communities should also be included: Brochet, Granville Lake, Pukatawagan, South Indian Lake, Tadoule Lake, and York Landing.

We all know the importance of proper nutrition. This is the 21st century. Remote communities deserve better access to healthy food. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Langford Community Pasture Protected Area

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, last fall a conservation agreement was signed with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation to designate the Langford Community Pasture as a protected area. All three levels of government signed the agreement, along with the MHHC and a Manitoba Crown corporation.

Their agreement protects the pasture from being altered in any way that may affect the ecosystem and from any commercial, residential, and any kind of development on the property. With over 9,500 acres in total, the Langford Pasture is the largest donated conservation agreement in Manitoba and fourth largest donated or sold in Canada.

Langford Pasture is split between two municipalities, with 7,261 acres falling in the RM of Langford, 2,561 acres in the RM of Lansdowne. Although some areas of the pasture are owned by the federal and provincial governments, other areas have never been registered to any owner. For many years the land has been reserved for public pasture. As well, much of the land has never been cultivated and,

thanks to this agreement, it never will be. It is also an important habitat for the Prairie Skink, Manitoba's only lizard.

Rick Donaldson, Langford's economic development officer, began looking for ways to protect the pasture over a year ago. Since the surrounding area—since then the surrounding area has begun to be developed in new ways. Concerns about the future of the pasture began to arise and spurred the collaboration of the two municipalities with Manitoba Habitat Heritage to officially designate the pasture as a protected area.

As part of the agreement, the municipalities had to sell their land to the Manitoba Habitat Heritage for a dollar. The land will still belong to the respective municipalities but will be protected from future human development even if the land changes ownership.

* (14:40)

The conservation agreement was signed by Langford on August 25th, by Lansdowne on September the 8th. Then on October the 1st, representatives from the two rural municipalities, the Town of Neepawa, Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, Agri-Environment Branch, as well as MHHC, met to ratify the historic document.

The conservation agreement is timely as the Town of Neepawa will soon be getting its water from an aquifer directly below the Langford pasture. The water source is now protected from contamination as a result of surface activities.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the rural municipalities of Langford and Lansdowne for their efforts to preserve one of Manitoba's unique treasures, the Langford Community Pasture.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wesley and Shirley Flett

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, Wesley and Shirley Flett are two people from The Pas who are an inspiration to me and all those around them.

While there are many pressing issues in today's world that require attention, some issues require ongoing attention and action. There are many missing murdered women in this province and across Canada, women whose disappearances go largely unnoticed. These women are the mothers, daughters and sisters and our friends. Many are Aboriginal.

Wesley and Shirley have been outspoken in creating awareness of these missing women. Tragically, it was Wesley's own experience with his sister Mildred, gone missing this year, that motivated him to get involved in this important cause. But thanks to his and Shirley's tireless efforts, more action is being taken. They recognized the need to educate neighbours, leaders and people beyond their own community about these missing women, and make sure people know that these women have lives and families and do not deserve to be forgotten. With every woman that goes missing, it brings sadness and fear to their communities.

Wesley and Shirley organize a group of people that have been pushing for awareness, pushing leaders to do more for these women and their families. Whether it is organizing awareness walks or memorial ceremonies, Wesley and Shirley call on others to take action to make a difference. These efforts have inspired other citizens, young and old alike, to take an interest and get directly involved in raising awareness and, most importantly, preventing more women from going missing.

We want answers, we want closure and we all want a safe community for everyone. Mr. Speaker, I am proud that one of these individuals are advocating for these women, who often have no voice.

On behalf of the members of this House and on behalf of the families and loved ones of these missing women, thank you Wesley and Shirley for charging ahead with this cause. It is people like you that make things happen and you are an example for all of us.

Thank you.

Luke Fritz

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to offer congratulations to Luke Fritz of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and CJOB and Corus Radio Winnipeg on winning \$50,000 for Winnipeg Harvest's Hunger for Hope program in the Pepsi Refresh Project CFL Challenge. The Kinsmen Club also donated \$10,000 making a total donation of \$60,000 for Hunger for Hope.

CJOB and Corus Radio Winnipeg have raised over \$300 over the past two and a half years for Hunger for Hope in support of Winnipeg Harvest. They have teamed up with Winnipeg Harvest in a province-wide fundraising initiative dedicated to

ending child hunger in Manitoba to ensure that no child goes to bed hungry.

Mr. Speaker, HungerCount 2010 showed a 21 per cent increase in the use of food banks across Manitoba. Children, seniors and immigrants seem to be the ones that were particularly hard hit. The proportion of children using food banks in Manitoba was 50.5 per cent, up from 48.7 per cent last year. This is the first time that the proportion of children has risen over 50 per cent.

Here are the facts: Winnipeg Harvest feeds over 19,000 children a month compared to 5,500 10 years ago; in March, 2009 over 13,000 school-aged children used the food bank compared to over 16,000 school-aged children this past March, 2010; there's a staggering 23.8 per cent increase in school-aged food bank use; 1,600 infants require emergency baby formula from Winnipeg Harvest each month; Winnipeg Harvest spends \$100,000 for baby food and formula; along with BC, Manitoba continues to experience the worst child poverty rates in Canada with one in five children living in poverty; in the last six years, almost 40 per cent of children have lived in poverty for at least one year.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the support and dedication to the cause on behalf of all Manitobans and all voters who made this possible. The enthusiastic and tireless campaigning was instrumental in winning this contest for Winnipeg.

Once again, congratulations to CJOB and to Luke Fritz. All of you truly made a difference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House leader, on House business.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business, a couple items of House business. On—pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next sitting Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer). The title of the resolution is Provincial Parks.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be

considered on the next sitting Tuesday will be one that will be put forward by the honourable member for Wolseley. The title of the resolution is Provincial Parks.

The honourable Government House Leader, on further House business.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask you to call second reading of Bill 13.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 13—The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the business for orders of the day will be second reading on Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended).

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker—[*interjection*] You have to be in your seat; you're going to second it.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Howard), that Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi visant la réussite scolaire (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has been advised of this bill, and the message has been tabled—[*interjection*] It hasn't been tabled yet? Okay.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the bill. I'd like to table the message from the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, the honourable minister has tabled the message from the Lieutenant-Governor, and this message has been tabled.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a few words on the record in regards to this very exciting piece of legislation, Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act, an act that will amend The Public Schools Act as well as various other acts.

With Bill 13, Mr. Speaker, our goal is to work with students, parents, school boards and educators to develop a new way of looking at the importance of high school completion. We now require young Manitobans to remain in school, an adult learning centre or a recognized workforce training program until they have reached 18 years of age or until they

have graduated from high school. Nothing is more important than an education for the future of Manitoba, for our children and our youth.

Over the past decade, we have made a lot of progress with improved high school graduation rates, a one-third increase in post-secondary enrolment, expanded skills training opportunities in our colleges and a doubling of the number of registered apprentices.

Our most recent education funding announcement brought the total increase over the last past nine school budgets to a record \$276 million, which is 15 times, Mr. Speaker, the increase over the same period in 1990. We have invested over \$568 million in new funding in public schools capital projects this decade, more than double the amount from the 1990s. In 2009-10, our government launched an ambitious, historic, four-year, \$310-million capital program to build and renovate Manitoba schools.

* (14:50)

And we have a strong record, Mr. Speaker, on property tax relief. According to Statistics Canada, we are the only province in Canada to see property taxes stay flat over the past decade.

In the classroom, we are targeting our supports to where they are most needed, such as Aboriginal students and students that are at risk. And special needs funding has been a priority with a new appropriate educational programming act and a 50 per cent increase in funding since 1999. Our Safe Schools Charter has helped to make schools safer because we know that kids can't learn if they're worried about being bullied or harassed. We are encouraging kids to make healthy choices and be physically active because we know physically fit kids will be more successful at school. We're helping students build the skills they need to enter the workforce and start their careers here in Manitoba.

But now it is time to move forward again, Mr. Speaker, to help ensure that all students share in these successes. This bill, Preparing Students for Success, is about giving young people every possible opportunity to succeed. In the modern economy, nothing is more important than keeping young people engaged in schools and in their education. And parents, educators and communities all have a part to play in building a stronger education system.

Currently, the law requires young people in Manitoba to stay in school until they are 16. This

new legislation will require that students remain in school or in a recognized training program until they are 18 years of age, unless they graduate sooner.

The requirement will be effective beginning in the 2011-12 school year and will apply to students who are in school as of the beginning of the fall term in 2011. It will not be retroactive to students who have already left school although there are always opportunities for those students who have left school to return and participate in the public education system.

How important is this, Mr. Speaker? My duty as a minister, the task of schools and school divisions, and our responsibility as a society is to equip students with the best skills and qualifications possible. We don't want to close doors on students. We want all students to have the opportunity to graduate from high school or a good workforce training program. And we need to recognize the modern world requires more education and skills. What was sufficient decades ago is no longer good enough.

The requirements for entering most occupations have become more demanding. Most apprenticeship programs at colleges now require grade 12 for admission. A young person with less than a high school education is very limited in the careers and occupations that he or she can pursue. A high school diploma or the equivalent is the key to post-secondary education and further training. And all the statistics clearly show a strong link between dropping out and unemployment, poverty and crime. So we need to give our young people here in Manitoba every opportunity to succeed. We need to make sure that students are adequately prepared for work or further education.

And we also need to realize that the education system itself must also face modern realities and be flexible and creative in its approaches to improving high school completion and graduation. That is why we are placing more of an emphasis on a mix of alternatives rather than simply trying to force young people to stay in situations that aren't working.

The graduation rate has risen substantially in recent years, from 72 per cent in 2002 to 80.9 per cent in 2009. This is a great improvement, and I want to congratulate all of the educators out there, the parents, the students who are working hard because this is a historic change and we—this bill will complement what is happening out there. It is an essential part of the foundation for our shared goals

of increasing graduation rates and equipping students for our modern economy.

These goals can be accomplished as we all work together. And we anticipate that this multiyear process, because we are trying to affect a culture change here, Mr. Speaker, in that a change in the expectations that we have, both of students and ourselves.

And I know that some people may object, saying that keeping kids in school when they won't—don't want to be there will just accomplish nothing and won't be fair. But, you know, we want to be fair to all students. We want to be fair to their families. The expectations for appropriate classroom behaviour have not changed. Teachers and principals will still have the authority to maintain proper discipline and academic expectations in the classroom and the school.

And we are not saying that 16- and 17-year-olds must stay in the school or program that is simply not working for them or for others. Many students want to go to education and training programs that are more appropriate for them rather than simply being kept in a traditional classroom.

Also, this is not about punishment, Mr. Speaker. I believe the challenge before us for our schools, for our workforce training programs is to engage students better so they want to show up. We can't write them off, and we don't want to be creating and maintaining educational dead ends for our young people.

This legislation would require school boards to establish policies and procedures to support students remaining engaged in school or in activities and programs which provide educational benefits. Policies and procedures would be established to assist pupils with difficulties attending school, and regulations under the act would outline the format and timing of absence reporting from schools to parents and school attendance officers.

Our goal with this legislation is to help produce an environment where students who are having difficulty can be more engaged with what they are doing in their school or training program. In the long run, this will make classrooms more productive.

And we already do have many great alternative approaches for students right now in many school divisions, in adult learning centres and in the high school apprenticeship program. We all know about the success that Brandon is having, and it's just one

of the many success stories in the province of Manitoba.

Neelin High school is an incredible example of an alternative program that serves all three high schools in the area of Brandon. A few years ago the Brandon School Division realized that they had a problem with young people graduating, and they did a study of the students that had dropped out of school, and talked to them about why they dropped out of school. And they were surprised, Mr. Speaker, because they realized that what the students were telling them, that there was a lack of academic support.

And so when they set up the Neelin High school, that high school, that alternative high school program, it's not a traditional school where students move from classroom to classroom and they have different school teachers throughout the day. That school has an opportunity for those students to be in a classroom with a teacher who knows them on a first-name basis, knows some of the struggles that they've had throughout their lifetime and they have a closer relationship with those teachers, and they connect with those teachers. And they have a teacher who works with them in regards to some of the concerns and the alienation that they have felt with the public education system. And that alternative program at Neelin High school has graduated more than 200 students since they put that alternative program in place for their students.

So I just want to congratulate, not just Brandon, but a lot of the other school divisions here in the province of Manitoba and schools and educators who have done a lot of great work on this. And I know that when we all start working together that we're going to have a lot of success in helping students move on to careers, move on to post-secondary training, move into the workforce so that they can participate in our economy, Mr. Speaker.

In response to the concerns of parents, we are moving to make certain aspects of the school system more parent friendly. We are committed to developing a parent-friendly report card written in plain language for use in all public schools so that parents get the information they need to be full partners in their children's education. In co-operation and collaboration with school divisions, we are in the process of implementing common in-service days across school divisions to help families co-ordinate work and care schedules.

*(15:00)

We are also taking steps to maintain the academic integrity of our school system and make sure that our students learn good work habits and the lessons of accountability and responsibility. The measures in this bill will supplement the work we are already doing with divisions and teachers on a policy on late marks which gives teachers the authority they need while being clear that there should absolutely be consequences for inappropriate behaviour such as handing in assignments after the deadline.

We are also working to clarify our expectation that decisions around the promotion or retention of a student are made at the local level in consultation with parents, with students, and the appropriate professionals, so that students have access to the supports that they need whether they pass or fail. I anticipate that these legislative changes will reassure parents and communities that schools are responsive and that high academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in the education system.

In addition, the bill will require government to include child-care facilities in any new schools that are being constructed. This supports the government's commitment under our Family Choices plan to invest in converting surplus school space into child-care centres. We want to build a seamless education system from early learning to post-secondary education and careers. Having child-care centres in schools helps our young people get an early start on their education while making it easier for parents to balance family needs.

In closing, I'd like to say I am pleased to introduce this historic legislation. I believe it is critical for the future success of our children, and I ask all Manitobans to help make it a success and to work with us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Well, Mr. Speaker, and it's—I want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record today in regard to bill three, the preparing students for success act. It's always nice when the government's sort of creative coming up with names for these particular pieces of legislation and, you know, after 11 years in government, it's good to see there's still a little creativity somewhere within the Department of Education.

It's ironic, quite frankly, that we're discussing and debating this particular bill dealing with

education today at the same day that the OECD report came out today talking about the Program for International Student Assessment, and I want to reference that particular report in a few minutes.

But, you know, we're certainly happy to move this particular legislation on to committee because we're interested in hearing what Manitobans want to say about this particular legislation that the minister has brought forward.

You know, the minister does talk about stakeholders, and we do have a lot of stakeholders involved in education. You know, we have a lot of, you know, about 11,000 teachers throughout Manitoba that are in the classroom on a daily basis working their best to give the students the assets that they need to develop. We also have, of course, the school boards and the administration that play an important role in terms of determining, you know, funding and—as well as some of the protocols within the school and some of the special areas and special education that the local schools require. You know, obviously, I think we—it's important that we engage the parents in this process. Obviously, they have a very vested interest in our education system, and I think it's important that we make sure that we engage the parents in the discussions and especially in terms of changing legislation going forward. And, obviously, the students have a—are impacted significantly by legislation and by this particular legislation, so I'm hoping once this bill gets to committee in the very near future that we will be hearing from many students across the province as well and get their perception on what we require in the education system to help move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to be asked to attend a meeting—this would be last spring—where the principal of our local school, Mr. Newton, invited a number of students who had just graduated in the last few years from the collegiate to come back and talk a little bit about the programming within the school, what they thought worked, what they thought didn't work, and where we should be putting some more emphasis on the schooling in the high school. And I thought it was a very good dialogue with those young Manitobans, and I think it's something that we should be doing more often as a government is looking for results.

We have to—you know, the government is big on saying that they're spending money here, they're spending money there, but at the end of the day we have to have results, and, Mr. Speaker, that's what

it's about. And, if we engage our communities and we want to make sure that we are offering what students require and what we as taxpayers should be anticipating and what we should have, as far as results are concerned—and I think that's the thing that the government is missing. You know, they're keen to write cheques, but they're not as good at assessing the results of the money they've spent.

And I think, clearly, when we look at the report that was released today, the downward trend in terms of what's happened to our students in Manitoba is quite alarming. It's pretty clear when we look at the results of the reading analysis from 2000 to 2009. It was—Manitoba dropped the most of any province across the country.

So now, in terms of reading proficiency, we are second-last in the—across Canada, next to Prince Edward Island, and it's been a very dramatic drop. And it's quite alarming to see that, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the report says, in contrast, as a result of its decrease in performance, Manitoba went from performing above the OECD average in 2000 to performing at the OECD average in 2009.

So we've really dropped down in terms of our reading proficiency. And the same thing can be said, too, for the math and science in terms of the analysis that was undertaken over the last few years. We've fallen behind in those two categories as well.

So, obviously, there's a lot of work to do in education here in the province of Manitoba, and we certainly look forward to meeting with those stakeholders that I mentioned earlier from across the province, getting their input into what we can do as Manitobans and as legislators to improve education here across the province of Manitoba. So having said that, I think there's opportunities also to engage other jurisdictions, whether it be other provinces or other countries, who are doing good things in education, who are providing what students need.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I do agree with the first WHEREAS in this particular legislation, and it says: "WHEREAS all young people deserve a strong education system that provides them with the opportunity to achieve a good outcome and prepares them for a successful future, whether that is in the workplace, a training or apprenticeship program, or a college, or university."

Mr. Speaker, we'll watch closely to see the results of this legislation, and we certainly will be monitoring this legislation as it moves forward to see

if it is—will be a benefit for the stakeholders that I talked about before. We certainly, on this side of the House, want to see this particular legislation get to committee as soon as possible so that we can have that consultation period and do what's best for the students across our great province. Thank you very much.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): I'm really pleased to stand and speak in support of this bill. I'm very much wanting to congratulate the minister for bringing it forth and providing it here for the—not just here for the Legislature but the kind of leadership that it takes, I think, here in Manitoba to produce a sound, 21st-century public school system, Mr. Speaker.

I was really interested to hear at the beginning of the statement that the member across the way made about being, you know, this side of the House being creative and, after 11 years in power, still having that ability to be creative. He was referring, of course, Mr. Speaker, to the title of this bill. I—one can only imagine, though, that if he had his way, what the titles of some of these education bills would be: Squash the future of our students bill; throw our—back to the future for our education system; the 1950s weren't that bad. Let's go back to those kind of policies.

I have no doubt that the member across the way could be creative, as well, and also have the kind of titles for their education bills that would reflect their horse-and-buggy approach to education, Mr. Speaker.

*(15:10)

I do though want to say—speaking of the member across the way who just spoke, I was really very pleased that the school from Carberry, which I believe is in his constituency, was here today to witness an occasion in this Legislature when we actually do rise above the usual din. I think that was a very worthwhile learning experience for those students. I would commend the teachers at Carberry and administrators and parents for getting their students here to this Legislative Building, and I was really glad that they got to see us pay tribute to Hong Kong vets and to firefighters and to so many people who were here today for question period.

Those are the kind of experiences, I think, that those students will remember the rest of their lives, and the kind of learning opportunities that I think our public schools, Mr. Speaker, in my experience, at

least, try to make the most of. I really think that that, today, was a exceptional experience for the students and for all of us here.

Mr. Speaker, we are products of our learning experiences. All of us in this Legislature reflect the background that we bring to this place. Part of my experience was being a public school principal during a time when members opposite, unfortunately, had their hands on the levers of power in this province. Now, I know what it was like to try to deliver public school education, public school experience in Manitoba with the backwards approach of members across the way. I remember that very well. I remember, as a school principal, having to, actually, I suppose, in a way, implement the cuts that members opposite came up with back in the early '90s. Very much a backwards approach, not only to education, but to handling an economic downturn that did occur in the early part of the '90s. And their response was to exacerbate that economic downturn with some of their own tough medicine, with some of their own out-of-date policies, with some of their own backwards decisions that they made at that time.

I was a school principal at the Rorketon Collegiate, a great little K-to-12 school in Rorketon, which is still today part of my constituency, Mr. Speaker. I remember sitting trying to figure out how it was that I was going to offer courses to a small high school, have enough staff to offer courses so that students in my class could actually graduate, let alone get an education. We were scrambling just to get enough courses to graduate back in the early '90s, and we looked for ways in which we could do that, and I remember—I've spoken to the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) about this because he was the Education Minister at the time, that didn't increase the amount of funding to schools.

You know, I hear the Tories in the House laughing about it's not all about the money. Well, when you have a -2 and a -2 and a -2, and then, election year, they zip—they go up to zero—up to zero—and then return to -2 after that, it's pretty easy for them, in opposition, to blab about how it's not about the money when they know that part of the problem is that they underfunded education year after year after year when they had the chance to do it. And, Mr. Speaker, let there be no doubt they would return to that if we let them. They would go back to that if we let them. Absolutely, they would. We would return to those days where the funding, to them, just wouldn't matter. Their attitude at the time was, we'll do the cutting here, and you, at the school

division, you can jump up and you can bump up—you can bump up the kind of local taxation that has to be there in order to make up for the cuts that the members across the way were doing back in the early '90s.

This bill that we are speaking about today deserves the support from all members of this House that I think it deserves. The primary purpose of this bill is to raise the compulsory school age in Manitoba from 16 to 18 years of age. And the, you know, the—we heard the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today in question period, I think, make a very good point, and that point was that in the first decade of the 21st century—this is the 21st century, and I would invite members opposite to figure that out and get into it—but, Mr. Speaker, over the first decade of this century, you can see a huge increase—[interjection]—in the—I'm glad the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen) enjoyed that one—but the first decade of this 21st century saw a very significant increase in a very important, very important statistic, and that was the number of students who are continuing their education right through until they get that grade 12 diploma.

Now, it seems, given the reaction of some of the members across the way, that that doesn't fit into their elitist, very narrow view of what our public schools should be. They seem to believe that what we need is a concentration on fewer and fewer students and narrow that focus down to a smaller number and concentrate on getting that smaller number, that—their scores, of that smaller number, up a little bit higher. Well, that's fine if that's how you see the world. That's okay, Mr. Speaker. It's not the way I see the world. It's not the way members on this side of the House see the world. We see the world as inclusive. We see public education as something that needs to be inclusive, not leaving people out if they—just because they can't produce a certain score on a test.

And that was the other hallmark of the members opposite. Thinking back to when I was a school principal, very much a reliance on centrally administered, very rigid, very narrow, standardized tests that did no one any good, except maybe it fit into a political approach of members opposite who aren't above using politics over education, Mr. Speaker. But that was a policy that didn't work. That was a policy that set education back. That was a policy where there was no, absolutely no—the member from—for Turtle Mountain quite rightly talked about stakeholders, but there was no talk of

stakeholders back in the early '90s when the minister of the day then sprung upon the public schools this out-of-touch idea of rigid, narrow, standardized exams.

Mr. Speaker, the—there is a much better approach. There is a much better approach to this. It involves teachers. It involves parents. It involves trustees. It involves parent advisory councils. It involves the people who think and believe that one of the best tools for a economic recovery, one of the best planks of an economic plan would be a strong public school system. You can't have an economic strategy without an educational strategy. And that's what this is about. That's why our minister has brought this bill forward.

I think, although we know that one of the main planks of this education strategy is the—is moving the compulsory school age from 16 years old to 18 years old, there are other aspects of this bill that are worth mentioning and are worth the support of all members of this Legislature.

The one that jumped out at me that I thought was quite, I think, quite useful is the part of the bill that—it's an existing provision that we strengthen, and it ensures that the principal is responsible for the evaluation and promotion of pupils. I don't want—I don't want—some arbitrary third party from a far distance making up decisions having to do with the students in our schools. I want those decisions to be made by people who know those students, who have a variety of avenues by which they can evaluate a student, where they can get to know the student. That means the educational leader in the school, which is the school principal, bringing together teachers and parents and others.

* (15:20)

And I think it makes sense that the policies of the school board need to be taken into consideration. And I think this does put some pressure on school board trustees to take a good look at the evaluations of their students. I think it does make it incumbent on stakeholders of—in our public schools to get involved and to make sure good decisions are made.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I noticed today, and it was brought forward by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. McFadyen), talking about a no-fail policy—that's politics. That's putting politics ahead of making good educational decisions. I can tell you there was no such thing as a no-fail policy when I was a school principal and today. There needs to be

some common sense when you deal with passing and failing students in a classroom.

I can remember, in a school that I taught at, a teacher coming forward and suggesting that 24 of the 28 kids in that class should fail. That's irresponsible. We can't have that kind of an attitude. That's out of touch. Now, that particular teacher is long retired. The—but, you know, we had a principal at the time who was an educational leader who did ensure, who did become responsible for the evaluation of and promotion of the pupils in that school. And that principal brought together all of the stakeholders, brought together teachers. A number of us in that school taught those students, and we worked collaboratively rather than simply treated as if it was *Dancing with the Stars* and there was thumbs up and thumbs down and that sort of thing. We actually did an evaluation of the strengths and the challenges that these students faced, and, in the end, none of these students that were under question failed. None of them did and none of them deserved to. None of them deserved to. Those parents in that situation had no prior contact at the parent-teacher interviews that were conducted throughout the course of that school year. No mention was made that maybe at the end of the year we would fail the student. There was nothing like that. Parents were taken by surprise.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, do you know what else was absent in this, was a plan for how you were going to deal with this student next year. Let's imagine that the student has—we've—the school has decided to hold back the student in grade 3, not promote to grade 4 but hold in grade 3. What's going to be done differently for that student second time around in grade 3 different than the first time around in grade 3? That's always a key question for me in this. If you just present the same material in the same way to the same student you're probably going to get the same result.

Mr. Speaker, it puts—this puts a lot of pressure, puts a lot of responsibility on teachers and trustees, school principals, parents to be involved in that student's education, to take seriously the job of evaluating, assessing and promoting students. It means that people have to be involved in this—the life of the student, and that's not a bad thing. I would suggest that that's a good thing.

We also in this bill give power to the Education Minister to make regulations around the scheduling of non-instructional days, admin days or PD days. I hear from parents a lot that it's quite the job if you

have a—especially with a larger family—to juggle when different school divisions and, in some cases, different schools have different schedules when it comes to these days. But these in-service days, I think, is a good idea to have these together. And I'm sure the member for Carman (Mr. Pedersen) agrees with me on this, to reschedule—to set the schedule so that it actually works for the families involved. It makes a lot of sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I hear about is comments having to do with report cards, and making report cards useful for the student and useful for the parents, so that that can only enhance the communication that we have between the school, the principal and the teacher, and the parents and the students. That to me makes a lot of sense. That's common sense. And we talk about how we need to introduce common sense to different things all the time. Well, here's a good example of that. It's a good example of common sense; have a report card that actually talks about the strengths of the student, actually talks about the challenges that student faces, have a report card that can help the parent help the student. That's, I believe, where we need to head with this. And this bill and that part of this bill, gets us a long way down that road, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to wrap up my comments just by spending a couple minutes talking about something else that I think is very important in this bill, and that is an amendment that would require early learning or child-care facilities be included in all new schools and in major renovations.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is one of the most positive steps a provincial government has taken in education in a long while. I read one time, not that long ago, that every human, by the time they're three years old, have learned 70 per cent of what we're going to learn over the course of our lifetime. By the time you're three, you've learned 70 per cent. And yet our school system, for years, was skewed towards the high school part of our learning experience and then we assumed that we stop learning after we turned 17 or 18 years old.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Acting Speaker, the learning benefits that we can gain by incorporating early childhood education into our schools, actually attaching them to our K-to-12 schools, I think, in the end, is going to pay off huge dividends for the individual kids and their families. They're going to pay off dividends for our communities. And, in the end, I think, it pays off

in terms of a strong economy with a young population that is productive and good citizens. So I think that there's no way that we can overstate the importance of attaching early childhood education to our public schools and providing that in our construction and in our curriculum.

And I think with the help of our stakeholders, in particular, the parents and parent advisory councils, who I think have been at the forefront of advocating for kids who are younger, that—having kids in that preschool—those preschool—sorry, in those preschool years, attached to the rest of the school.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, with those comments I would very much recommend this legislation to the House and I would hope that members opposite can see past the desperate politics that they have been playing and support something as positive as these amendments.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

*(15:30)

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I thought the opposition might like to stand up and speak to this, but I guess that's not the case. But I'm sure I'll hear a lot from the chairs as I'm giving my presentation, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I usually do. *[interjection]* The member from Brandon West just loves to yell down contrary opinions, so I'm looking forward to his heckling this afternoon as I always do.

Just to put things in perspective, Mr. Acting Speaker, when I had the privilege as serving as Manitoba's Minister of Education for six years, I had the opportunity to represent Canada, in the absence of a federal minister of education, at the Organization of American States summit in Trinidad, Tobago. It sounds really exotic and wonderful, and it was, only when it's 95 degrees and 95 per cent humidity and you're in a suit, there's something lost in that.

But it was really interesting to hear the perspectives of different member nations of the OAS in terms of what their challenges were in education. It was almost like that scene from *Jaws* where the characters were comparing scars—and I'm sure many members in the Chamber are old enough to remember that particular scene where you were comparing some of the scars that you had—and we were talking about the scars that we had in our education systems per se, and that's how it felt at first when I heard the discussion but it got to be something a little bit more than that, a little deeper

than that, when we heard what some of those challenges other jurisdictions faced.

For example, one South American jurisdiction said: We would love to have the same education system you have in Canada because our system in South America, we're only funded publicly till grade 9, few kids go on to high school, fewer still go on to post-secondary and university. We would love to have the system you have in Canada. And that's their biggest challenge.

Then another jurisdiction—one of the islands in the Caribbean—their Education minister said: We have a challenge with infrastructure. Every year we—in the hurricane season, our infrastructure is wiped out. We deliver a lot of our education to the islands through distance education initiatives that require satellite transmission, satellite receivers. Every year the satellite dishes are wiped out, the technology is wiped out, and we can't afford to keep rebuilding, so half of our kids go without an education.

And then another jurisdiction said, 25 per cent of our students and 25 per cent of our teachers are going to die from AIDS.

And then they turned to me and said: What's your biggest challenge in Canada? And it made me think about what our challenges are here in Canada, and our challenges in our education system certainly are not insurmountable when you consider the challenges that these other jurisdictions face in our neighbouring jurisdictions to the south.

But we do have challenges, Mr. Acting Speaker, and certainly we recognize those challenges. One of the challenges has been the fact that, for the longest time, students were allowed to drop out of school after 16 years of age. That might have made sense in an economy 30 years ago; it doesn't make sense today. And that's why I'm very pleased to stand in this Chamber and speak to this bill which will ensure that students must go to school until 18 years of age.

And, of course, we know and I know, as a teacher, that there are students who don't want to be there. They might not have the academic bent, if you will; they might not have the ability to perform in the academic stream, but what this bill is saying is if the system doesn't fit the child—or if the child doesn't fit the system, we'll make the system fit the child. That's what this bill is saying. This bill is saying we're going to give you more opportunities to succeed and we're going to give you those opportunities to

succeed in a stream other than the academic, whether it's through the apprenticeship program, whether it's through technical-vocational initiatives, co-op and job sharing initiatives, whatever the model that will fit the child that will help that child succeed and become a successful contributor to society. And this is a very important bill to bring that to fruition.

Now, you know, it's—again, I'll go back to my initial comments that I thought the members opposite would stand up and have something to say about this but—especially when I think this is the one thing that the member from Carman said that they were going to win an election on was education. I think that's the one—one of the things that he said they would win it on. But then our—the Education critic stood up and he had an opportunity to put their platform on the stage and put it in *Hansard* and let people know what they stand for in education, and I think his speech was less than 10 minutes. So I'm glad we have the opportunity and we'll certainly take advantage of that opportunity.

But they don't have much to say, but let's look at what they did say—let's look at what they did say. I remember in the 2003 election campaign when I was right out of the high school classroom in Gimli High School, and I'm on the campaign trail and I heard the announcement of the Tory Education critic on what they were going to do for the public school system: less emphasis on frivolous things like phys. ed., arts and music. And that was the member from Russell, who was an Education minister, saying: We don't need to emphasize phys. ed.; we don't need to emphasize music; we don't need to emphasize art. I was waiting for him to announce that their policy included a chalkboard slate and chalk for all students, taking us back to the Stone Age, essentially, in education, because we believe that our education system should give every student an opportunity to succeed. And not every student is going to succeed in the academic stream. They need to explore the skills and the gifts that they have when they walk into that classroom every day, and that's what our system should be—giving every student an opportunity to succeed.

So, yes, we value the academic stream and we've done incredible work in developing curriculum and redeveloping curriculum that had been largely ignored during the 1990s, unless you were looking at curriculum for standardized testing and teaching to the test and that type of focus that the opposition was putting on it at the time. But we developed one of the best music education curriculums in the country and

that's been recognized by third-party validators. We've developed one of the best citizenship education curriculums; that's been held up nationally as an example. We've developed one of the best curriculum and support systems for education for sustainable development, which members opposite might not think is important, but we think that's important to educate our students on sustainability of this planet of ours. We've developed a number of new curricula to support physical education.

So it's interesting today, you know—in 2003, they're saying, ah, we're not going to emphasize phys. ed. In fact, at one point, they even wanted to cancel recess. I remember the members opposite talking about doing that. So—[interjection] That's right. Shorter summer as well.

But 2003, they're talking about limiting the options in physical education, and then this morning, I heard one of the members going on and on about the obesity epidemic with our children, and we need to get our children more active. Well, that's why our curriculum example is being held up nationwide on what you can do to get children more active in school.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, to hear them talk about their education policy is really quite—it's a gift that keeps giving, quite frankly, as a teacher who became a politician because of what they did to the education system in the 1990s.

Now, the other thing—this morning on the radio, it was absolutely fabulous listening to the members opposite. Their leader was on the radio this morning, and they said: Well, what are you going to do about these PISA results? He said: Well, for one thing, we're going to make sure we have percentages on report cards for high school students. Where has he been? There's a lot of report cards that give percentages for high school students, and for him to say that, I thought, they really don't know what's going in the education system.

And he said: Oh, and we're going to have a parent-friendly report card. That's their commitment. Hello. I believe our Education Minister announced that just this session, that we're moving forward with a—[interjection] Yes, they're stealing our ideas because they have none when it comes to education. They have none.

And then what else did he say? His third platform: We're going to consult with stakeholders. We're going to consult. Now, how refreshing is that?

Because as a teacher teaching in our education system under the Tory government in the 1990s, no consultation—none.

In fact, when we came to the government of the day in the 1990s with a number of issues, we were largely ignored, and how did they treat us for being vocal about the education system? They stripped us of our collective bargaining rights with Bill 72. They cut our salaries and locked people out from the classroom so they wouldn't get any professional development. They announced funding of -2, -2, 0, 0 and -2. They butchered the education system in the 1990s, and what are they talking about today? They're talking about a half-billion-dollar cut to the budget, and who's going to be cut? Our education system is going to be cut. Our education arts programs will be cut. Our education music programs will be cut. Our education—well, phys. ed. probably will be cut as well, because that's what they said they'd do in 2003.

But I digress—I digress. I did say about the consultation, I do recall in 1993, we sent—we, being the teachers of Manitoba, sent a survey back to the government of the day and said: You know what? We have concerns with safety in our schools for our students and for teachers, because kids are getting a little more violent, a little more aggressive. And a couple of years ago, when we started the Safe Schools initiative in this province, I remember the member from Charleswood standing up and saying, there was no bullying in the school system when we were in power. Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

The biggest bullies to the education system in the 1990s was the Tory government, I tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, and to actually suggest that bullying was a product of an NDP government was just the most asinine suggestion I've every heard in this Chamber. And I've heard a lot of them from members opposite, trust me. There's no shortage of suggestions from members opposite that we could choose from, but that was one of the most asinine.

*(15:40)

So where do we go from here? Well, we're going forward, and we're going forward with a piece of legislation that will ensure that students have to stay in school until 18 years of age. And how are we going to do that? By engaging students in a variety of learning opportunities for those students, for them to succeed, for them to find what gift it is that they bring into that classroom every day and explore

those gifts and build on the strengths that they have, as opposed to the Tory approach, which was a regimented system of standardized tests where students were being measured for what they were not—well, let's just—let's face it. Standardized tests is a rather outdated method of assessment. And they'll point to the PISA results. Well, one of the countries that consistently performs best in the PISA reports is Finland.

Finland has no standardized tests, so it's a bit of a lost argument for the members opposite. Why does Finland do very well? Well, because they're a comfortably homogeneous society with, phonetically, a very easy language, from my understanding, to learn. So they are going to succeed on so many levels based on those and a couple of other variables.

Now, you know, I heard the members opposite talking about PISA results today and they're laughing about, oh, Liechtenstein. Well, you know, it's a 35,000 people in the principality, only the fourth largest—or the fourth smallest, I should say, principality in Europe. It's primarily Germanic speaking—and this is the old geography teacher talking here—primarily Germanic speaking with two-third born in Liechtenstein, one-third foreign born, but most of those that are foreign born are also Germanic speaking. It has the largest GDP per person in the world. It's one of the richest principalities. So there is a socioeconomic relationship here. There is a bit of a relationship here. So they're laughing about Liechtenstein. You know, as somebody who's been to Liechtenstein, I'm offended that they would laugh about that.

And Iceland, Iceland—they compared it to Iceland, and started laughing about Iceland. Well, somebody of Icelandic ancestry could tell you that there's 300,000 people in that country. They've had an emphasis on literary tradition for a thousand years. They were one of the first to achieve 100 per cent literacy. One in 10 Icelanders will publish a book in their lifetime, and literacy is a very important part of that culture, and it's culturally homogeneous.

So they're laughing at how we compare to these other jurisdictions without even thinking about the apples and oranges comparison that we have. And what do we have here in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker? We have many schools that I visited as Education Minister where it's not uncommon to be in a school where there are 50 or 60 languages spoken,

because we are a country of immigrants. And we continue to promote the Provincial Nominee Program to bring more immigrants to Manitoba and we've had tremendous growth in Manitoba because of that. So it's not unusual to go into a school with 50 or 60 languages being spoken. It's not unusual to go into a school where there are children from refugee circumstances and it's not unusual to go into schools where we have a variety of socioeconomic variables within those classrooms. And what have we done for that?

Well, let's just look at the English as an additional language initiatives. We had 11 recommendations on how to improve EAL and we implemented all 11, including an extra year of funding, and increasing funding. What do they do on the budgets? Voted against them. But we're providing more supports for English as an additional language learners.

We introduced the first of its kind Intensive Newcomer Support Grant because we recognize that some students that come from all over the world bring with them such baggage and such incredible challenges. Students who have been in refugee camps, who have not had a formal education for 10 years, are coming into our school system and expected to perform at the same level as their peers, by virtue of their age. We've introduced this intensive newcomer support grant that we've had in our funding formula for four years and what have they done every budget? They voted against it.

We've increased support for reading recovery for small-sized classroom grants. We've looked at keeping schools viable in the community and keeping our schools open. And, you know, it's no small coincidence that a lot of the schools where there's been depopulation are in lower socioeconomic regions of the city. But members opposite opposed Bill 28 and the school closure moratorium.

They thought, ah, we should be closing schools, and now, this morning, you know, they're talking about—or this afternoon they're talking about building new schools because they're bursting at the seams. What would the challenge be if we had closed—allowed the school divisions to close all those schools considering the population growth? But, of course, they don't get it because the Leader of the Opposition, a couple of years ago, said, we don't need to give any more funding to education because enrolment's declining.

Well, this year is one of the first years we see an increased enrolment because of our Provincial Nominee Program, because people are coming back to Manitoba, because people know that Manitoba is where they want to be, and we're seeing more and more people come back to Manitoba, 85,000 people over 10 years, Mr. Acting Speaker. So we're seeing this province grow. And Stats Canada has suggested that our population has not only grown to include the first increase into—in enrolment in decades, but we'll see a continual increase in enrolment in our schools in decades. And what are they going to do? They're going to cut half a billion dollars from the budget. And how's that going to impact further programs for new Manitobans who are coming to call this great province of ours home?

Well, I can tell you, it's going to have the same effect it had in the 1990s when they were in office, when they cut 284 teachers in one spring because of their budget announcements. I think that happened to be the same spring when the Minister of Education at the time, the member from Russell, flew in a helicopter from Winnipeg to Gimli, to talk about fiscal restraint. Now, I can tell you that went over very well with the school division board, flying in on a helicopter to talk about fiscal restraint.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm not surprised that they only had one contributor to this debate so far. I'm not surprised that he spoke less than 10 minutes, because when it comes to education, members opposite haven't got a clue. They haven't got a plan. They haven't got a platform. They're going to cut half a billion dollars from the budget, and that's one budget. That's one budget. That's one budget. What happens if, God forbid, they were elected to office and had four years, and four years of budgets of cutting, cutting, cutting, cutting? That's what they do.

Now this particular bill—*[interjection]* I'd like to thank the member from Lac du Bonnet for putting me back on track. But, you know, I do get distracted when I'm talking about education, because we've got a lot to say on this side of the House. There's a reason there's nine of us in this caucus who are teachers, because they made us politicians. They made us politicians because the way they treated the education system, and I know they're sitting there silently because they can't argue with that. They can't argue with that.

So this particular piece of legislation is a great example of how we're moving forward. And, again, we've been working at this with increased funding,

with increased capital, with curriculum changes over the last 10 years, working on a variety of fronts to make our schools healthier, make them safer—

An Honourable Member: Appropriate education.

Mr. Bjornson:—including Bill 13, the Bill 13 that I had the privilege to introduce, the appropriate education act, to be inclusive, and that's what our view on education is; it's inclusive. It's inclusive.

Now, my personal philosophy on education is that it is a recursive—an inclusive, recursive and consultative process, that we continually evolve because the system needs to evolve to meet the needs of our students when teachers know that they're educating students for jobs that will not—that don't even exist right now, but their job is to prepare them for jobs that will exist 20 years from now.

So our bill keeps kids in school longer, gives them more options and opportunities. It addresses what they thought was our policy on no-fail, which is wrong. They thought it was our policy on no-fail. That was incorrect. It makes—it puts clear language in the act, so that parents and teachers and principals and students know what the roles are, with respect to advancement in the schools. It addresses the mistake that they made in 1997, that students couldn't be penalized for not handing in their grades on—or their papers on time.

And I suppose I can admit to this now because of the statute of limitations—I've been in this Chamber over seven years; I didn't subscribe to that as a teacher. The students handed in work to me and it was handed in late, there were consequences. And, as I said, statute of limitations, seven years after the fact, if they want to go after me for a perceived violation of The Public Schools Act, go ahead.

But, the difference is our party believes in an inclusive education system, not an exclusive education system. When times are good and we introduced our budget with \$54 million, their shadow budget, \$10 million for schools of excellence. They don't get it. They just don't get it. They would rather give funding to schools where kids have more opportunities to succeed. We fund schools, so all Manitobans can succeed.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, that's why I'm proud to be on this side of the House. I'm proud to support this bill. It'll be important changes for the education system in Manitoba. It takes something that might have worked 30 years ago when the economy 30 years ago and fixes it to make sure students are in

school till 18 years of age for the economy of today. And I'm proud to be on this side of the House and I suspect members opposite might have something to say on this because, after all, they did say that they were going to win an election based on education. As a former teacher who was a teacher when they were in office, I don't think so. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (15:50)

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's a privilege to be able to stand up in this House and discuss Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act.

I guess I'd like to start off by saying that you and I do share a history of being in the post-secondary education system together, and now we are raising young children. So I know that, personally, education and investing in youth is something that you and I share and have spent many an hour in our lives over the past 20-plus years discussing the role of education and its place in our lives and the lives of our children.

And I think that's something that needs to be looked at here, is what this bill will do in terms of supporting parents, like ourselves, and other parents throughout the province as we try to make sure that we do the best for our children.

And I think one of the things that this legislation does is—really significant—is that movement of the compulsory age in school in Manitoba from 16 to 18 and to do so with supports because, as the world has evolved economically, things have changed for students. I mean, I think back to various generations—grandparents and that—where you didn't even need to complete high school to get a job, and, in fact, to go that far was almost considered unnecessary in some cases. And the bar keeps getting raised as to what is the prerequisite for entering into a stable profession, something where you can provide for your family.

And, really, basically what has happened is the bar has been raised and, unfortunately, because there are so many challenges that certain students face, just even simple things such as peer pressure, that when kids get to a teenage—their teenage years, there's often a lack of motivation to stay in school. They find other things that are distracted. As we know, the frontal lobes are not fully developed at that point so they don't have a full comprehension of cause and effect at that point. So they don't understand that

decisions that they are making at that point could have long-term detrimental effects. So by putting this legislation in place, especially this one particular component, what we're doing is we're providing those tools, those strengths that wrap around students, give the education system and parents another tool to help motivate their children to stay in school and then also provide the supports that they require.

Having been a former educator, one of the things that you become keenly aware of is that students have different learning styles. Some students are auditory learners. Some students are visual learners. Some require reading and repetition. So there's a variety of different pedagogical tools that you have to have in place and that those that go through the education process to come out as teachers learn these things, are aware of them and know how to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of those students and that this becomes especially challenging when kids do get to the older years because, as I said, there are other things that strike their fancy at that point.

And, also, too, if they haven't been given the opportunities that best suit their learning needs, this is a time where they feel that they can move on to being a grown-up. And they think that getting a job and doing those kinds of things will help them. What they don't realize is that's a very short-term way of thinking. As I said, the frontal lobes are not fully developed in that age range yet, so they're not completely aware of the consequences.

What this legislation and this specific aspect will do is it encourages the wrapping around of supports. It encourages students and gives the educational system a means of providing a location for those students to seek the opportunities that will truly carry them forward. So it is about finding means of adapting the education system to suit the child. Are they an auditory learner? Are they someone that's very mechanically inclined? Are they someone that has, you know, an adeptness in the arts? How do we keep those kids in school and building their education?

And that's, I think, one of the most important things that we can do for any child, is invest in their education and to do so for every child, not to do so strictly for a handful of elites, not to do so strictly for people that fit in particular demographics, but to do so for every child because when every child comes into this world they are rich with potential and that the only thing that stands in their way are the

different things that unfold in their lives that, in a sense, remove potential from them, that harm them, the things that come into their path. And, we, as a government, know how important it is to keep all of those doors open, whether it's investing in early childhood education or now ensuring ways to keep kids in school until they finish the 12th grade, and then—as we discussed this morning in the private members' hour—about how do we encourage youth to stay in post—go into post-secondary education and job training.

So it's really about engagement, and engagement requires investment, and I think that's another thing that I find really kind of striking and disappointing as we enter into this discussion. Now, interestingly enough, we've had a—we've had chirping from the other side, but only one person actually willing to put something on the record in this matter, and I think that speaks volumes. I really think that if we are given the privilege by those who elected us to represent their neighbourhood, we have given this privilege—it should not be dismissed. It should not be passed off, and we should each take the opportunity to speak on behalf of the needs of our neighbourhoods and what matters to them, and I know that education is a huge priority in my neighbourhood.

I have the privilege of representing an area that has two International Baccalaureate programs in it, as well as strong arts programs, strong technical-vocational programs, as well as a really diverse group of students from a variety of backgrounds, and that we have strong French immersion programs. So I know the value of education to my neighbourhood. They put a great deal of investment in it and a great deal of belief in the value that education will provide their children in terms of future opportunities.

And it is a privilege to be a part of some of the various programs that they run out of those schools, whether it's the Lincoln Middle School's music program or the arts programs at Westwood Collegiate or the interdisciplinary programs that are offered through Collège Sturgeon Heights in terms of their ability to do aerospace at the same time as IB French immersion. Education matters, but education needs to be invested in, and students need to be encouraged. And I have to say, one of the things that was an outcome of the kinds of investments that have been made by this government has been seeing things like what happened at Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate where, in bringing together a technical-vocational school with a school that had

English, French and IB streams running, the kids were given a wealth of opportunities, and kids that were able to put together schedules that couldn't have existed otherwise. You had IB French students in media courses, in electronics courses, in aerospace courses.

You had these kinds of things happening and you also had—that school can brag about having one of the very first Native studies programs that started back when it was Sturgeon Heights Collegiate. So you see an investment in the diversity. And that school also had a great range of academic needs, and there were some students that were at greater risk, but investment was placed in them, and this is where this legislation really is just one more layer on over a decade's worth of investment.

And, again, as I said earlier this morning, I had the misfortune of having to deal with a young child in the educational system here in the '90s, and it was harsh. It was hard to find daycare. The supports that were there were lacking, and then I had the misfortune of then going from the Filmon regime to relocating to the Harris regime. And talk about your frying pan to fire situation. And again, what's interesting is a common thread in both of those situations is the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), and, sadly, a former classmate of mine, which, again, I reflect on, as I have done previously in this Chamber, I—[interjection] Yeah, he went to the dark side, as the member from Thompson pointed out.

Yes, he—there were apparently some lessons that I'm sure our teachers are quite troubled that he failed to fully comprehend. And a certain amount of those lessons did have to do with things like social justice and understanding of things like education, history and geography from a holistic perspective, and as the minister and member from Gimli pointed out, that, yes, if you're trying to compare countries like Liechtenstein, you know, to Manitoba, it goes even beyond apples and oranges. I think you're talking about comparing apples to Hondas at that point.

* (16:00)

It's just so completely far apart because when you have that socioeconomic and cultural environment and in such a small geographic region, it is completely different from a province where—yes, we have pockets of socioeconomic varieties and that we have a variety of cultural experiences. We have a number of things happening where people are—their educational experience is influenced by a number of

things and what this legislation does is work to equalize that and that kind of equalization is not necessarily something that is even relevant in a comparative model of something like Liechtenstein so, again, when you're comparing things that really have no basis of comparison, it undermines the overall comparison and the value of the comparison.

And so the kinds of investments that have been made here and what this legislation represents is something that, again, those of us that actually have a background in teaching and pedagogy are able to speak to, and I guess maybe that, in some respects, is possibly part of the reason why members opposite are only able to chirp rather than get up and debate, is the relative experience in pedagogical practice on the other side of the House is somewhat limited, to say the least. Whereas we have had people in this debate from this side of the House actually come to this debate with classroom experience, and I think that makes a huge difference because when you've been in the classroom, when you've been dealing with students, when you have a background in pedagogy and learning styles, you actually have a clue about education and you know how important it is to invest in it and to invest in all students, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And I think that is something that, again, we need to remember, is that education is about preparing kids for life beyond the classroom, and that's why I think it's also very important that in part of this legislation we are looking at ensuring that there are early childhood education centres within the schools because, as a mother of a young child, I know how important it is to have that all under one roof to provide that continuum for parents. It's both convenient, in that day-to-day sense of being able to drop your child off at daycare where they can go to daycare in the morning, kindergarten in the afternoon, and you can pick them up afterwards.

But it also gives them a continuum in the learning environment, because by exposing those younger children to a range of older kids, they see themselves fitting in at a very early age. Peer mentoring begins at a very early age. They see what the other kids are doing and they want to grow up to do that, too. I've also seen the kinds of programs that have involved peer mentoring across the schools where grade 12 kids were matched up with grade 1s for reading buddies.

So, again, having that cross-generational educational experience is important and, again, those

are programs and projects that I've seen happen under this government and I have no recollection of anything even similar to them existing back when my first child started in elementary school. And so, again, we really have to remind people in this province just how much has been done and, I think, part of it, and this is where members opposite sort of fail to recognize, is that in having invested what we have over the past decade-plus, people have taken—they take a lot of these things for granted. They often forget what things were like before, because we are in a position where they've had this for a decade. It's like it's always been there. And so I think people need to be reminded of what actually did exist in the past and that, again, if members opposite were allowed to have their hands on the levers of power again, they need to be reminded of the hacking and slashing that occurred in the past and that would likely to be occurring again in the future, again, especially with the kind of budgetary cuts that they have proposed.

I mean, one, we've increased operating funding for schools by 42 per cent. I do believe that the numbers I was hearing earlier all had minuses in front of them when we were talking about the 1990s. So there's a bit of a difference there. How do you, you know, run schools? How do you do things? I think of what happened in the United States during the beginnings, those first horrific months of the economic downturn, and you were hearing stories of students having to bring their own toilet paper to school because of the kinds of budgetary cuts that were being brought in. The schools couldn't do things.

The things that I have heard happened from my colleagues in the US when I was at the Midwestern Legislative Conference about the kinds of consequences that their schools faced, and we don't want that to happen here, and I find it amusing that one of the members opposite sits here and laughs about this. I don't know—he considers himself—and I've heard him tout himself as the education advocate in the past and I, really, again, maybe if he's laughing about things, that questions the degree of his advocacy. But it is one of those things that we have continued to invest because we know how important it is.

We have been building schools, and, in fact, we have invested more than \$643 million in schools capital since 1999, which is an increase of \$302.5 million from the '90s. And in that time,

we've built 17 new schools, 12 replacement schools and completed over 74 additions and renovations.

And what's interesting is that 50 per cent of the schools we've built have been in Tory ridings, so we're trying to make sure that all the kids get educated. It's not their fault who their MLA may or may not be. We've actually—you know, we're concerned about all students and investing in it. So, again, I think it comes down to the fact that, again, when they've had the opportunity to put something on the record and to debate, there doesn't seem to be much for them to say. And I think that, again, it speaks well of this side of the House that not only have we had people up and actually actively engaging in debate, but, again, as I noted previously, most of these people have come to this debate with a background in the education experience.

So, again, that is one of the things that I am proud of with this government, is the fact that we come to the table and we bring in the experience from the classroom, not just from very—you know, not just because this is our job as legislators, but we come in as parents, we come in as former educators, with the understanding of pedagogical practice and the importance of investment and understanding the needs of all students, not students from one particular socioeconomic background, not for elite schools, but for all schools and for all students.

And, as I said before, the kinds of changes here really are about bringing the legislation into the current era, into the times, and into the ever-evolving economic world, and as was mentioned earlier by the member from Gimli, that we're trying to educate students for jobs that don't even exist, that he—you know, that there are jobs that will exist in 10 years that don't exist now, that we can't even foresee them. And so we need to give our students those tools and give them those options. And I think that it's very important that, again, that those that like to chirp across the way should maybe actually invest their time, not so much in chirping, but actually taking a look at the material and taking—and actually considering putting something of substance on the record rather than just heckling from across the way. It's sort of one of those things that if you actually have something of value to say, as a teacher would say, could you kindly share it with the class. You know, don't just sit there and snip from the back of the classroom. That's not good pedagogical practice and also speaks of poor manners. So, again—but that's something that—the teachers in the room would be familiar with that. But I digress.

So the other thing that I think we need to consider is what this—again, it's interesting that when such behaviour was pointed out, you know, as with many students at the back of the class that don't feel discipline is for them, the member has just rather taken up the volume rather than paid attention to what has been said about his behaviour. And, again, if I was a teacher, my behaviour in regards to that individual would be very different than, unfortunately, what it has to remain, as it is you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that in many respects, becomes both the teacher and the principal in this situation.

An Honourable Member: Judge and jury.

Ms. Blady: Judge and jury, yes.

And so there are days in this Chamber where, frankly, I wish we could go to more of a classroom model in terms of behaviour because I think many times certain members should maybe be given a timeout to reflect on their behaviour and work to correct it before coming back into the Chamber, but, again, I digress.

The real important point here, Mr. Acting Speaking, is that this government continues to invest in children. We have a track record that demonstrates that. This bill is just one more piece in a much larger package that looks at education holistically, that looks at students as complete human beings, that looks at them as having a diversity of educational needs, as well as recognizing their strengths and aptitudes, and how best to encourage them as students and to provide the educational system and to provide parents with greater tools to support their students.

* (16:10)

And, sadly, members opposite do have a track record, as well, and it has—is one of hacking and slashing and focusing funding on the elite. And, unfortunately, that doesn't work for every student.

And so, again, I would just like to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a privilege to represent my neighbourhood and to participate in debates, and that I think that more members of this Chamber should recognize the luxury and the privilege that they have to do that. And maybe members opposite would choose to better represent their constituents by putting a few words on the record in this very important debate.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Acting Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the Chamber and put a few words on the record with regard to this legislation, preparing students for success act.

I had the privilege of serving as Minister of Education-in-training for a few years in this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, when we were first elected in 1999 and, oh, my, what a busy period it was.

Mr. Acting Speaker, members opposite, when they were in office, did a full frontal assault on the public education system. They removed collecting—collective bargaining rights from teachers in the classroom. They forced through successive years of significant cuts to the public education funding. They forced out of the profession hundreds of teachers, literally, through their cuts to the public education system.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

You know, on top of the attack on collective bargaining and removing collective bargaining rights, Mr. Speaker, that made life very, very difficult, indeed, for those educators who laboured in the public education system in the province of Manitoba.

There were many, many, many egregious examples of hostility towards the public education system made by members opposite. You know, I mentioned, too, the abrogation of collective bargaining rights and the year after year after year cuts to public education funding, Mr. Speaker, but I think one case in particular, one issue in particular really did sum up how little members opposite cared for the minds of children and the integrity of the public school system, and that issue was the selling of broadcast airspace in the public school system through the commercialization, the invitation of youth TV to come into the classrooms of our school system in Manitoba with commercial television, mandated for children to watch commercial television, to watch advertising for various multinational corporations—mostly American—for things like pop and junk food.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite cared so little for the public education system, cared so little for the sanctity of the minds of young children in our province, that they were willing to sell commercial airtime in our public schools, and not only sell commercial airtime in our public school system—not only sell airtime—but mandate that children be forced to watch commercial television as part of their

curriculum in our public school system. A more shameful, a more disgusting example of disdain and disregard for young people's minds cannot be conceived of than that.

So, you know, members opposite have really nothing to teach those of us on this side of the House about the integrity of the public school system, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's imperative on all Manitobans to fight against an attitude, or in a political party that would commodify children's minds and commodify the public school system by selling advertisements in commercial television in our classrooms.

An Honourable Member: I forgot about that.

Mr. Caldwell: Yeah, most people have forgot about that particular issue, Mr. Speaker, because it—there was only three schools. Thankfully, we were elected in September '99 because there was only a handful of schools that had already installed television screens throughout the hallways and in classrooms. So there wasn't a lot to remove when we came into office, thankfully, because another year along our schools would have been the McSchools of this continent.

It was absolutely an appalling abrogation of responsibility, and, in fact, I would dare say, from an education's perspective, criminal, that members opposite were selling off the minds and selling off the classrooms and selling off the schools of the province of Manitoba to the highest corporate multinational commercial bidder, having those captive minds in the classroom watching commercial television as part of the curriculum, which is criminal, as my colleague from—where's Dave from? [*interjection*] Kildonan. That's criminal, indeed.

Mr. Speaker, it's—certainly is—it certainly does sum up everything that Manitobans need to know about members opposite and how much they care about education. They don't care about education at all. They—they're not speaking to this bill. They don't have any credibility on education. They've launched a full-scale attack on teachers, on their collective bargaining rights, on their salaries. They've launched a full-scale attack on the public school system and on the minds of young people in the public school system.

And, more than that, they stopped investing in capital for our public school system. You know, when we came into office in 1999, the capital shortfall in our public school system was somewhere over a billion dollars in leaking roofs, in substandard classrooms, in mould. I remember going out to

Beausejour—not a New Democratic constituency in the early days of my office—and touring a school in Beausejour, that was—the walls were crawling, literally, with mould, and classrooms were sealed off with plastic tarp. There was no money to repair that damage. The members opposite cut the capital for their—for the public school system during their time in office.

When members opposite, in fact, had the opportunity to hold government and had the chance to make a positive difference in the public school system, what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They launched out a full-scale attack on teachers, students and the public school system in this province. And indeed, that's what Manitobans can look forward to when, God forbid, members opposite come back into office, many, many, many years from now.

But there will come a time in any democratic system when governments change, and you can mark my words, the best indicator of future action is past action, and in past action, members opposite attacked the public education system, attacked the post-secondary education system, attacked the health-care system, attacked the social assistance system. You know, we hear in this House—we listen in this House—[*interjection*]-in fact, yes, my colleague from Gimli, members opposite attacked the democratic system. They ran a vote-rigging scheme to pervert democracy in this province, which is, incidentally, is something that should be more part of the curriculum in this province so that Manitobans and young people, in particular, can understand contemporary history in this province, Mr. Speaker, and how little respect members opposite have for the principles of democracy in this province.

An Honourable Member: Shameful.

Mr. Caldwell: It is, indeed, shameful, Mr. Speaker, how members opposite conduct themselves, not merely in opposition, which is questionable enough, but when they're in office, when they have a chance to make a difference in people's lives, they do take that—they do take advantage of making that difference, but that difference is a negative impact on people. It's cuts to the medical system, cuts to health care, cuts to the public school system, cuts to the social fabric of our province and, most egregiously, as I mentioned, a total disdain for democratic principles, and, you know, as Chief Justice Monnin, in his inquiry, wrote and pointed out that he had, in all his time on the bench, he had never seen as many

liars as he was confronted with by members of the Conservative Party when they were called to account for vote rigging in this province and perverting democracy in this province.

* (16:20)

These people primarily care nothing about anything but personal power and privilege and the opportunity to use that power to create winners and losers in this province, Mr. Speaker. The winners who buy the Manitoba Telephone System—many of the names are familiar to this House because they sat in this House as Cabinet ministers and premiers and associated political hacks. That telephone system that was sold to themselves—you know, the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact, as I like to refer it to it as. You know, every single Manitoban paid the price for members opposite selling the telephone company to themselves, every single Manitoban paid that price.

Every single Manitoban, in fact, paid the price for the perversion of democracy that took place under the vote-rigging scandal, Mr. Speaker. These sorts of things happen in third-world banana republics, generally not in a first-world environment.

So, you know, I understand why members are hostile towards education. Education broadens one's mind; education fosters critical thinking; education fosters questioning of authority. Members opposite like nothing else than to be the authority figure in their communities, in their house—do what I say, is the mantra for members opposite. Do as I say, don't question, don't criticize, we are the divine—[interjection] My colleague from Flin Flon just said, you know, it's a divine right. The divine right to rule, Mr. Speaker, seems to be the guiding principle of members opposite and nothing will stand in their way of that. They will vote-rig to keep that; they will attack the public education system to reduce critical thinking. They will do anything they can do, and it's been proven that they will do anything in their power to maintain power for themselves and to undermine those who would seek to question their policies and their motives.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, as Minister of Education I was handed, certainly, a full plate of crises and problems that arose from the 10 years that members opposite were in power and had the opportunity to launch their decade-long attack in the public school system, the health-care system, the social service system, you know, democracy, as I mentioned. So when I did assume office in 1999,

there were a great many fires burning caused by members opposite, but I wanted to remind members in the House about something that doesn't get a lot of ink anymore because it was dealt with very expeditiously but was probably the most egregious thing that members opposite did, and that was the sellout of our classrooms, our schools and our children to commercial television interests as part of the curriculum. It's unimaginable. Even is—at recess or at noon hour watching commercial television is egregious enough, but to make it a mandated part of the curriculum—to watch television with commercials—it beggars belief what members opposite undertook during their time in office to damage and undermine the public education system in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, today we're debating The Preparing Students for Success Act, which is a continuation of the many initiatives that our government have undertake—has undertaken over the last decade to build the public school system in our province and to create a learning environment for young people that is modern and progressive and provides teachers with a work environment that is supportive and professional and dynamic. This bill that we're discussing today is—the act that we're discussing today provides for an increase in the compulsory education age from 16 to 18 which I can—I could tell you during my time in the 1970s, when I was a student in the high schools—you know, I did graduate from high school and had a fairly successful university career out of high school, but many of my friends did not. Those of who I am still in communication with, 25 years later, 30 years later, now, many of them have either returned to high school or, when they were younger, returned to high school to get their diplomas or attended post-secondary education as mature students or, frankly, never did finish high school but went on to successful business or professional careers in the business world. But all of them, to a person, I can tell you, wish that they had had the opportunities that our government is providing for them to succeed in high school.

We are, through this act, providing for a wide range of initiatives that will appeal to those who are disengaged from the public school system because, frankly, Mr. Speaker, one size does not fit all in our modern world. People have different aptitudes and different interests that they are passionate about, and we should be, as a society, creating opportunities for them to take full advantage of the skills that they

have and the aptitudes they have and the interests that they have, so that all of us as a society can benefit from the wide range of talents that people can bring to our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, this increase in the age of compulsory education to adulthood is something that I very much support. It's something that is very popular, in fact, with students and with former students, with those my age that may not have succeeded when they were in high school. As time passes, we generally become wiser in our outlook towards our own lives, and I think that this particular bill has had considerable resonance around the province.

Mr. Speaker, the bill or the act itself is not confined to compulsory education age. There's more to it than just increasing the age of compulsory education from 16 to 18. There are amendments to reflect new assessment policies whereby the promotion of students, the no fail, as it is known, the promotion of students is set out so that divisions must not adopt a policy that requires principals to promote a pupil regardless of his or her expected learning outcomes.

We believe that there are benchmarks that have to be satisfied in order to progress throughout one's school life, as indeed there are benchmarks that one must meet to progress through one's professional life. We've also, Mr. Speaker, in addition to no fail, this—the acts under debate, The Education Administration Act, will be amended to give the minister the power to prescribe standards for form and content of reporting by schools of student progress.

We're going to have report cards that are more consistent across the province and easier to understand for students, parents, teachers and the general public, Mr. Speaker, which is in the interest of all of us in terms of the benchmarks I was speaking to earlier.

We're also co-ordinating in-service days, Mr. Speaker, to make better use of resources and to make—to provide better efficiency—efficiencies for school divisions and teachers to participate in in-service days, so there's consistency across the province and not a fragmented in-service calendar such as we have had in the past.

And, finally, Mr. Speaker, additional amendments to The Public Schools Finance Board Act will provide for the addition of early learning

and child-care centres as being part of the list of criteria which must be considered when putting together capital plans for schools, and this is probably, to my way of thinking, the most significant aspect of the package of educational reforms that we're making and discussing here today because child care, as all of us know on this side of the House, and early childhood education is probably one of the most critical as well as one of the most under-appreciated aspects of education.

* (16:30)

The skills that are gained during a child's first years of life are some of the most critical skills that that child will take with him or her throughout the remainder of his or her life, and, Mr. Speaker, utilizing the infrastructure that we have in Manitoba, the tremendously good infrastructure we have now after 11 years of historic levels of investment in our public school infrastructure, using that infrastructure to not only make sure that children from K to 12 are housed and taught in the best facilities possible but we'd also use those facilities to provide for early childhood education opportunities and child-care opportunities for the communities in which our public school infrastructure exists. We've got several hundred schools in this province, Mr. Speaker, that can provide an extraordinarily good environment for the youngest of our citizens to begin their path towards life-long learning in.

I know that my colleague, the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), when he was Minister of Education, ceased the practice of closing down schools in our province. Oftentimes—I won't say a whim, but oftentimes, schools were closed without much due diligence taking place.

And, we have, in my own part of the province, in Kenton, Manitoba, in western Manitoba, probably the first case, and certainly a benchmark case, for a school that was slated to be closed, turned into a child-care centre, early childhood education centre, a community centre, and it has made the world of difference to children and families in the Kenton area, and not only to the children and families in the Kenton area but to the community of Kenton itself. To have that school functioning as a major educational and social centre in Kenton has made a huge difference in the future prosperity and the current prosperity of Kenton and area.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we do have hundreds of schools, several hundred schools in the province of Manitoba, all of which can be utilized in

a very, very positive fashion for early childhood learning and daycare.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill, a good act, continuing a very strong history of active engagement in developing educational excellence in our province. I'm very, very proud to stand with our government in continuing our work on public education and on post-secondary education in—we recognize, that education is the foundation of our prosperity, our future prosperity of our province. We recognize that it's a foundation for economic development and economic growth in our province. And we are investing accordingly, and that means we are investing at historic levels—in fact, unprecedented levels—in both our post-secondary and public school system. This act continues that record of investment and engagement in our public school system. And, as I said, I'm very proud to stand on the government side with what I like to refer to is the education government in Canada. We have been consistent and steadfast in our commitment to providing educational excellence in this province.

Mr. Speaker, just to conclude my remarks, I think it's reasonable enough to conclude in this fashion, members opposite really have nothing to offer but for cynicism. As I began my remarks, but for cynicism, and when they are in office, a record of—a shameful record of hostility towards the public school system.

But, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I do want to acknowledge that today in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*—Tuesday, December 7th edition of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*—contrary to what members opposite have been harping on earlier today in question period, Canada's education system, and I quote from the *Globe*, remains one of the best in the world, and our students perform well, regardless of socioeconomic background, according to the organization of economic co-operation development.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite would have one school system for the elite and another school system, presumably, with McDonald's teaching from the television screen; one education system for the elite, their own folks from the Charleswood-Tuxedo family compact families, I suppose, and another system for the rest of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, we would have an education system that provides excellence to all and it goes along with the OECD assessment that Canada, as I said, is one of the best in the world because we perform well, regardless of socioeconomic

background. And, in fact, Canada's strongest performance—and I quote again from *The Globe and Mail*—was in reading, with the fifth-highest score behind, obviously, four other jurisdictions. And Canada also did—posted top scores in math and science, which is of increasing importance internationally.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to speak in support of this act and proud to support all of the initiatives that we've undertaken in education, in funding education, supporting the children, supporting teachers, supporting families and, ultimately, supporting communities and our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I will speak for a few minutes.

I am very much of the point of view that we should encourage children and students to stay in school and that we should work to decrease the very high dropout rate that we have in Manitoba compared with other provinces. And certainly, after 11 years of NDP government, to have had such a high dropout rate here compared with other provinces is not a mark of a strong education system, unfortunately.

We shouldn't take away from the many student—teachers who are working very hard and who are doing very well. But we do need to be careful, particularly when the—our ranking, Manitoba compared with other provinces, has gone down significantly in terms of reading and math and science. And there's clearly a long way to improve, and we need to have a much stronger education and education system than we have at the moment.

The question on this bill is whether, in fact, it's going to achieve the target of keeping young people in school, or whether, in fact, this is another—more smoke and mirrors than otherwise—attempt to show a government which is trying hard, but very often not meeting its targets as we saw with climate change, as we saw with area after area.

And so I suggest that, first of all, that one should look at the record, and the record is that New Brunswick brought in mandatory staying in school to age 18 in the year 2000, and yet, when you compare New Brunswick to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, there's virtually no difference in terms of the number of kids staying in school. And so, you know, it's not necessarily this

type of measure which is going to be—have a huge effect. And larger studies looking at jurisdictions in the United States and comparing jurisdictions which have a mandatory staying in school to age 18 versus those which don't, suggest that the differences are pretty small in terms of an effect to keep kids in school.

They—the bigger areas where kids need to be staying in school are probably, particularly, early on. There are, in the discussions, many discussions that I've had, problems in areas of the centre part of our city where kids are not staying in school because, for a whole variety of reasons, in the earlier grades, and as they disengage in the earlier grades and don't stay in school, then having measures which are right at the end of their period in school, at age 16, 17, 18, are not as effective as—one of the things that one has to do is act much more effectively early on.

I'd say that the use of fines in this legislation, it's a—it is a—many people that I have talked to suggest that this is actually counterproductive, you're trying to fine the—often the poorest kids and the poorest families. And, in fact, Lloyd Axworthy, in the work that he's been doing, has shown that where you do the opposite of fining, but actually help kids, you make a much larger difference, and that's something that this government should have learned from in terms of what is actually working and what's making a difference.

* (16:40)

So, you know, I think that, although, you know, I'm prepared to look at this carefully and to support elements of this, I am a little skeptical that it's going to be the magic wand that this government would like it to be. And, certainly, I think all of us should have some skepticism, particularly given this government's track record of again and again not delivering on promises and targets and commitments.

So those are my comments. That being said, I want to praise the many teachers, the many people who are working very hard in our school system to try and make it a better place in spite of what this government has been doing. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): It's my pleasure to rise and put a few thoughts on the record about Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended), and, Mr. Speaker, whenever I have the opportunity to speak in the House, I always like to take the step of reading the piece of legislation over again and doing a little bit

of research on what the intent of the legislation is, and, to do that, I always find it great to look at the first explanatory note that the bills have in them because that often speaks to what the intent of the bill is.

And the explanatory note, in terms of this bill, talks about whereas all young people deserve a strong education system that provides them with an opportunity to achieve a good outcome and prepares them for a successful future, whether that is in the workplace, a training or apprenticeship program or a college or university. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that that really speaks to what our government has been all about during my seven and a half years being here in the Legislative Assembly. I have seen that to the extent that it has made me very, very proud to be on this side of the House.

When I look at institutions like the University of Manitoba—the University of Manitoba is in my constituency. It resides in the Fort Richmond side of my constituency, and when I first came into the Legislative Assembly, and prior to that, the University of Manitoba was actually decrepit and in very, very many ways—

An Honourable Member: Falling apart.

Ms. Brick: —falling apart, quite literally what the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) said is the exact thoughts that come to my mind: falling apart.

The Engineering Building was very, very sad. I strongly believe that people should not be learning engineering, which is about the skills that you learn and the skill set you need to learn so that you can design buildings or make those buildings' design so that they're functioning mechanically and they're functioning electrically for people who reside here in Manitoba. I thought it was such a sad state and spoke so much to the previous government's inattention that the Engineering Building at the University of Manitoba had a leaky roof and that asbestos was allowed to continue to exist in many of the buildings, that the electrical systems were very, very sadly in need of repair, and our government has attended to those things.

When I look at the Domino's project that is now in place, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it's made me amazingly proud to be the member for St. Norbert—who sits on this side of the House—where the University of Manitoba resides, to see new buildings coming up, but, also, in those new buildings, an attentiveness to the historic value of

many buildings. And I just want to say that the Domino's project, which takes a look at buildings that are on campus that relate to the Faculty of Music, the Faculty of Arts, that also relate to student residents and ensuring that student residences that are being built are totally accessible to the point where they have Braille right beside the elevators, to the point where absolute accessibility is made. When a Arthur V. Mauro Centre is opened up, it includes absolute accessibility so wheelchairs can get in anywhere in that building, and I think that those are the types of things that our government has been paying attention to.

That, Mr. Speaker, talks to post-secondary education, but in terms of post-secondary education, I know all members just recently received a card in the mail that talked about the appointment of the new college president, Mr. Mark Frison, and he is with Assiniboine Community College which, as we know, is in Brandon.

And I had the opportunity to read that card, and I thought, boy, you know what? We really are doing good, because that card talks about providing educational training for 50 years. It talks about over 30 certificates, diploma and advanced diploma programs and 10 apprenticeship programs taking place at the Assiniboine Community College; 2,600 full-time students, including something that I'm really proud that we're paying attention to on this side of the House—apprenticeships, part-time students, as well, being accommodated. Eight campuses and training centres throughout Manitoba; 7,000 continuing studies, distance education and contract students. It also speaks to an annual operating budget of \$38 million, which we've made sure that colleges have enough money and universities have enough money to continue to operate. It also talked about the economic contributions to western Manitoba and that that was measured at \$96.6 million each year.

But, when I read the last bullet, Mr. Speaker, I must say I was particularly proud, being someone who has an undergraduate degree in physical education, but has a history minor, the fact that we're currently relocating to a beautiful heritage site on Brandon's North hill. I think that that's important to people, that we don't forget our backgrounds, we don't forget our history, that we take a Red River or community college and we ensure that a heritage building in downtown Winnipeg is made for students, a facility that maintains the integrity, maintains the outlook and the facade of the building,

maintains history for everyone to see, but repurposes a building.

And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I attended the opening, and I've actually gone back and attended a class there. I went back and took school last year in learning to write better. I'm learning to speak better—written and oral communications. I did a 10-week course there. And, in going into that building for that 10-week course, I was really proud, really proud that it was this government that repurposed that building. I think sometimes on this side of the House, we tend to forget all the things that have happened during the time that I've been here and the four years prior to that.

I, also, Mr. Speaker, during my reply to the Speech from the Throne, spoke about one of the institutions that is in my constituency that really focuses on preparing people so that they can achieve success from the time that they're 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and sometimes returning to school when they may have young children or families, and that is Winnipeg Technical College.

That college just celebrated, on November 19th, its 25th anniversary, and I have really been the beneficiary of that college in both my children and my son, Steven, attended college there, and he took production welding and he also took autobody painting.

* (16:50)

Now my son, Steven, is now 24 years old, but I must say that that gave him a self-confidence that he never had. He's a sufferer of attention deficit disorder, a really sweet kid, but someone who's kind of all over the map in terms of where his learning is, and I must say that Winnipeg Technical College and Myron Kowalski, who was his instructor, was so very, very patient with him. He ensured that Steven learned and that Steven's learning needs were met, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, it's that kind of teacher and that kind of attention that we want to encourage with this bill.

This bill ensures that parents are also a part of the conversations that happen around their children's learning. It ensures that, when you receive a report card, in terms of your child's success and your child's challenges, it's in plain language. It's in English that everyone can understand.

And, to me, Mr. Speaker, that's important. It's important in terms of the people that we have here in Manitoba, our new immigrant population that is here.

It's important as well so that a dialogue can happen, a dialogue between a teacher and a parent, and a child, because that's really the triangle that it takes to ensure that success happens.

I know that my time is limited and I could speak for much longer but before—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Brick: I'm not done yet. Don't—*[interjection]* Well, I do—

An Honourable Member: Some of us, we do have a few more things to say.

Ms. Brick: I do have a lot more to say actually, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk—I do—well, actually, I must congratulate the House because—thank you for listening. Thank you for listening. I actually feel that I am being listened to, so thank you. But I think the opposition on the other side of the House may not like what I have to say now.

In the late 1980s, I was a parent with two young children, Steven and Janelle, and that was the time that I must say, Mr. Speaker, I started—although I wasn't very political, never thought of myself as political—I started to learn more about politics. I became an activist in daycare.

I helped co-found an organization called Concerned Parents for Child Daycare Manitoba. That organization, of which I was a part of, spent many, many, many hours fighting the Conservative government on the daycare file. It was nothing but frustrating as a parent to find out that your fees for your child's daycare, based on your small limited family budget, was increasing, increasing 30 per cent or increasing 50 per cent, was hugely challenging. I was in here with many, many people, late '80s. In 1989, I was in here many, many times speaking to the member for Russell, who, at that time, was the minister, and who just actually turned a deaf ear to us.

I was in here with daycare workers delivering peanuts to the government of the day, the Tories, because that's what daycare workers were getting paid, peanuts. Pretty hard to attract daycare workers to a job if you don't pay them fairly, if you don't give them a pension, pretty hard to attract them.

I'm so proud of our government on this side for making sure the daycare is part of this equation for this bill. I'm so proud to see that Preparing Students for Success Act includes discussions in it about capital for daycare. I must say that on this side of the House we know that children grow from little to adults. We know that it's a whole spectrum.

We know we have to take care of them and ensure their success during the time they're little to the time that they're 20, 30 or 40 so that they continue to be able to attend educational institutions that are successful like the University of Manitoba.

And I'm really proud to be on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank our government for introducing this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 13, the—second reading of Bill 13, The Preparing Students for Success Act (Various Acts Amended).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

House Business

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

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Howard: I'd like to announce that following routine proceedings tomorrow, December 8th, the House will be considering a condolence motion for Mr. Harry Enns.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, for House business for tomorrow, after the routine proceedings, that we will be doing condolence for Mr. Harry Enns, who was former member for the Lakeside.

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there's a will to call it 5 o'clock?

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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