

**Fourth Session - Fortieth Legislature**

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES**

and

**PROCEEDINGS**

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

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The Honourable Daryl Reid  
Speaker*

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
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REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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ROWAT, Leanne	Riding Mountain	PC
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SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

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

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 5—The Police Services Amendment Act  
(First Nation Safety Officers)**

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 5, The Police Services Amendment Act (First Nation Safety Officers), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Allum:** I'm pleased to introduce The Police Services Amendment Act for First Nation safety officers. First Nations are faced with significant public safety challenges resulting from the federal government's unilateral decision to terminate the band constable program effective March 31st, 2015.

This legislation will create a framework for First Nations to enter into agreements with Manitoba, Canada and the local policing authority to create First Nation safety officers. This will replace and improve upon the band constable program. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this legislation also emphasizes a holistic community-based approach to First Nations policing which is adaptive to the diverse characteristics and needs of each individual First Nation community.

Thank you.

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

Any further introductions of bills?

**Bill 6—The National Research Centre  
for Truth and Reconciliation Act**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that Bill 6, The National Research Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Act; Loi sur le Centre national de recherche pour la vérité et la réconciliation, be now read for a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lemieux:** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a significant undertaking and it is a prestigious honour that Manitoba will be home to the national research centre on Indian residential schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to bring about truth, healing and reconciliation. It is important that these documents and personal stories be made available for survivors, researchers and others to learn about residential schools while respecting the privacy and dignity of those who shared their painful memories.

This legislation will empower the University of Manitoba to manage the records so that they are appropriately accessible to promote engagement in regard to residential schools and other issues related to the colonization of indigenous peoples while respecting and protecting the highly sensitive personal information in some of those records.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

**PETITIONS**

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

**Election Request**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) In 2015 the current provincial government will be in the fourth year of its mandate.

(2) There is a crisis of leadership unfolding on the government side of the House.

(3) According to media reports, the member for Minto stated that the Premier is more concerned about remaining leader than doing things in the best interests of the province.

(4) According to media reports, the member for Seine River stated, if you are in a position where you support the point of view of the leader—of the Premier, your priorities and your projects move up the queue.

(5) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated that the Premier has stopped listening to our advice.

(6) According to media reports, the members for Southdale, Dauphin, Seine River, Minto and Fort Rouge stated, we can no longer work for a Premier who refuses to hear us; he refuses to hear us not just on the leadership issue but also on a wide range of issues in our portfolios.

(7) The concerns over the Premier's leadership have not been confined to just government members. NDP provincial council member Darlene Dziewit has been reported as saying, we have a crisis here in that I don't think the people of Manitoba trust our leadership anymore.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Premier to immediately consider calling an election so that Manitobans can decide who is best placed to govern in the best interests of Manitoba.

And this petition is signed by Q. Vandermeulen, J. Gobin, S. Langevin and many more fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

#### **Grace Hospital Emergency Room Upgrade and Expansion**

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The provincial government promised to upgrade and expand the Grace Hospital emergency department in 2011 and to complete it by 2015.

The Grace Hospital was left as the last of all Winnipeg hospitals to be slated for an emergency room upgrade.

The provincial government has broken another promise to Manitobans by delaying the start of this upgrade by three years, as failure to begin construction in 2013 has left patients and hospital employees facing long wait times, overcrowding and the risk of unsafe conditions and care.

This provincial government has allowed ER wait times at the Grace Hospital to become the worst in Canada at triple the amount of time that emergency physicians recommend.

Ambulances in Winnipeg, including at the Grace Hospital, continue to face excessive patient off-load delays that are getting longer every year.

Last year the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg had over 23,000 patients seeking emergency care through the ER department and over 2,000 of those patients left the ER without being seen because they became too frustrated waiting to be seen.

\*(13:40)

Instead of fixing hallway medicine, there are now numbered hallway spaces.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to keep their promise to the people of Manitoba and make the upgrade and expansion of the Grace ER an immediate priority.

And this is signed by W. Neufeld, J.M. Nadeau, T. Wiebe and many others, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Highway 10 North and 3rd Street North in Swan River—Traffic Signals**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Local residents have expressed concerns regarding properties located at the intersection of

Highway 10 north and 3rd Street North in Swan River, including the Swan River regional high school, the Tim Hortons and the Co-op gas bar quadrisection.

There are no traffic lights or pedestrian crosswalks at this intersection. Students from the high school run across the highway to access Tim Hortons and the Co-op gas bar. When the daycare centre opens, children will need to cross the highway if they wish to access the wellness centre.

Highway 10 north is a major haul route for farmers and logging trucks, including the potential for a collision—increasing the potential for a collision involving students and/or motorists.

This intersection is a dangerous corner for motorists, including school buses making left-hand turns onto the highway from either direction, especially in the hours before and after school and at lunchtime.

The traffic on this highway and at this intersection will only increase in the near future with the opening of the wellness centre and the daycare facility.

Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is only offering to provide a painted-line crosswalk with unlit signage but nothing to actually stop the traffic for pedestrian crossing safety. Motorists often disregard painted-line crosswalks, creating a false sense of security for pedestrians who use them.

On October the 3rd, 2013, Winkler mourned the loss of one of their 16-year-old students killed at a crosswalk consisting only of signage.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation consider installing a set of traffic lights, including pedestrian lights, at the intersection of Highway 10 north and 3rd Street North in Swan River.

And this petition is signed by J. Foster, R. Minish, W. Hanke and many, many other fine Manitobans.

### **Residential and Vocational Service Organizations—Standard Province-wide Funding Formula**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

Funding provided to organizations that provide residential and vocational services to individuals with physical and developmental disabilities in rural areas is significantly lower than the funding levels provided to similar organizations in Winnipeg.

This discrepancy in funding levels have affected—has affected the recruitment and retention of skilled staff, as average wages do not reflect the complex duties of staff that are similar to health-care aides.

Without increased funding, more—most organizations that provide residential and vocational services will be forced to close.

The closure of these organizations will severely impact the local economy, as these organizations are often large employers and provide necessary services in the community.

The value and quality of life experienced by individuals with special needs residing in a familiar and consistent environment is immeasurable.

Closing these organizations and moving these individuals will be incredibly disruptive to their lives and detrimental to their health and well-being.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services consider implementing a standard funding formula across the province for organizations that provide residential and vocational services for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

This petition's signed by A. Milton, H. Jacobson, W. Mate and many, many more concerned Manitobans.

**Mr. Speaker:** Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Human Rights Commission annual report for 2013, the 'discriminatory' business practices act annual report for 2013-14 and the annual report concerning complaints on judicial conduct for 2013.

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

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Shelly and Wayne Davidson, who are the guests of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

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

And also, seated in the public gallery from École secondaire Neelin High School, 47 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kerri Malazdrewicz and William Savoy, and this group is located in the constituency of the Minister of Municipal Government (Mr. Caldwell).

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Former Cabinet Ministers Support for Government

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Well, the dangerous and dysfunctional situation within our provincial government continues, and the question is how long will it take to stabilize, I suppose. I'm sure the Premier's asking himself that very thing.

The rebel five have spoken very harshly of our Premier and they have said that he's stopped listening. They've said his priorities are not Manitobans' priorities. They have said that he refuses to hear them and they've said that they cannot be truthful and hold on to their integrity. Yet now they say that they will vote against a non-confidence motion which is based entirely on their own statements.

So they are not confident in the Premier and the government on one hand, but they are confident

enough to vote the Premier and government back in on the other. This perpetuates a dangerous instability in our province. Now, as former front-benchers can't seem to decide if they are rebels or loyalists, so they are trying to be both simultaneously, and this dangerous political instability hurts our province and its people.

How long does the Premier think he can count on the support of these returning rebels? Would it be months, weeks or days?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** The Throne Speech that we put in front of the people of Manitoba through this Legislature just a few short days ago, Mr. Speaker, spoke to the priorities of Manitobans.

It said there needs to be opportunities for young people to get the education and training they need so they can live and work in Manitoba and make a good living. That built upon our commitments to renewing and extending infrastructure in this province, critical infrastructure for economic growth, infrastructure to protect communities from floods and municipal infrastructure to improve the quality of life. And that built on our commitment to protect core services for people, whether it be health care, education or other essential services to families. And, finally, it built upon our commitment to having the lowest electricity, home heating and auto insurance rates in the country as a bundle and making sure Manitoba stays affordable.

So I'm actually of the optimistic view, Mr. Speaker, that all members of the Legislature should vote for the Throne Speech and reject the non-confidence motion, and I look for the members opposite to endorse the Throne Speech and vote against the non-confidence motion.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, that's highly unlikely, Mr. Speaker, and so is the healing of a rift among government members, I'm afraid.

Of course, the government has underspent in only one department over the last five years and overspent in all others. The one they underspent in is the one they now claim great affection for and that is, of course, infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the rebel five say that the Premier's priorities have been put ahead of those of Manitobans and the Premier says that the Throne Speech outlines his priorities. Therefore, the rebels have to decide: either they vote for the Premier's priorities which are, as they have said, not those of Manitobans and support the Throne Speech, or they

vote for Manitoba priorities and against the Throne Speech. They cannot have it both ways without eating their words and looking unprincipled.

Now, the rebel vote for this Throne Speech is a clear admission that the priorities of the rebel five are exactly the same as the Premier's priorities.

So let me ask the Premier: How long does he suspect this will continue to be the case?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, the person that didn't hear anything in the House recently was the Leader of the Opposition.

We said the Throne Speech reflected the priorities of Manitobans and that everybody could find a way to support those priorities because their Manitobans have said that their No. 1 priority is infrastructure. Manitobans have said they want good opportunities for their children to live and work in Manitoba. Manitobans have told us that they want to ensure that the health-care system is there to look after their parents and other members of their families, and Manitobans have said, do those things at the same time because they are our top priorities and keep Manitoba an affordable place to live where everybody can have a sense of inclusion and respect.

Those are the priorities of the people of Manitoba. I hope the members in the opposition will vote for them because they will then have shown they listen to the people of Manitoba.

\* (13:50)

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, half his former front bench doesn't believe him, Mr. Speaker, so who could blame Manitobans for not believing him after he broke his promises?

Manitobans are quite rightly asking us, and I'm sure they're asking the members opposite, what all the fuss was about a couple of weeks ago when six MLA mutineers jumped the sinking NDP ship and blamed the captain, and then they went out and they told everyone that would listen that they had to have another captain and they screamed, replace the captain, they said. But of course the captain didn't listen to them, but, then again, according to them he doesn't listen to them anyway, and now they all scramble up the ropes back onto the very ship they deserted a few days ago.

The question is: How does the captain now trust those former deserters from his own caucus? How long does the captain think it's going to take before there's another mutiny and he has to deal with that?

Will it take months, will it take weeks, or will it just take a few days?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we come to the House to reflect and identify and respond to the priorities of Manitobans. That's what the Throne Speech did.

Mr. Speaker, we heard students saying they want to make the cost of going to post-secondary institutions more affordable. We had a very specific initiative on interest rates to help them do that. We have the graduate tuition tax rebate in Manitoba which has a portion of that is available in third and fourth year when people are studying in a post-secondary program. We've expanded our apprenticeship opportunities.

We saw in the Throne Speech a commitment to double the number of online courses in Manitoba through the revamped Campus Manitoba program which will allow people, no matter where they live in Manitoba, as long as they have access to broadband, to be able to study those courses online. And we would like to have more broadband opportunities in Manitoba; it's a little harder to do when the telephone system has been privatized and we don't have the same ability to guide it in the direction we'd like to.

But the reality is this, Mr. Speaker: All members in this House should consider supporting this Throne Speech because the Throne Speech speaks to the priorities of Manitobans, and when we speak to the priorities of Manitobans—

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

### **Provincial Deficit Reduction Strategy**

**Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's still unclear whether those are the priorities of a premier or of a leadership candidate.

Mr. Speaker, the new Finance Minister said in question period that it was the goal of the NDP government to return to surplus in 2016-17. However, the NDP ran on a promise to actually eliminate the deficit by 2014. Now, the former Finance minister, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), he reaffirmed that commitment to get into balance by 2014 just two years ago, but instead of a balanced budget, Manitoba got a \$522-million deficit. They broke their promise in spectacular fashion, but now the new Finance Minister would have Manitobans believe that this time around it is somehow different.

So I ask the new Finance Minister: How will he succeed where his predecessors have failed? Will he disclose today how he's going to eliminate his government's half-billion-dollar deficit?

**Hon. Greg Dewar (Minister of Finance):** I want to thank the member for the question.

The—it is our goal of this government to return to surplus in 2016-2017, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we're going to do so by controlling expenditures, by finding efficiencies and by growing the economy.

And we are growing the economy. We're the third best performing economy in Canada over the last 10 years. As well, our unemployment rate is the third best in the nation as well.

But we're not going to do what they want to do and that is to cut \$550 million out of health care, out of education and out of infrastructure.

**Mr. Friesen:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, so the new Finance Minister says he's going to get there by controlling expenditures, but I have another recent history lesson for this minister.

I remind him that the former Finance minister, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), after the release of last year's third-quarter results, she said she was doing better than she thought, that she was ahead of schedule. But then, at the end of the year when the numbers come out, we find out that she's actually \$90 million over her own estimate from just three months before.

Even with record revenue accruing to this NDP government from an illegal PST, they still can't curb their spending. But now this new Finance Minister says he will curb the spending.

I call on this new Finance Minister today to tell this House: What is his deficit reduction strategy that would so boldly go where no NDP Finance minister has gone before?

**Mr. Dewar:** Again, as I said earlier, our goal is to return to surplus in 2016-2017 and, as I said again, we will do so by controlling expenditures and growing the economy, as we're doing. We will not—if we have to respond to a natural disaster, Mr. Speaker, we'll be there, and we need to continue to—a global economy that may be struggling; we will be there as well.

But I do want to remind the members opposite they—their promise to return to balance was in 2018-2019, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Friesen:** All right, Mr. Speaker, another lesson for the new Finance Minister.

The provincial budget is now over \$15 billion. The deficit stands at \$522 million. Where the former Finance ministers have failed to curb spending of that government by even 1 per cent, this new Finance Minister is now claiming that he will curb spending by 3.5 per cent; that's what it would take to get the government now back into balance. Yet there is in the Throne Speech not one reference to a deficit reduction strategy and the new Finance Minister has no evidence, no plan, no strategy for the members of this House today.

Will the new Finance Minister just admit that while the NDP Finance ministers may keep changing, that it is the same failed record and broken promises of an NDP government that just can't manage and the same response from Manitobans who just don't believe you anymore?

**Mr. Dewar:** Remind the member—I remind the member, Mr. Speaker, that in this week's speech of the throne we announced a new hospital in Notre Dame de Lourdes, and that will add \$35 million to our debt. Are they saying now they don't want us to proceed with that hospital? Are they saying that?

I want to say yet again it is our goal to return to surplus. We will do so by controlling expenditures, by growing the economy. We won't do what they did and that's to sell off MTS to pay—to eliminate their deficit.

#### **Student Financial Aid Information System Implementation and Costs**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** I think some people should be sticking to the script there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2007 this spendDP government decided to replace the student financial aid computer program. The tender went out in 2009.

I'd like to ask this new Minister of Education today: Is this new program up and running, and what was the cost of that program?

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** Well, as the member knows, certainly, then, infrastructure at some time requires to be updated. We've been in the process of updating this infrastructure and we're going to do it right, Mr. Speaker, and phase 2 of the service portion of the project has been a little bit more difficult due to the complexity of it, but there have been some

challenges getting the system up and running within the original time frame.

But what's important is the fact that there are student loans available, there are bursaries available, and we are supporting education in unprecedented levels, unlike members opposite. I know they cancelled a lot of funding for scholarships. I know that they cut funding to the universities, and that's what they'd do again in their effort to save money here in Manitoba.

We believe in investing in education and we'll invest in education.

**Mr. Ewasko:** While sticking with the theme of history lessons today, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give one for the Education Minister, who once was a history teacher as well.

Manitobans are paying more and getting far less, Mr. Speaker, underneath—under this NDP government. Matter of fact, Manitobans are getting nothing when it comes to the Manitoba student financial aid computer system.

Mr. Speaker, just to enlighten the Minister of Education, \$22 million have been spent on the student financial aid computer system that was supposed to be launched June 2011. They have actually scrapped the program.

So today I would like to ask Mr.—the new Minister of Education from Gimli: Where's the money gone?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we want a system that's flexible and adaptive, and we know that as we move forward, future upgrades won't require the same type of investment. And, no, it has not been scrapped. We're currently in discussions with the provider on what the next steps would be.

\* (14:00)

And, again, members opposite like to talk about education policy, Mr. Speaker. They like to talk about investing in our youth, which is really talking out of both sides of their mouths because we know what happened when they were in office: cutting funding for bursaries, cutting funding to the universities, cutting funding for the K-to-12 system. They've already said in their alternative throne speech their way up is to be cutting programs for our students.

That's not we're about on this side of the House. We'll continue investing in education.

**Mr. Ewasko:** We're just asking for when the launch date is, Mr. Speaker. Our informants have told us that it's been scrapped.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Minister seemed thrilled yesterday to be holding down the last spot in the country when it comes to the Pan-Canadian Assessment scores, and today he seems fine with the wasting of \$22 million of hard-working Manitobans' money on a new, still-in-the-box computer program.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have come to understand that this is a spend-more, get-less government, but now they are getting nothing.

Where did the money go?

**Mr. Bjornson:** Okay, so what we've been investing in education, Mr. Speaker, he wants to talk about results: 45 per cent increase in enrolment in our universities, 52 per cent increase in enrolment in colleges, tripled the apprenticeship program.

And, actually, I would encourage my critic to read the Throne Speech again, because the very first part of our Throne Speech dealt with an incredible amount of education initiatives, unlike their throne speech alternative, which I think mentioned education two or three times but said nothing about what they would do to the system.

What we have done in the system in the past is continue to invest in our system. We'll continue to listen to students as we did when we heard them say they wanted zero per cent interest on their loans. We delivered that and we're going to continue to deliver more good things to students in Manitoba, and they will have access to affordable education, Mr. Speaker, quality education that we're all proud of on this side of the House.

#### **Child Poverty Rates Effectiveness of Policies**

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** Mr. Speaker, it appears we're dead last on education, and the Manitoba Report Card on Child and Family Poverty came out recently and Manitoba has the unfortunate stigma of having the highest child poverty rate in Canada, almost 10 per cent higher than the national average, with 29 per cent of Manitoba children living in party-poverty, sorry, leaving us dead last in the country. This means three out of every 10 children are living in poverty.

After 15 years of NDP government, we are the worst province in Canada.

What does the Minister of Children and Youth have to say about—to Manitobans about her government's failure for Manitoba children?

**Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities):** I'd like to thank the member for the question.

We are making important investments all the time to reduce poverty and support Manitoba's families and children in our province in so many areas, in housing, in health care, in education, in early childhood development, which is my new portfolio.

I would like to mention that under the Market Basket Measure that, in fact, we have 5,000 fewer Manitobans living in poverty in our province right now than we did in 2002, and we did that through a recession, Mr. Speaker, that was global and that is just fragilely recovering now. So I do think that's something.

Do we always want to do more? We always do on this side of the House. We always want to do more, and we are going to be doing more. We have an early childhood strategy coming out and we know that that's one of the areas that makes the biggest difference.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wishart:** Mr. Speaker, since the NDP's much promoted ALL Aboard strategy in 2009, Manitoba's children in poverty rate has actually gotten worse, rising 1.4 per cent while Canada's child poverty rate has decreased 3.1 per cent. The child poverty numbers continue to rise under this new policy and Canada's continue to fall.

Is this not yet another example of NDP policy that has failed Manitoba children?

**Ms. Wight:** Some of the things that we have discovered, Mr. Speaker, that have the biggest impact on child poverty is early childhood development, and one of those things is the Prenatal Benefit. I think we were the first province and we may still be the only province who actually provides a prenatal benefit to moms, and it's a cost-efficient way of helping moms with their babes and it provides them a little bit of money that is enough to improve the nutrition so that their babies are now being born—with healthy babies as opposed to premature, and that's one of the many things.

We have another Healthy Baby program, of course, that involves visiting with the moms and really being able to target where they need help early on, Mr. Speaker, because we have learned that working early on with our children is absolutely the key to the investment in the future and to the lives of these children.

Thank you.

**Mr. Wishart:** We are still dead last and falling.

Mr. Speaker, food bank usage in Manitoba is now at 61,700 people per month. Forty-four per cent of those people are children. Since 2008 that is an increase of more than 50 per cent.

I'm sure you're proud of that. It's hard to look at these numbers and believe this government has any real concern at all for those on limited and fixed incomes.

Will this government admit today that their policies to deal with poverty have failed, leaving those on limited and fixed incomes more vulnerable than ever?

**Ms. Wight:** I'm always interested, actually, when the members opposite ask questions about this because, you know, we've increased the minimum wage every year since we came in. And what did you do? What did you do? I don't know. You froze it for seven years. Does that affect poverty? Yes, it does.

We are building 1,000 more social housing units. How many did you build? None. None, Mr. Speaker, in all the years that they were in government. They did not invest in a single one. They did invest in a welfare snitch line, and I remember those signs telling us to call in. That's how they tried to fight poverty.

We are on quite a different track here in Manitoba, and do we—are we proud of what we've done? Yes. Do we want to do more? Yes, we do, and we will continue to do more in the future as we invest in Manitoba.

#### **Child and Family Services Mental Health and Child Poverty**

**Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, they are on track, on a very dangerous track that are putting more and more families at risk.

Yesterday the Family Services Minister said, and I quote: No one is proud of 10,000 children in care. However, those children are safe and they're being protected.

Mr. Speaker, either—or either the minister wasn't listening or she just doesn't want to face the truth. This NDP government is failing policies and more and more children are getting—being put at risk. Having the highest poverty—child poverty rate of any province in this country puts almost 84,000 children at risk. The Social Planning Council indicates that these children are growing up with fewer opportunities and poorer health than their peers.

So I ask the Minister responsible for Child and Youth Opportunities: Does she agree with the evidence that the NDP is putting children at risk, or does she still stand by the Family Services Minister, whose head remains stuck in the sand?

**Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services):** When we are asked questions around Child and Family Services, they're very, very important. It's important that we look at the whole picture of what's happening in Manitoba and what supports that families need.

This government, every day, works in the best interests of families. We ensure that they have good health care, quality education and good employment. We have more work to do and we're committed to do that. We work every day to ensure that all Manitoba's children are safe and we work every day to ensure the safety of Manitoba children that are in care.

What I wanted to say also yesterday is for the families that their children are in care, we're working with reunification with them. We also are working with 20,000 families; 20,000 families are getting support through different community agencies, through different authorities, ensuring that they're able to stay with their families, because we know the best place for a child is a safe and nurturing home.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, we know that this whole picture that the minister's talking about is putting more and more children at risk.

In Manitoba, suicide is the leading cause of injury deaths in children over 10 years of age. According to the office of the Children's Advocate, in 2012-2013 report, there were 17 child and youth suicides, of which 11 of these children were involved with the child-welfare system. Four of these children were only 12 years of age.

\*(14:10)

The Children's Advocate has said that the changing pattern of suicide that now includes

a greater proportion of girls and a younger demographic will all speak to the need to re-evaluate our approach to youth suicide, in stark contrast to the Premier, who said last year, resources dedicated to dealing with mental health are going well.

Well, really, going well? Does this Premier believe—

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

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** Our priority is the safety of all children in Manitoba. That's why that—we developed the suicide prevention program. That's why we are training professionals all through the province to ensure that they have the resources that they need, the knowledge that they need to help support children. We continue to do that whether it's in rural, northern, whether it's in the urban settings.

We are aware of the loss that happens with suicide. Young children committing suicide is a tragedy. We all feel that. We need to ensure that we're supporting families, providing them with the necessary support so they can support their children. Really, what we need to do is continue to instill hope and promise for them.

**Mrs. Rowat:** Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are hearing from social policy experts who believe that when it comes to setting children up for bright futures, this NDP is failing them and failing them in big ways. Three out of 10 Manitoba children live in poverty, the highest rate of any province. There are over 10,000 children in care, a record high, the highest proportion of all provinces. Suicide is the leading cause of injury deaths in children over 10 years of age in Manitoba. Tragically, Manitoba has seen at least 25 deaths by suicide of children in care in the last five years, quite the record.

Does this minister truly believe that the worst rate of child poverty of all provinces and an alarmingly high rate of youth suicides year after year demonstrates that children in Manitoba are safe and safeguarded? I don't think so.

**Ms. Irvin-Ross:** I will state it over and over again: Our No. 1 priority is the safety for all Manitoba children. We work every day with community groups, with families to ensure that they have the resources that they need to support their children.

Suicide is a tragedy. We need to continue to ensure that families have the resources they need to provide safe and nurturing environments, that the

services are available for youth with complex needs. We need to ensure that we provide a safety net for all Manitoba's children, and I have confidence on this side of the House that we have done that.

We have more work to do, but we are committed to getting that work done to ensure the safety of all Manitoba children.

### **Violence Towards Children High-Risk Offender Applications**

**Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach):** Mr. Speaker, under the various NDP attorney generals we've continued to lead the country in violent crime. That includes violent crime against women, against children and against men.

Mr. Speaker, too many high-risk offenders reside in Manitoba without any real restraint, without any real check on them. The Criminal Code, under section 810.1, provides the court an opportunity through the Attorney General to have restrictions on high-risk offenders, those who would commit crimes against children.

Will the Attorney General please tell us how many section 810.1 applications have been made in Manitoba to put restrictions on those who would cause harm against our children?

**Hon. James Allum (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I thank the member for the question. It is a very important matter of public policy, but he's wrong on one thing: In fact, crime is going down in Manitoba. Violent crime has gone down by 11 per cent in the past year, and in Winnipeg alone, according to the violent crime index, it's gone down considerably both in relation to violent crimes and in relation to robbery as well. So, as usual, Mr. Speaker, the member doesn't have his facts right.

But, Mr. Speaker, the main thing on our government is we're not just interested in putting people in jail, we want to keep people from going into prison in the first place. That's why we make sure that kids have—there are opportunities for our young people, that we invest in good educational outcomes for young people and we make sure that our communities remain strong, safe and sustainable.

**Mr. Goertzen:** If the Attorney General doesn't know the answer, he can take it as notice, he can borrow my copy of the Criminal Code, he can certainly read it, Mr. Speaker, and then answer the question.

Under section 810.2 of the Criminal Code, the Attorney General, through the Department of Justice, can apply for applications to ensure that there are restrictions on those who would commit serious personal injury against persons in Manitoba. This is used commonly in Canada. It's used in many other provinces. This is not a new part of the Criminal Code and it's not unusual.

I want to ask the Attorney General: How many applications under section 810.2 of the Criminal Code have come through the Department of Justice and are currently in place in Manitoba today?

**Mr. Allum:** I think the member knows that in October 2000, just after we were first elected, four glorious terms ago, that the government established the Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit. It was established in October of 2000 to provide more intensive supervision to high-risk offenders, including sex offenders. The unit works collaboratively with prosecutions, police and victim services, and since its inception in 2000, Mr. Speaker, the unit has supervised 856 high-risk offenders.

**Mr. Goertzen:** If he wants to pick up a copy of the Criminal Code, they're available in better bookstores everywhere, Mr. Speaker. He'll find section 810 on page 699 of the most recent version of the Criminal Code.

British Columbia has recently stated that they have 300—more than 300 applications under 810 of the Criminal Code to try to prevent serious offenders, both against children and adults who would commit crimes against other adults as well, Mr. Speaker. Their Attorney General has published that information.

I understand this Attorney General probably has never read section 810 of the Criminal Code, but I'm asking him to either take this question as notice and provide the answer another time or tell us how many applications under section 810 of the Criminal Code currently exist in Manitoba to protect children, to protect women and to protect men who are otherwise victims of crime and violent crime in Manitoba.

**Mr. Allum:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite went to law school, and I know that he prides himself on being a very cagey lawyer, and his torqued hyperbole, though, makes no impact on me.

The fact of this matter is this government has done hard work not only on violent crime and

reducing violent crime but on dealing with sex offenders. We've also decreased—*[interjection]* Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the members opposite for their help in this question. We've obviously done much to prevent crime. We've made sure that people are safe and secure in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to take people and throw they—away the keys. We believe in the people of Manitoba. We're going to provide safe—

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

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable member for Steinbach, on a point of order.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Mr. Speaker, I asked a very specific question on a very specific part of the Criminal Code. He does not have to answer the question. He can take it as notice and provide it later on. But what is not an option for him is to take a very serious issue about women who are at risk, children who are at risk, men who are at risk and try to politicize that.

If he doesn't know the answer—if he doesn't know the answer—and it's very readily available if he asks his officials in the Department of Justice, he should take it as notice and not disgrace himself and everybody else in this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Government House Leader):** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member opposite has many opportunities to ask questions. I don't know if he bothered to ask questions about this in Estimates where detailed questions are asked. I note that there are other options available. Three members have chosen to ask questions, written questions, detailed questions on the Order Paper, and I think the member opposite indicated quite clearly that he had to get the last word.

And I would suggest not only does he not have a point of order, but comments using language such as disgraceful—I think the member opposite should look in the mirror. The bottom line is here he's entitled to ask any question he wants. He could put it on the information—any false information he wants, but it is the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Allum) prerogative to respond and correct the record, and that's exactly what he was doing, correcting the false information put on the record by the Opposition House Leader.

\* (14:20)

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

I think all honourable members will know that I've referenced the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, several times in this House in past sessions, and I think honourable members may recall, too, that I've also mentioned to all of us that it is not up to the Speaker to determine the quality or the contents of a particular answer to a question that may have been posed in this House and there is no provision in our rules or in the practices that would require or in any way permit the Speaker to insist of—on certain answers, so I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order in this particular matter.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Now, question period to continue.

#### PST Increase Infrastructure Spending Record

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** A year ago the Premier said in his Throne Speech every dollar raised from the new point of PST will be fully dedicated to new investments in core infrastructure over and above existing spending levels.

In September we found out that in the first year of the PST increase that \$75 million of that money was not used to fund infrastructure. Yesterday Manitoba Liberals exposed the fact that today's NDP are actually borrowing much of the money for the new infrastructure and are not using money from the PST increase.

Why did the Premier fail to keep his commitment to spend every dollar raised from the new point of PST on infrastructure?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, as we indicated in our five-year plan, any money that for whatever reason wasn't spent in the plan would be rolled over. The \$75 million is rolled over.

The PST supports investments in infrastructure and is matched up with the investments in infrastructure which have grown the economy by 8,100 jobs in the last year, provided \$1.1-billion boost in economic growth in the province, Mr. Speaker, and provided good jobs and opportunities for young people and continues to allow us to have a steady-as-she-goes economy, among the third best in the country over the last decade.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP—today's NDP introduced the PST increase from 7 to 8 per cent in April of 2013, with a wide variety of explanations as to how the Premier was going to spend the money. By November 2013, the Premier made it clear that every dollar of the PST increase would be spent on core infrastructure over and above the existing levels.

It's now clear that instead of spending the PST money on infrastructure, he is borrowing much of the money spent on infrastructure and spending the money from the PST on other items.

Can the Premier tell us today what other items he is spending the PST money on besides infrastructure?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we've matched infrastructure investment with the amount we've raised on the PST. We've done it without making major cuts to core services, which are very important. We've said that the PST has allowed us to make these infrastructure investments at the same time as we've protected core services in health, education, services to families.

I'm—it's regrettable the member opposite has not supported that and voted against that, but it has created more jobs. It has helped lift the economy in Manitoba. At the same time, we've protected core services.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward we will look at ways to increase our expenditure on infrastructure. As we met with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities this morning, we indicated that we believe we can put more resources to municipal bridges program because municipal bridges are a very important part of what local municipalities need in order to have access to their communities.

So as the economy grows, we will invest even more money in infrastructure in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier said every single dollar from that increase in PST would go to infrastructure, but it's not happening.

Whether it is infrastructure spending, his approach to child poverty, to education or child and family services, he has failed to live up to his commitments. The Premier and today's NDP have failed to live up to the expectations of Manitobans.

I ask the Premier: Why is there such a disconnect between what the Premier says he will do and what the Premier actually does?

**Mr. Selinger:** Mr. Speaker, we've seen reductions in the number of people living in poverty under our Market Basket Measure, including children. We've seen increased investments in infrastructure.

In the 1990s, when the members opposite were in office, they actually raised gas tax and cut the roads budget. We've done the opposite. Last year we spent over \$844 million on infrastructure in Manitoba.

We protected communities from floods. You can see the evidence of that in Brandon this spring. After 2011, we committed about \$28 million to building a dike in Brandon that will protect that community, and it made a gigantic difference when the flood of the summer of 2014 came. So those investments are paying off as we speak.

Homes and communities all along Lake Manitoba have seen increased diking. They've seen their homes lifted up. They've seen their homes moved back. Cottages, for the first time ever, have received support for structural improvements to their cottages to protect them as well, and we've seen the fortification of the dikes on the east side of Portage la Prairie, Mr. Speaker, and more work has to be done.

And in this Throne Speech you saw a commitment to an outlet on Lake Manitoba that will flow an additional 7,500 cubic feet a second, the equivalent of five Olympic-sized pools—

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

#### **Valeant Canada New Facility (Steinbach)**

**Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert):** Mr. Speaker, we know that supporting rural Manitoba is a key priority. One of the ways that our government is investing and contributing to the success is by collaborating with private sector partners to invest in good jobs for Manitoba families.

Just yesterday the Minister of Jobs and the Economy was out in Steinbach to make an important announcement about how our government is supporting job creation and economic growth in southeastern Manitoba's largest employer.

Can the Minister of Jobs and the Economy please inform the House about this wonderful announcement?

**Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy):** As the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) always says, it's worth a trip to Steinbach, and it certainly was yesterday. I was very proud to join Charles Perez from Valeant as well as Mayor Goertzen and Kent Ledingham from the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Speaker. We're incredibly proud that Valeant is actually moving, expanding their operations in Manitoba, in rural Manitoba, creating new jobs, training.

One of the things that they talked about yesterday was the cost of doing business in Manitoba is more affordable and more stable. They were incredibly proud of our ability to hire and retain staff. We've always said we have the fastest growing demographic. The most talented young people in the nation live in Manitoba, and through yesterday's announcement we're keeping them here. It's a message of collaboration, a message of partnership and we want to work together.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say in closing that it is cold season, and one of the things we should all be proud of, support a local business, buy cold—

**Mr. Speaker:** The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

#### **Minister of Municipal Government Alternative Energy Comments**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** Yes, we're very proud of the hard work that the member from Steinbach does for all members of the House.

Mr. Speaker, at the recent meetings of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the new minister of local government told that group maybe instead of building Bipole III and more dams, we should be looking at alternative energy sources.

I would like to ask the minister for local government: Would he enlighten the House on what he meant by that statement?

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Municipal Government):** Well—

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

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

**Mr. Caldwell:** I'd like to thank my honourable friend the member for Lakeside for the question and for

almost paying attention during my remarks yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted—I'm wearing the Manitoba tartan today in honour of the 16th annual Association of Manitoba Municipalities convention that's taking place. I was on the founding board of that association as well as the last board of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, which jacket I'm wearing today. It's the Manitoba tartan, for people who may be interested.

And, Mr. Speaker, all municipal officials are working with this government to build our province. We're building infrastructure. We're building flood protection. We're working together to make Manitoba the most prosperous province in Canada. We've got the third best economy in this country and our ambitions are to grow—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

#### **MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Mr. Speaker:** It is now time for members' statements.

#### **Snow Lake**

**Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon):** If you love hockey and you've—from the North, then chances are that you've heard the story of Kenny Baird, who was drafted ahead of Larry Robinson in the 1971 NHL draft and played one season with the Jets. Kenny came from a town in my constituency that shares his underdog status, that doesn't get its fair share of attention when we talk about northern Manitoba.

\* (14:30)

Snow Lake is a small community of just over 700 people that sits east of the city of Flin Flon, and just like its neighbour to the west, Snow Lake has its legacy firmly rested in the mining industry. Two major mining operations recently opened in Snow Lake, which has been incredibly exciting news for the town. With the 373 permanent jobs now created with Lalor and Reed Lake mines and more jobs to come, stability and economic prosperity has taken root in the community. Workers are in demand and residents have housing ready and waiting. And with the mines hiring so many workers there is ample opportunity for spinoff businesses to flourish.

Snow Lake is a safe, stable and, above all, beautiful community for people to call home. Sitting

right on the shores of Snow Lake itself, this community is a paradise for those who love the outdoors. Fishing, boating, bird watching, hiking and berry picking are all the activities that the loyal supporters enjoy during the summer months. The Snow Lake Golf and Country Club has a nine-hole golf course and families can go swimming right next to town, either at Sunset or the Purple Sandy Beach. The nearby Wekusko Falls Provincial Park is fantastic for camping and canoeing.

Of course, this is a vibrant community all year round, with grounds-groomed cross-country trails, a curling rink, a hockey rink and plenty of ice fishing. This community loves to keep warm through the winter by staying active. When Manitobans dream about living life on the lake their first thoughts might drift to Kenora, but Snow Lake is a jewel of a community right here in Manitoba. With the quality of life available in this community, Manitoba should look no further than Snow Lake.

Thank you.

#### **Stella Monaster**

**Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside):** I'm honoured to stand before you today and congratulate Inwood resident, Stella Monaster, on celebrating her 100th birthday; truly a memorable milestone.

Stella has lived through the Great Depression, two World Wars, four royal monarchs and 19 Canadian prime ministers. Stella grew up on a farm in Fisher Branch with her parents and two brothers, John and Donald. 'Eagle' to work at the age of 15 years of age, she took a train to Inwood and worked cleaning, serving and helping in the kitchen in the Hillside Hotel for four and a half years. She met her husband, Harry, and the couple moved to a farm near Inwood where they raised chickens, cows and boarded local school teachers.

Unfortunately, Harry passed away three years after their marriage. Remaining on a farm, Stella met Steve Monaster, her second husband. The pair married in 1940. Together they raised and farmed with two children, Randy and Kathy.

Once her children were grown, Stella took a job in Inwood at the Olsen's grocery store. At age of 71, after 19 years of service, Stella retired. Steve and her sold the farm and moved into town.

In 1980, Stella and Steve celebrated their 40th anniversary. Steve passed away in 1987, leaving Stella a widow once again. In her later years,

Stella never stop—let age stop her from doing what she loved. She curled until she was 84 years old. Even at 100 years old she keeps active: baking, cooking and gardening. It is rare, as an MLA, to have an opportunity to acknowledge such milestones. Stella is a true inspiration to us all. Having said that, I'd like to extend sincere wishes on my behalf as well as the Legislative Assembly here in Manitoba.

#### **Arpena Babaian**

**Ms. Theresa Oswald (Seine River):** It is my pleasure to stand in the House today to pay tribute to one of Manitoba's most brilliant teachers and administrators. Arpena Babaian, currently principal of Samuel Burland School, will retire at Christmastime after 40 years of outstanding service to children and families of Manitoba and, indeed, around the world.

I had the privilege of first knowing Ms. Babaian when she came to Minnetonka School when I was a student in grade 4. She was a vibrant, spectacular bombshell of a teacher that encouraged all students to participate in athletic competitions, rough-and-tumble play and leadership activities, no matter what gender the student may be. Ms. Babaian taught young girls to lean in long before anyone had even heard the term.

Ms. Babaian was my language arts teacher in addition to being my coach throughout junior high. She drove us hard to excel at athletics and to be gracious in victory and brave in defeat. It was a magical time. She demanded excellence from her students and challenged us with complex texts and literary greats that were well beyond our years. I have no doubt it was Ms. Babaian's influence, along with my grade 12 English teacher, Mr. Peter Cowie, that inspired me to pursue a career in teaching with a major, of course, in English.

Ms. Babaian returned from a teaching post in Germany with a husband, her beloved Stew, and a continued passion for education. Our lives intersected again at Glenlawn Collegiate where I began my own teaching career. Even though she was much busier then, raising her two beautiful daughters, Anoosh and Alex, she always had time for questions and to offer critique and advice to a beginning teacher. There was no such thing as good enough. Ms. Babaian believed in excellence every day, all the time, and, indeed, our students deserved no less.

Mr. Speaker, there will be many tributes to Ms. Babaian in the days ahead, as her professional accomplishments make up a list as long as my arm.

I want to offer my personal thanks to Ms. Babaian, my darling Arpi, who has been a teacher, coach, mentor, confidante and a friend for almost my entire life. She is the friend who will tell you when you have broccoli in your teeth, when your boyfriends are lousy and when your lesson plans just aren't up to snuff. But she's also a friend who will be there when your mother dies, when your child is sick or when your career takes a path that you perhaps haven't planned. She will always be the one who cheers most loudly from the stands and who will weep for joy when there—when she is there watching your dreams come true, the same dreams she was so very much a part of making a reality.

I hope all members of this House will join me in congratulating Ms. Babaian on a brilliant 40 years of teaching and on a life so well lived thus far.

#### **Canada World Youth**

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, since its founding in 1971, which, I must say, was a great year for many things, Canada World Youth has offered volunteer programs for youth from Canada and abroad. To date, over 37,000 young people have participated in their programs. Their programs have allowed youth the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to not only participate in our society but to help create a better one.

Canada World Youth has also developed some unique Aboriginal youth programs over the past five years. Aboriginal youth participation in their programs has quadrupled. In June of this year in Charlottetown they co-hosted with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island a national Aboriginal youth symposium called Aboriginal Youth and Confederation, Learning from the Past and Building for the Future. The conference focused on Aboriginal issues in the context of Confederation, and over 50 Aboriginal youth from across Canada attended. Fittingly, this conference occurred on the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference, which as we all know was a major step on the path to creating this great country of ours.

The success of Canada World Youth has been noted and copied in other countries. In 1989 the Netherlands created a program inspired by the Canada World Youth program. Sweden followed suit

four years later and Great Britain created one of their own in 1999.

As you all know, Manitoba is home to many great volunteers. According to Statistics Canada data, Manitobans volunteer over 74 million hours a year. In addition, over 86 per cent of Manitobans donate to charitable causes every year. In 2010 the total value of those donations were almost \$450 million. Those stats are something we should all be very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, not only have thousands of youth participated in Canada World Youth programs, but thousands more have benefited from their programming. It is a pleasure to recognize them and the contributions they have made over the years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Child Poverty in Manitoba**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, Monday this week, Campaign 2000 released its Manitoba child and family report card for 2014. It's a devastating assessment of conditions in our province. Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty of any province in Canada at 29 per cent, 10 per cent more than the average for all of Canada.

Jim Silver recently commented in the Free Press on the persistence in Manitoba of a deep, complex and damaging poverty. The numbers of children coming into our food banks are the highest per capita of any province.

Tragically, today's NDP government has been very ineffective in addressing poverty. It took the NDP until 2009, that's 10 years, to bring in the ALL Aboard strategy, and this was done only after they'd rejected legislation brought in by the Manitoba Liberals to ensure a much better approach to poverty in our province. The ALL Aboard strategy has largely been a dismal failure. It lacked many of the critical ingredients such as a specific goal for reducing poverty, a comprehensive approach and an annual legislative debate present in the Liberal legislation.

\*(14:40)

Sid Frankel performed a careful analysis of the NDP's ALL Aboard strategy. He found it was, and I quote: So incompletely articulated that it cannot act as a reliable guide for policy implementation, is not evaluable and renders government unaccountable. The first 31 months of ALL Aboard do not demonstrate effectiveness in poverty reduction

compared to all of Canada, regardless of the measure. Children fare especially poorly.

Campaign 2000's follow-up on the ALL Aboard strategy observed a 1.4 per cent increase in Manitoba's child poverty rate from 2008 to 2012—not much effect. For years, the NDP resisted increasing support for shelter rates for those on social assistance and low incomes. After intense pressure from about 150 different organizations, today's NDP announced that they'd increase the shelter rates to 75 per cent of market rates in four years. Once again, under today's NDP, those who are poor, wait. It's time for a much stronger and much more effective approach to reduce child poverty in our province.

**Mr. Speaker:** I believe that concludes members' statements.

### House Business

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Government House Leader):** On House business, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** On House business.

**Mr. Ashton:** I'd like to ask if you will please canvass the House to see if there is agreement to waive rules 31(2) and 31(3) for this session as per the agreement by House leaders. This will eliminate the need to submit all private members' resolutions within 14 days of the Throne Speech debate for selection as prioritized, and instead will allow the government and opposition House leaders to announce the private members' resolutions for consideration one week in advance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to waive rules 31(2) and 31(3) for this session as per the agreement by House leaders? This will eliminate the need to submit all private members' resolutions within 14 days of the Throne Speech for selection as prioritized and instead will allow the government and opposition House leaders to announce the private members' resolutions for consideration one week in advance. *[Agreed]*

Thank honourable members.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### THRONE SPEECH

#### (Fourth Day of Debate)

**Mr. Speaker:** We'll now proceed to orders of the day, government business, and to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the

honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland, who has 28 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland):** As I was just about to start yesterday when we ran out of time, but I was mentioning the summer fairs and festivals that I attended throughout my constituency over the summer, including the Manitou honey and garlic festival; the Harvest Moon Festival in Clearwater, which is always a great event and everyone should take that one in. Some 1,500 people show up in the community of Clearwater, which probably boasts about 60 people for the rest of the year, so it's quite an event there.

I also was at Walinga manufacturing, and they celebrated a significant anniversary and continue to manufacture feed truck boxes, truck boxes for handling feed, and they are marketing around the world. And it's really amazing the equipment that they've got in there and the computerized equipment that they have in their shop. So it's a great institution.

*Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Of course, being the Agriculture critic for our party—and I've travelled the province in the agricultural regions and throughout all of Manitoba over the summer—in Midland constituency we were very fortunate to generally have very good crops as compared to other areas, and also with the better markets in the cattle and hog industries it has been quite a good year within my constituency, although you—certainly is not province-wide, as I was into the southwest Manitoba a number of times with my colleague from Arthur-Virden, touring there and just seeing the devastation from the rainfall events and the continuation from the last number of years, the hardships that a lot of those producers are having.

In the Interlake we continue to see the damages, both Interlake and Westlake, of the high levels of Lake Manitoba and the Shoal lakes and what that's done to really prime agriculture land in terms of the—particularly in the cattle industry in terms of the pasture and feed situations there, and we're seeing that now with some sell-off of the cow herds through—from those areas, because I talked to a producer this morning at AMM and he told me that he sold off half his herd. He says, I just got tired of fighting the water, and that's unfortunate. That's going to hurt our economy going forward, and this—Lake Manitoba water levels and the Shoal Lake

levels need to be addressed not in 10 years but in three years, which we feel is quite doable there.

The Swan River Valley, talking to producers there and there's concern variable crop conditions throughout their area and kind of goes—you can field the field. But there—the concern now is with Cargill elevators shutting their elevator down in Swan River, leaving them with only a Pioneer just north of town and actually the rail line, there is concern about the viability of the rail line there. And so it's certainly been an interesting summer on the ag scene we—throughout all of Manitoba.

But coming back to my own constituency this summer and into this fall, I was very fortunate to be invited to the citizenship court where we have some very good friends and entrepreneurs in Carman who, three of them now, have got their citizenship and the one fellow's wife is about to get her citizenship. They will notify me and hopefully I can attend that ceremony.

And when I was at one of the ceremonies, I was actually sitting beside a young lady from—originally from Afghanistan, and her mother was getting her citizenship. She is not able to get hers until she's 18 because she came in on her mother's passport. And the stories that she was able to tell me about her journey to Canada from Afghanistan is—very certainly—sometimes we just don't appreciate how good we have it in this country, as compared to many of our new citizens, and they are such a valuable contribution to our country when they choose to move to Canada and move to Manitoba.

I attended the Remembrance Day just this past November in Carman. There was over 700 people in attendance there. There's usually a large crowd there but this year it was overflowing. They didn't even have enough chairs for everybody to sit in and, of course, marking the 100th year of the start of the Great War and the war that was to end all wars and very poignant and also, of course, with the recent killings of the soldiers in both Ottawa and Quebec, it was a very emotional day.

And our—we see the veterans come and the veterans are getting fewer each year from the Second World War and I know a number of them personally and it's great to see them there but they're also having—it's just getting harder for them to get out each year as they age. But we certainly appreciate what they've done, and you think about the—as they read the honour rolls at these Remembrance Day services and the ultimate sacrifice that these soldiers

gave just to uphold the democracy and our right to vote, and too often we take that for granted.

And I was sitting there at that Remembrance Day service and I was comparing that to the dysfunction that we see across the aisle and the right to vote being taken away from Manitobans and a government that feels that they don't need to talk to Manitobans. They will decide—the NDP members opposite will decide what is best for Manitobans, and that's a question of integrity. It's a question of ethical behaviour, and it's a sad reflection on Manitoba. And we're hearing this from business people who travel the world, and they brought us stories back about there's concern of the dysfunction within this government because dysfunction affects business and business does not like instability, and that's what we have here in this province.

And when you have members of their own caucus talking about—the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) talking about sometimes doing the right thing isn't the easy path and being truthful and holding on to your integrity is something my parents raised me to do and I honour them today with that. Well, where's the integrity here? You said the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is not listening to you. You don't agree with what the Premier is, and the next day she says she's going to support the Throne Speech. So where is the integrity in that?

\* (14:50)

And that is concerning, and Manitobans—it's concerning. I heard that loud and clear as I travelled the province in the last month and I heard it loud and clear the last two days being at the AMM conference. Municipal leaders are shaking their heads and saying, how is this going to affect us, like, what is going to happen? And, of course, we don't have the answers. I don't even think this government has the answers of how they're going to solve their internal battles, but it's affecting Manitobans, and when it affects Manitobans, it affects all of us.

Moody's bond-rating agency issued a negative rating, and the reason that they issued a negative rating was because they called it execution risk. Basically, execution risk, it means they don't believe what this government is telling them. We know that this is going to cost Manitobans more in interest costs. We're already spending \$821 million just to pay the interest on our debt, which is going up constantly every year as my colleague from Morden-Winkler—emphasizing again today about deficits and growing debt and just a lack of concern,

no plans, no—there's no idea of how they will even begin to address this. And this—as this interest cost continues to rise, that affects front-line services in health, education. It takes money away when you have to pay the interest. It takes that money away from where we could be putting into front-line services in health and education.

We have record-low interest rates. There's nowhere for interest rates to go but up. It's not a matter of whether they will rise, it is a matter of when they will rise, and that is what's really disturbing for us and for Manitobans. Every day we see we're paying more.

The NDP solution is to spend more, but the problem with that is that they're spending more and we're getting less. Every day they spend more. Their solution to everything is spend more, but they don't talk about results. And, if they were to talk about results, they would talk about being last in health-care services, they'd be last in education, they'd be last in—no, pardon me, we're first in child poverty. And that's a terrible record to have.

That family of four living in Regina today pays \$3,200 less every year in taxes. Now, that may not seem like much to members opposite, but to a family of four that's a lot of money. That's a family vacation; that's an extra payment on the house. It's money that they can use in their family, but in Manitoba that money is gone because we are not competitive with them.

As I sit and I watch the distrust and the confusion amongst the NDP across the way—we have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) who is adamant about staying in power. And this Premier seems to be going to use the office of his premiership to buy delegates for his leadership vote. It'll certainly be interesting to see how they decide who is eligible to vote, how this leadership will unfold, but it's hurting Manitobans while they decide. The NDP's engrossed in their plummeting polls. They seem to—they've forgotten what the real function of government is. And it's about survival. It's about placing blame on each other, whether it be—and it's interesting, now they're even pointing fingers at each other. It wasn't enough to blame the feds, our party, the First Nations; they blame everybody, they blame Manitobans and they're even blaming each other now, and that's unfortunate. It costs Manitobans with this chaos that they've created.

And, as I said, in the meantime, we're last in education scores, math, reading and science. Our

young people face an uncertain future when we have that. We all know the importance of education.

We're last in health-care wait times. Ask anyone in Manitoba who's on a waiting list how long that waiting list is once they see the specialist to actually get on the waiting list, never mind how long it takes to get to that specialist. You can't continue to operate like that. We need to have common sense to solve these issues. Health care is the largest issue that my constituency office faces day in and day out, and it's about waiting lists, it's about access, it's about how to find their way through the system.

And I have a very personal issue just in the last while. A good friend of mine is facing brain cancer and now he's been told by Manitoba Health that he's not eligible for cancer drugs, and that's just not acceptable. We have to find a way to address these health-care wait lines and health-care issues that we face.

We're the highest numbers in per capita for food bank use. Where is the solution in this? Where is this government on this? We're the highest numbers per capita in child poverty. Violent crimes—the new Attorney General (Mr. Allum) today wouldn't even take a question on notice to find an answer for it. Instead, he spilled more NDP rhetoric, which had nothing to do with the question.

Manitoba Hydro faces a very uncertain future with this NDP government. That came through loud and clear at the AMM convention this morning in questions to the ministers. The Bipole III west waste line began at \$1.1 billion; it's now up to \$4.6 billion. That's just the latest cost estimate, and as four times the original cost, and they barely got started on this. We know that from their record of building Wuskwatim dam that it started out at \$800 million and then ended up at \$1.6 billion. So, does that mean, then, that we're going to be over \$9 billion on a Bipole west line that's 25 per cent less efficient, that's 500 kilometres longer, that takes in some of the—affects some of the most fertile land we have in Manitoba?

But, rather than deal with these issues Manitobans—that Manitobans face each and every day, the NDP's focused on themselves, and they're focused on their internal battles. It's about self-preservation. It's about blaming each other. It's about looking for a scapegoat. It's about preserving the vote tax. Manitobans don't matter to this government. They take over \$1 million out of the—of

taxpayers' money just to pay themselves first, and that's wrong.

It's interesting to see them huddling in groups these days when we're in this House, and one could speculate, well, is that a new alliance, or who's talking about who there. It's about total dysfunction. It's about self-preservation. It's not about what is best for Manitobans, and Manitobans are concerned. You only have to talk to anyone, and I spoke with a civil servant last week at one of our wonderful Manitoba liquor stores as I stopped to pick up some groceries, and she expressed concern about this government, and yet she didn't want to—she certainly didn't want to be publicized because she didn't want to see any retribution back on her, so—but she was very adamant about her concerns there.

So how long will the infighting continue? How much will this infighting cost Manitobans? The concerns that Manitobans have continue to be out there. The dissidents—the dissident five, six, nine, whatever it is—they said the PST was not the issue. PST was not the issue. The more somebody says something is not the issue, that's what the issue is, and you can tell me it's not the issue, but the fact that you're talking about it, we know that's what the issue is.

They say it's not about the PST, but it's about the PST because it was trust that was broken in—from—for Manitobans from this government. It's about a lack of respect of this government. First, they broadened the—after claiming that we would not change the PST, we would not increase taxes, then they broadened the PST to include insurance, haircuts, registration fees on vehicles, fuel taxes. This costs Manitoba families each and every day.

\* (15:00)

And then that wasn't enough. Then they increased—a 14 per cent increase in the PST, and they try to tell you it's not about the PST? Of course, it's about the PST because you're taking money from Manitoba families.

Our debt under this current Premier (Mr. Selinger) has gone from \$18 billion to \$32 billion. It's a number that is almost unfathomable, but we see what it costs us in interest costs each and every year and it's going to go up. It's going to cost him—us—more. But, rather than expand and rather than deal with other jurisdictions, other provinces, this government remains focused on self-preservation. We should be in the New West Partnership with our

neighbours to the west. That's a given. There's no need not to be, and yet this government is so focused on themselves that they won't touch that. They won't even ask. Perhaps they're afraid to ask. Maybe they're afraid of the answer they'll get when they ask.

The focus on the leadership battle comes at the province—at the expense of this province, and the focus on the plummeting polls will cost Manitobans. I hear it loud and clear because I talk to Manitobans each and every day. They're tired of the false promises. This NDP government has no values. They have no ethics. They have no integrity. But Manitobans do; Manitobans have not lost their ethical behaviour. Manitobans have not lost their integrity, but this government has—and we'll continue to talk to Manitobans. We'll continue to listen to Manitobans. We will continue to earn the trust of Manitobans. That's what hard work is all about, and we will continue because all we have to do is tell the truth, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there was any ethics, if there was any integrity within this government they would support the amendment to this Throne Speech. They would vote against this Throne Speech and we would be into an election.

Thank you.

**Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning):** I'm very pleased to rise in the Chamber today and put a few words on the record about the Throne Speech that has been presented.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to start by thanking my constituents in Gimli where we celebrated the 125th Islingadagurinn this summer, and I was absolutely delighted that my mom had the honour of being the Fjallkona for Islingadagurinn this year. I was also very pleased to join Mayor Tony Pimentel and his committee in Winnipeg Beach when they celebrated their centennial celebration in Winnipeg Beach, another fine community that has certainly done well by our government in terms of our investments in infrastructure and supports for the community. And, certainly, as many of us did enjoy the summer, it was, albeit a short summer, it was something that Manitobans do very well, and that is celebrate our summers and the many festivals and activities that go on year in, year out—or pardon me, year after year, summer after summer in Manitoba.

I'd like to welcome the table officers back for this session, our interns that are now assigned to our

caucuses and, of course, the pages that are going to have an interesting experience in what has proven to be a very punchy and raucous session as—and I'm very much looking forward to further debate on this Throne Speech, which, I think, is quite a telling characteristic of a tale of two parties, if you will.

For the first time, and I know that the opposition has, as the member from River East said yesterday, they can have it both ways in opposition. They can have it both ways, I believe, is what she talked about yesterday in terms of what they can put on the record. And for the first time since I've been in this Chamber I've seen an alternative throne speech from the opposition, and it's really quite an interesting contrast when you hold up the two documents and look at these two documents. One, ours, is a vision for the province of Manitoba with a very good strategy to achieve good things for all Manitobans. And the other, well, I'm really still trying to figure it out, quite frankly, because what it looks like to me, if it was a document to talk about their vision for the province of Manitoba, it's essentially a rehash of every private member's bill that we've debated in this Chamber over the last 10 years that members opposite have brought to the Chamber floor. It doesn't have any vision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the future of the province of Manitoba, and like I said yesterday in question period, I can imagine what they're talking about in their caucus when they talk about a strategy around education. What have you got? Nothing. Any ideas? No, I've got nothing.

I think that's clear by their vision as outlined in the throne speech. I think it mentions education three times, which is encouraging, but it doesn't say anything about what they would do to make our education system a better system.

By contrast, you've looked at our Throne Speech, and I think it's the first five pages, if I'm not mistaken, perhaps more, that deal with our education—our outline for—our vision for education and moving forward. Oh, I stand corrected; it's actually six and a half pages, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about our vision for education in the province of Manitoba. And this is a plan that will open so many doors for so many students in Manitoba so they have so many options available to them. It is a plan to work with our universities and post-secondary institutions to ensure that students can achieve credits in the high school level that are transferrable to post-secondary institutions. It ensures that students that achieve credits in one post-secondary institution who might wish to change

their field of study and go to another post-secondary institution will receive credit for the credits that they achieved in their previous post-secondary institution.

It is a plan that looks at regional opportunities where we will recognize the opportunities for particular regions to enhance their training programs to meet future labour market demands and needs within their communities. And a really good example of that is one that we've committed to in the Throne Speech with respect to the northeast Interlake training facility, working with our First Nations partners in Peguis, in Fisher River, the surrounding municipalities and RMs who are going to work together to realize a facility that can provide training for First Nations, but not only First Nations residents but also for individuals from the surrounding municipalities so they can get training close to home.

Now, of course, not everyone's going to have an opportunity to be trained close to home, so I think it was fabulous that we announced, as per the rally of the Canadian Federation of Students, the first province in western Canada to eliminate interest on student loans, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's going to have a tremendous impact. It's going to save on average \$1,600 if a student has a \$10,000 student loan at the end of their career. They'll save \$1,600 on payments on that student loan by getting zero interest on that. And I think that's going to make a big difference for those students who will stay in Manitoba because we have the tuition rebate, where they will get 60 per cent of their tuition back through their income taxes over five years. So they get money that they can invest in homes and cars and start a family when they start their job here in Manitoba. And that's something I think we can really be proud of here on this side of the House as a serious investment in education.

So, when you go through these six pages, you see that these first six pages of the Throne Speech—and I know it's my education focus as my background and as the newly minted, or, like my colleague said, the old—my opposition candidate said, the old Education minister. Oh, my goodness, old Education Minister. I'm feeling very young and energized, quite frankly, and I feel very energized because of this Throne Speech that has a plan for education in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I love the idea that we are looking at no closed doors, only open doors for our students. I love the idea that we're going to be working for

specialized programming, and a great example of that was what we saw at Sisler and the vision that the students and teachers at Sisler High School had for a cyber-security academy. And I might be dating myself here, but I remember the movie WarGames with Matthew Broderick—that's a few years back—but this notion of these young students learning how to use computer systems to identify threats to cyber security and being the only place that they can get this training, other than in military academies in the United States, from my understanding. It's the only academy of its kind, and they're actually going to be teaching university students these courses at Sisler High School. These academies are absolutely fabulous vehicles to promote what we do exceptionally well at our schools, and this is a great example of partnerships that has been able to deliver this particular program at Sisler High School.

And it's not just the programs, it's the capital. Our campuses have had 80 major capital projects, a \$1.1-billion investment in capital. And I remember the former premier, Premier Doer, talking about the fact that when we first got into office, you had a leaky roof in the engineering building at the Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba—\$1.1 billion invested in capital. And that's an incredible commitment to the students of Manitoba. So we've invested that in capital that also supports community.

\*(15:10)

One of the first opportunities I had to cut a ribbon as the new Minister of Education and Advanced Learning was the incredible fieldhouse that we worked with the University of Winnipeg to develop, and what's unique about that facility is that they have an agreement in writing that 30 per cent of the time it will be available to the community. I think that's an exceptional example of engaging your community when we are spending public money to build a public building primarily for the university, but to ensure that the community has access to that building so all people in the area can enjoy recreational opportunities in that particular environment.

So what have we done with these 80 new buildings? We've also increased the number of students that are participating in our post-secondary system.

Since we've been in office, college enrolment is up by 52 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 52 per cent. University enrolment is up by 42 per cent. Those are very significant numbers, and I think the only thing

that went up when the members opposite were in office was tuition fees, if I'm not mistaken, 142 per cent. I think that's the figure, 132, 142 per cent, 132 per cent I stand corrected, and what did that mean for students? What did that mean when their tuition fees went up and they cut bursaries and they cut scholarships? They abandoned the schools in Manitoba, the post-secondary institutions in Manitoba. They cut funding to these post-secondary institutions and, yes, we're looking at funding universities here.

The increase that we provided to the universities this year and compared to other jurisdictions we found a way to invest in our universities when other jurisdictions like Alberta cut 7 per cent from their university funding. Oil-rich Alberta cut 7 per cent from their universities in one budget year. Yes, they did increase it 5 per cent the next, but imagine a 7 per cent cut and what that's going to do to impact the universities. We haven't been cutting funding. We find ways to continue to fund universities, even though we've been involved in a very difficult economic downturn for—a global economic downturn, and add to the mix the fact that we got successive floods of incredible magnitude year after year it seems.

It seems we have two seasons winter and flood in Manitoba in the last few years, and what does that mean? That means that we have to reinvest in infrastructure and we have invested in infrastructure, and this Throne Speech also speaks to the importance of infrastructure as far as flood protection is concerned, \$450 million to help the people on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin to address the infrastructure needs so that all Manitobans can be protected by the infrastructure investments in flood mitigation.

And I think it's really something that people in Winnipeg sometimes don't remember, that we're having floods in Manitoba, because of the flood protection that we have in Winnipeg with the expansion of the floodway because we don't hear about devastating effects on property in southern Manitoba because I believe only one property was flooded in floods of significant magnitude—of the same magnitude since—of 1997 compared to the thousands of properties that were damaged in 1997 because of all the mitigation efforts that have been under way to prevent flooding. And we do know from a one-in-350-year flood, which, coincidentally, we had two years later—we do know that there's a billion dollars needed to address those infrastructure

needs to ensure that Manitobans in southwest Manitoba are all safe to the same degree as people living in Winnipeg and people living in southern Manitoba.

And, of course, that infrastructure is not just flood-protection infrastructure, but we're also talking about highway infrastructure and the announcement that was made in Morris just recently bringing the bridge to a safety standard and Internet—pardon me—interstate standards to support the corridor that we have uninterrupted transportation of goods to the United States and from the United States through Highway 75. So this is a Throne Speech that talks about investing in our future whether it's in education, whether it's in infrastructure.

Now, when I look at the opposition's throne speech it's really quite an interesting read, I have to admit, if not a comical read, and one of the things that I found really curious was they talk about migration, outmigration in the province of Manitoba. And they use a particular example where they talk about the population of Steinbach and Brandon, and they compare the number of people that have left the province of Manitoba with the number of people living in Steinbach and Brandon. Well, that's a rather curious thing to do, because in 1999 the—or, pardon me—in 2011 the population of Steinbach had gone up 22 per cent from 2006; the population of Brandon had gone up 10.3 per cent from 2006.

So they're using these two cities as examples, and Steinbach, if you see the headline, talks about how it has leapfrogged into the third largest city in Manitoba because of the growth that we've seen in Steinbach.

What they neglect to mention is the fact that we have a net increase of 140,000 people in Manitoba. And they talk about population decline. It's interesting Tory math, but we do know—we do know—that when you go back to the previous decade, when they were in office, when they were last steering the ship, we do know that there was a net decrease of 33,000 people from the province of Manitoba—a net decrease. The population did decline for a decade that they were in office. Our population has grown 140,000 since we've come into office. And that 33,000 decline in population is the equivalent to a sellout at the Investors Group Field, which is government-built, and the number of people that come to Manitoba on average is the equivalent of a sellout of the MTS Centre, which we partnered to help build.

And that's what we do as a government. We work with our communities, we work with our partners and we build this province, and we know that investments—strategic investments in infrastructure, whether it's school capital, whether it's flood protection, whether it's economic-development engines such as the Investors Group Field, such as the True North—or, pardon me, the MTS Centre, such as partnering with the federal government and all those private contributors to the Human Rights Museum, whether it's the incredible infrastructure at the Journey to Churchill—these are all important capital projects.

And the member talked about having attended AMM, and it's always great walking over to the Convention Centre, seeing that partnership and that investment in the Convention Centre which will be one of the nicest convention centres in Canada for this size of city and that size of footprint that the Convention Centre will now have, where people can come and take advantage of the critical mass of things that we're doing here in Manitoba.

I was also very proud, if not very cold, the other day when I was standing outside to see the opening of the latest provincial park with the Upper Fort—or, pardon me, Lower Fort Garry—pardon me—let's get that straight: the Upper Fort Garry park, and I think that speaks volumes to the vision of a government to work with a community to take a prime piece of real estate like that but recognize the value of the heritage of that site and the green space and the importance of having that green space in downtown Winnipeg, and recognizing the historic importance to preserve that. And I was very proud to be there with the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) when the ribbon was cut on that first phase of that particular project.

We are developing an incredible critical mass of attractions here in the city of Winnipeg. We are developing incredible, critical mass of infrastructure throughout the province of Manitoba, and people are noticing. At the AMM today, I was very pleased to hear what leaders of the AMM had to say about the working relationship we have with their organization. Sometimes you have to go elsewhere to realize how good you have it back at home, and that was the message I got from the AMM.

Some of their executives were saying how they go to the FFMC conferences and they find out that—did I say FFMC? That's Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation—I guess I want the Federation of

Canadian Municipalities—[interjection] FCM, thank you very much; I should correct that. They go to FCM and they say that other provinces—or other—pardon me—other municipal partners cannot believe the working relationship that they enjoy with us here in the province of Manitoba. They cannot believe the partnership that we have with our municipalities. They cannot believe how they were so quick to access the build Canada initiative, because we were ready and we worked with them and we made it happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's about relationships. It's about building capacity. It's about doing what's right for your communities and doing what's right for your province, and that's what we've been doing. And there are so many things that we can talk about with respect to how we intend to move forward in this Throne Speech, and I wish I had more than the half hour that's afforded me for this purpose.

\*(15:20)

So, after we've talked about education and laying the groundwork for more opportunities for our youth, the second part of the Throne Speech talks about creating jobs and building a stronger economy. Now, when you look at our vision versus the vision of members opposite, that question was raised today in the AMM. I was asked why can't you get rid of education taxes off of small businesses. But I was able to remind the individual that we eliminated the small business tax, the first province to do so, the only province to do so from 9 per cent to zero. So, if you have a taxable income of \$500,000 and you have been seeing your small business tax decreased as we phased it down to zero per cent, you would have saved over half a million dollars in taxes. The only province to do it, and I'm very proud of that record.

And everything that I heard from small businesses, the vast majority of them, taxes were not their issue. Their issue was primarily a trained, educated workforce, which goes back to part 1 of the Throne Speech, our investment in education, our no wrong door, our opening-doors philosophy that students should have an opportunity to explore a number of different careers, a number of different options and to have an opportunity to find good employment here in Manitoba, good jobs in Manitoba, and that's what the pathways are in our education system.

And they could be part of our \$700-million investment in highways. They could be part of our \$3.7-billion investment in highways over five years.

They could be part of the spinoff jobs that will come as a result of that, whether they're running their own restaurants and serving these individuals who are working on their highways, whether they're opening up their own shops to service and maintain the equipment, whether they're building new opportunities as tradespersons or as careers—professional careers in support of all the things that'll be happening.

And, unlike members opposite, it's curious if you look at their infrastructure plans versus ours. Our infrastructure touches every corner of this province. We build for every Manitoban. We build from corner to corner, from boundary from boundary, from the 49th to the Arctic Circle. We build infrastructure for every Manitoban, including the east-side road which I think is a very important commitment that we have made to the First Nations on the east side, and that is a project that I'm very proud of where these communities will be connected to the rest of the province over the next 20 years as we develop the east-side road to support industry and opportunities on the east side.

So the other parts of the Throne Speech that are certainly not last but not least in any way, shape or form that I think speaks to our vision versus their vision is the fact that we're going to prevent—or we're going to—pardon me—invest in prevention and protecting front-line services.

Now, it's curious, when I look at the opposition's throne speech, they talk about reducing spending as a way up. Reducing spending is a way up for young people by improving the quality of education. I did say they referenced education maybe once or twice. I'm not sure how reducing the spending is going to be a way up, because I saw the reduced spending on education when I was a teacher in Gimli High School. I saw the impact that that had on our classrooms. I saw the impact that that had on the teachers, and they ignored so many issues in education time and time again, and it was actually—there were a couple of times when I sat down with my principal and had a conversation about career changes because I was really, really having a hard time—really having a hard time dealing with the fact that our system was getting so underresourced that the hands were tied by our school, by the provincial government's actions, that our school boards were faced with really tough decisions.

For five years I actually didn't have a permanent job. I was always the lowest on the seniority list and

it took five years before I knew that I had a permanent job in my school division, and I often talked to my principal about what other options might be available to me.

But, thankfully, things changed in 1999 when we were first elected to this Chamber as a government, and I was very pleased to join the team in 2003 and be part of a team that invests in protecting those front-line services in education, in health care and in services that matter most to Manitobans.

And we've seen many examples of that. It wasn't that long ago I was in Selkirk, where my good friend, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), he was unable to attend that event that day because he's a very busy man. But I gave greetings on his behalf and it was the celebration of the new cancer hub and the cancer navigator program in Selkirk, and the importance of that particular investment for people who are suffering from cancer and the scourge of cancer and to know that there is somebody there to navigate their journey and help them every step of the way.

And it's such a distinct difference between our vision and their vision. And I have to—I've said it before but I'll say it again, I distinctly remember the 2007 election, when we promised to build a dialysis unit in Gimli and I was essentially accosted by my opposition campaign manager. The opposition campaign manager came up to me and said, what the expletive deleted are you doing? We can't afford this. We don't need this. That's what they said.

And I was very pleased to open that centre in 2011 and you should have seen the joy in the faces of those individuals who have been very positively impacted because they can go and get dialysis at home. When you have an 80-year-old man who had to drive every second day to get dialysis—he had tears in his eyes, talking about what that meant to get the service that he needed to save his life at home. And what did they say? We don't need this; we can't afford this.

There's such a sharp contrast between us and them and they've demonstrated that in this alternate throne speech.

I'm really not sure what this alternate throne speech is, like I said, other than a rehash of every failed private members' bill that they've brought to the table, which we've debated in this Chamber, which we have said this is why this isn't going to work, this is why this is not right for Manitoba. There's no vision in that throne speech.

But look at the Throne Speech that we've presented to Manitobans. Look at the vision we have for education, look at the vision that we have for infrastructure, look at the vision that we have for jobs and the economy, look at the vision that we have for child care—the vision that we have for child care. I know our federal party has been saying that—*[interjection]*—I believe you'll have an opportunity to have your speech there, young man, so maybe just sit tight.

The vision that we have for child care in this province, towards universally accessible child care, that is a vision that we share with our federal party, universal child care. Now we know that we had an agreement with the federal government at one time, but, unfortunately, when the Liberal government lost and we had signed that agreement with them to bring forward towards universal accessible child care, the Conservative government came in and what did they do? They cancelled it. They cancelled it—

**An Honourable Member:** Like postal service.

**Mr. Bjornson:** Like postal service, like other—like veterans' services, like health transfers to the provinces, like health clinics, women's clinics, as well, all these things that the federal government cancelled that we have tried our best to backfill, we've tried our best to meet the needs of those who are left out the door by the federal government's initiatives and their cutting of services.

Now, why do I raise the federal government? Because that's the vision of the members opposite: cut, cut, cut. We don't subscribe to that. We know that strategic investments will drive the economy. We know that strategic investments will create jobs. We know that strategic investments will allow parents to have a choice for child-care needs so that they can get those jobs, so they can go to the schools that we're building, so they can access the university and college courses that we are funding, so they can get that student loan and not have to worry about paying interest on it, so that they can go through opened doors and create a better life for their friends and for their family.

So it's quite a contrast again and I know that I am running out of time but I do want to say that after a very positive session with many members from the AMM, after a very positive experience at AMM and good discussions, I must say I was very distraught to hear what the Leader of the Opposition had to say.

\* (15:30)

Now, it's not unusual for the opposition to say silly things. I remember them saying, there was no bullying in school when we were in office; thank you very much to the MLA for Charleswood. I remember them saying, well, there was no car theft when we were in office; thank you very much, the MLA from—the former MLA from Morris. I remember them saying, oh, if you're getting bullied on the Internet, the answer is simple, just don't go there; thank you very much, MLA for Emerson. They say silly things, but what was really offensive to me was another silly thing. Their leader has allowed that tradition to continue. He stood up in front of the AMM and said, the NDP is going door to door and saying I should not be the next premier because I'm from rural Manitoba. He said that to the delegates at AMM. I'm—I don't know what to say. I mean, how ridiculous an assertion is that? That is absolutely ridiculous and insulting to those of us from rural Manitoba, and to suggest that we would do that is absolutely ludicrous.

But, like I say, they have a tradition of saying silly things. I remember a former Education minister, he used to teach phys. ed., I believe his name was Len Derkach, who actually said, you know what, we're going to cut frivolous things out of the education system like phys. ed. and music and art. That's what Len Derkach said, the former minister of Education. They say silly things. And, you know, that's one thing about being in public office: when you're standing up in front of cameras, when you're standing up in front of microphones, things that you say are accounted for. And they will be held accountable.

And our vision is for a better Manitoba, growing Manitoba, and I'm very proud to be on this side of the House represent the fine constituents of Gimli, and I'm certainly looking forward to representing them for many, many years to come. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I rise to talk about the NDP's Throne Speech, but first I want to say some thank-yous to the residents of River Heights, to the staff who work in my office, to Rana Bokhari, the Manitoba Liberal Leader, and to those who support from around the province the Manitoba Liberal Party.

Now I'll respond to the Throne Speech. My overall impression is that the media are right. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) must have spent most of the last five months battling internal turmoil within his caucus because there's little of the planning I would

usually expect in the Throne Speech. A throne speech is the chance to talk about the big issues, the challenges and the opportunities. A throne speech should talk about the challenges faced by the province and what solutions the government will implement to meet these challenges.

As in other areas, a good plan depends on, first, a good understanding of the problem demonstrated in an articulate definition of the issue. In the case of the NDP Throne Speech, there was a poor definition of the problems and then a poor outline of the plan to address these problems. I will begin by focusing on a report of the Broadbent Institute. This report looked at the well-being of Canadians across Canada. Sadly, Manitobans' social well-being was rated the lowest of all the provinces. There were specific reasons for this. Today's NDP has failed to recognize the importance of social well-being and the importance of issues which were raised by the Broadbent Institute.

As I go through my response to the Speech from the Throne, I will mention aspects of the Broadbent Institute study of social well-being and address the areas where Manitoba came up short. First, education: The Throne Speech starts with a discussion of education, but sadly the Throne Speech doesn't address one of the most important issues of today, the fact that our students are doing poorly when assessed in comparison to other provinces. Let's take a look at the results of the Pan-Canadian Assessment of mathematics, reading and science. This is an assessment done by the councillors of ministers of Education Canada, of which Manitoba's Minister of Education is a member. The results for Manitoba on today's—under today's NDP were abysmal. Among all provinces, Manitoba was dead last in science, reading and mathematics. The impact is across the spectrum of students, with more Manitoba students having low scores and few Manitoba students having high scores. The results are so bad they threaten to pull our students and our province backwards and to cause major difficulties in several areas for many years to come.

The issue here is the quality of the education our children are receiving. This is an issue that affects children and their future, and it affects our families and communities because the future of our families and our communities depends on our children and how well they do.

It is a shortcoming for Manitoba that was highlighted in the Broadbent Institute study of social

well-being. It should've been addressed in the Throne Speech. It was not. Let us examine the results a little closer. Manitoba was not just last in science. We were 35 points lower than the Canadian average and 40 points lower than Alberta. Manitoba was not just last in reading. Manitoba was 39 points below the Canadian average and 55 points below Ontario. Manitoba was not just last in math. We were 36 points below the Canadian average and 56 points below Quebec. Manitoba was not just last in science learning overall. Manitoba was last in physical and earth sciences and second last in life sciences. Manitoba was last in scientific inquiry and problem solving and second last in scientific reasoning. Manitoba wasn't even close to the Canadian average in any of these areas and was 56 points behind Alberta in scientific inquiry.

The tombstone of the NDP will read: Through poor management and terrible implementation the NDP government of 1999 to 2015 failed the children of our province so badly that they fell behind every other province in Canada in reading, mathematics and science. Even the Free Press highlighted this in an editorial, saying that the approach of today's NDP high cost and low outcome isn't acceptable. The Free Press goes on to say that Manitoba's NDP has a nasty habit of pandering to voters as opposed to promoting innovations that might make services better and cheaper.

Sadly, in the Throne Speech, not only do we not see an acknowledgement that the quality of education in the outcomes of our students are important, but if we do not see the needed commitment to look at how we improve education while stemming the rise in costs.

To be fair, the Throne Speech did make a positive step in addressing student debt, saying it would in next year's budget eliminate the interest on student loans. But we still don't know whether this will be for all students or just some students and when it will actually start.

It must also be said that the funding pressures on universities and the recent announcement that the University of Manitoba must face deep budget cuts emphasizes the fact that the NDP broke their multi-year funding commitment to our universities and instituted cutbacks in the last two budgets which are partly to blame for this problem.

Second, health care: As in education, the section in the Throne Speech on health fails to focus on the most critical questions which exist in health care

today for Manitoba. Recently, a report released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information on September 18th showed that Winnipeg's hospitals had very long wait times in their emergency rooms. The longest of these was the Grace Hospital where the 90th percentile of waits was 9.1 hours. Dr. Howard Ovens, co-author of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians statement on emergency departments, said nine hours is really a very troubling figure. The idea of actually waiting nine hours in an emergency room is disturbing.

The Throne Speech doesn't recognize the extent of the problem, and though the Throne Speech announces funding for redevelopment at the Grace Hospital including a new emergency room, we all know what happened after redevelopment of the Health Sciences Centre emergency room: Brian Sinclair died waiting 34 hours to get help. It's more than just building structures. It's about improving operating procedures as well.

But the issue of the emergency rooms is larger than this. Through a Freedom of Information request we found that there were over 750 days in 23 Manitoba hospitals outside Winnipeg where the emergency room was closed and not available to those who had an emergency. This also was not recognized in the Throne Speech, and no plan at all was mentioned to address this problem.

And there are other critical health issues which are inadequately dealt with. Mental health is one. Except for a brief reference to post traumatic stress disorder, mental or brain health is not mentioned, this in spite of the fact that the Broadbent Institute highlighted the fact that Manitobans had the lowest self-perceived mental health of any province. It's an important issue for Manitobans and it should have been addressed in the Throne Speech; it was not.

\* (15:40)

Manitoba Liberals have been concerned with the mental health, brain health of Manitobans for some time. Indeed, recently we announced the first plank in our platform to build a healthy Manitoba to increase access to psychological services in our province. This has received very positive comments because people know that access to psychological services is critical to improve mental and brain health and well-being.

In contrast to our prioritizing mental and brain health, the NDP Throne Speech relegated mental and brain health to the back burner. Indeed, today's NDP

have neglected the importance of psychologists in health care for 15 years, to the point that Manitoba trails the other provinces in Canada in the number of psychologists per capita. Liberals have put an emphasis on better access to psychological services in order to address the mental-health needs of Manitobans and because we see it's critical to address the mental and brain health needs before people end up in crisis and have to go to an emergency room or a crisis response centre.

But there is more in health. Since 1992, Manitoba has had an epidemic of diabetes. When the NDP came to power, the epidemic had progressed to the point that just over 50,000 Manitobans had diabetes. Today, after 15 years of NDP government, the epidemic continues at an accelerated pace, as we now have more than 100,000 Manitobans with diabetes. I've talked about the lack of action by today's NDP on many occasions in this Legislature, and yet this year diabetes was not even mentioned in the Throne Speech. The same is true for FASD, another major problem in our province. And yet today's NDP have done all too little to prevent FASD and to decrease its devastating effects.

Infrastructure: In last year's Throne Speech the government said every dollar raised from the new point of PST will be fully dedicated to new investments in core infrastructure over and above existing spending levels. As we are finding out, the reality is somewhat different. In their first report on their infrastructure spending under this plan, in September the provincial government reported that it had taken \$190 million from Manitobans' pockets in the first year, 2013-2014, of the implementation of the increase in the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. They also reported that they'd spent \$115 million on core infrastructure, leaving a shortfall of \$75 million. From government records, this \$75 million was spent on items other than infrastructure.

But more than this, we've now confirmed that much of the money used for the \$115 million of core infrastructure spending is actually not from the PST increase but was borrowed money. This borrowed money is evidence that the government is not doing what it said it was going to do: spend every dollar of PST money on core infrastructure. It's also building up our provincial debt so that our debt is climbing higher and higher, leaving a legacy of debt for future generations.

There's another important aspect of the provincial approach to infrastructure spending. For

many, many years, the City of Winnipeg and municipalities throughout our province have called for a new deal in which the Province provides much better support to municipalities to address the infrastructure needs. Manitoba Liberals have shown, in an announcement in recent weeks, that Liberals are prepared to address this issue, while the NDP have shown over 15 years that they are not going to address it at all.

Child and family services: Manitoba's child and family services system is a very important area of concern, yet here again there was a lack of focus on the part of the government in the Throne Speech. The focus needs to be on much better support of families in order to reduce the number of children in care. Year after year, the number of children in care has been going up and up and up under this NDP government. The answer to why this is happening is well documented in a report we released a year ago.

Sadly, in a recent response to the ongoing situation of children in care being housed in hotels, the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has basically brought forward the repeat of the approach used from a time before when there was public attention to the fact that her government was housing children in hotels. It is their response to increase the capacity, not to address the real reason why there are children in hotels: that the government is operating a system which is taking far too many children into care in the first place. Indeed, not only this, but as was reported by one family last week, there are grave concerns that a child may be less safe in CFS care at times than at the home.

I have spent a great deal of time talking with people within the system and people affected by the system. In the last year, as an example, I visited the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Family and Community Wellness Centre. I visited there three times in order to better understand how they're managing child and family services. They have found an approach which brings together a variety of services in one place, under one executive director and with a common purpose of helping families and supporting children. They have, as one can see by looking at the recent report of family services, reduced the number of children in care by 18 per cent and they've done this by treating families with respect and by helping families to address the challenges they face, not by immediately apprehending children from all the families that need their help.

Think of it. If the whole system had reduced its number of children in care by 18 per cent, then last year the number of children in care would have decreased to just over 8,000 instead of increasing to over 10,000, as actually happened.

This government continues to fail children like Tina Fontaine, who was exposed to drugs and prostitution in the hotel she was placed in. This government has not in 15 years developed the capacity to change the misguided direction it's been going in and to improve the lives of children and families, instead of causing the breakup of more families and having more children in care, and in the Throne Speech there was no clear plan to change. It is now almost a year after the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry report and very little appears to have changed. It is unacceptable.

The economy, the government talks about the performance of the economy. One of the most important measures of how the economy is doing is whether we are seeing people leave for other provinces or whether we are seeing people from other provinces come to Manitoba. On balance, in the 15 years of today's NDP government, year after year we have people leaving, that is, there is a net loss of Manitobans to other provinces. This loss has been tragic in many ways, most particularly because it says that on a comparison basis people in Manitoba see greater opportunity elsewhere in Canada and not enough opportunity here in Manitoba.

Together with the loss of people, our relative status on a critical economic area, manufacturing, has changed. While Saskatchewan has been doing well in manufacturing, we cannot make the same claim. The result has been that Saskatchewan has now overtaken Manitoba in terms of manufacturing output. In essence, the NDP have created a situation where those interested in manufacturing are going elsewhere to build or expand their business. Today's NDP have, frankly, just been incompetent in this respect. The Throne Speech should have had a real plan to address our lack of progress in manufacturing. Why it was not there is hard to fathom, but the plan was not there.

Poverty, a Campaign 2000 report this week exposed a devastating crisis in Manitoba. It showed that we have the highest rate of child poverty of any province in Canada and that we have the highest per capita food bank use of any province in Canada in spite of, and many would say because of today's NDP. Over the last 15 years there has been, as Jim

Silver has said, the persistence in Manitoba of a deep, complex, and damaging poverty.

In 2008 this government brought forward its ALL Aboard strategy to address poverty. But as Sid Frankel has shown and the recent campaign 2000 report makes clear, it has been ineffective. In a lengthy discourse on the ALL Aboard strategy, Dr. Frankel describes the strategy as misguided and says that it's not sufficiently articulated for implementation and that it has not been effective. The Throne Speech doesn't recognize the depth of this problem or the failures of the government, let alone set forth what is needed: a far better plan, an implementation to address poverty in Manitoba.

Flood prevention: preventing floods as we all know is vital in Manitoba. One of the critical areas which was identified in the report following the 1997 flood was land management, that is, water management on the land. During the flood of 1997 in southwestern Manitoba it became evident that this was particularly critical in southwestern Manitoba. In spite of this today's NDP did little, even though it was apparent at that time that a surface water management plan was needed.

\*(15:50)

The lack of an NDP surface water management plan was very evident in the flood of 2011, and in various studies which have shown that in this area how water is managed plays a major role in the severity of the flood. Nevertheless, the NDP failed to act, and in the fall of 2011 there was extensive drainage in southwestern Manitoba. The area was set up then, and in succeeding years since 2011, for increasing severe flooding. And guess what? It happened in 2014 with a severe flood. And still, now three years after the flood of 2011, the NDP continue to hesitate to put this surface water management plan in place. We have heard this year that the NDP may act after 15 years of delay. The Throne Speech even says so but we have six more days in this sitting and have not yet seen a bill to address it. Liberals saw this as so critical we called for Legislature to resume in September this year, to deal with the surface water management plan and other time-sensitive and critical issues. The NDP delayed, as they have so often in the past.

And so now we are here in November and there is still no Surface Water Management Strategy in place. Such ongoing delays are neither surprising nor impressive but they sure are disappointing. The Throne Speech calls for efforts to address flood

prevention for people around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. Here, again, there are delays and delays. Indeed, hundreds of people from the communities of Little Saskatchewan, Lake St. Martin and Dauphin River remain out of their homes, partway through their fourth year after the flood that displaced them. It was a flood, we must remember, that this government actually created by sending water through the Portage Diversion and raising the levels of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. And yet today there is still no clear indication of when people will be able to return to their homes and their home communities.

Lake Winnipeg, the late and delaying NDP are late on the hearings of the regulation of Lake Winnipeg which have been delayed until 2015. This is another sign that Lake Winnipeg is just not a priority for this government. While problems with algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg continued again this year, a new problem also emerged—zebra mussels. The arrival of zebra mussels signals a failure of the activities to prevent this invasion and its devastating effects on Lake Winnipeg. With the presence of zebra mussels on the lake, the plan now needs to focus on species which are related to zebra mussels. At a meeting this summer, Robert Kristjanson emphasized the importance of preventing a similar invasion from other, similar species; (2) mitigation of the effects of the zebra mussels and suppression of their growth in Lake Winnipeg; and (3) perhaps most important of all, adequate measures to prevent the spread of the zebra mussels to other lakes in Manitoba and outside of Lake Winnipeg.

There are many, many lakes, probably somewhere around 100,000 lakes which are at risk and yet this government, when it knew it needed to act to prevent the spread of zebra mussels to other lakes, and it knew that current legislation was not good enough, failed—has failed to act. I called for the Legislature to sit in September to deal with this so there could be prompt action and we could have action in place by the time that boats were being moved around as the ice came on this fall. But instead the NDP delayed and delayed and delayed and here we are in late November and the bill still has not been brought forward. Where is it? Why the continuing delay? Manitobans need to know.

Child care and early childhood education, as we stand today there remain very long waits for many people looking for child care and early childhood education. While we applaud the look towards a universal system, we are right now a long way from

having a system which does not impose long waits on parents and children. We will wait to see what is actually delivered because too often in the past there's been a disconnect between what has been said and what has been delivered.

Justice; as Corey Shefman has pointed out, too many, more than 60 per cent of those who are in the provincial jails are there waiting for justice, not because they've been convicted. It is, as Corey Shefman has said, a profound problem which should be addressed and which was not even mentioned in this Throne Speech. There is also a matter of the drug treatment court and its future. The NDP have hesitated to ensure its future and it hangs in limbo. The NDP should have extended the drug treatment—a court—approach to drug treatment courts in Brandon and Thompson but they have not done so. There are no such courts there yet in Brandon or Thompson. And it's not in the Throne Speech to implement. These are further examples of the neglect by the NDP of important elements of our justice system.

Housing; in housing, there continue to be issues. There are still homes in northern Manitoba without clean, running water. The shelter rates are to be increased to 75 per cent of market rates but we are only one-quarter of the way there. The housing-first study was a success but there was nothing in the Throne Speech to suggest the NDP will take this successful study and implement the approach province-wide.

Yes, there remains much to be done in housing and much that was not mentioned in the Throne Speech. With all the shortcomings in the direction of this government, I can fully understand why five senior Cabinet ministers rebelled and said enough is enough. To have an NDP-led province which is last in social well-being, in poverty, in education and in so many other important aspects is not to be tolerated.

Manitoba Liberals no longer have confidence in this government and we believe a large majority of Manitobans no longer trust this government. I will be voting for the amendment expressing non-confidence in the government and against this Throne Speech.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development):** It's an honour to stand up here, first and foremost to recognize the 19,000 family farms that we have in the province of Manitoba and to the people that are very important to our economy in the province of Manitoba. When we talk about family farms, we talk about industry that's

directly or indirectly related. It's an opportunity to brag about the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba.

This is the opportune time where we acknowledge 9 per cent of our GDP comes from the agriculture sector in the province of Manitoba, but also another alarming, actual fact is 64,000 people are employed directly or indirectly in the province of Manitoba, and that's why we're rated as the third fastest growing province in Canada as far as economic growth goes, and that's all partly contributed to the agriculture sector in the province of Manitoba.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

I also want to share some great meetings we had today at the AMM convention, and we continue to have good dialogue with a number of municipal governments. It was my great pleasure to be involved in municipal politics for 20 years of my life and to have the opportunity to also be in agriculture for 35 years of my life, to share my thoughts on what we see today.

Our Throne Speech definitely has 'resigned' the importance of agriculture as we move forward in the opportunity enhancing economic and jobs in the province of Manitoba. I want to refer to a commentary that was made earlier by members opposite about the water situation and the challenges we face in surface water management.

It's quite ironic that the members opposite that don't really want to concern the conversation leading to the fact that maybe our watershed problems are not within provincial boundaries, but they choose not to acknowledge maybe where the excess water may be coming from and the opportunity, most recently, when our conservation minister was in Regina, to have a very fruitful discussion addressing a watershed problem that stems from Alberta through Saskatchewan into Manitoba, into the bathtub of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, the Hudson Bay situation.

But they choose not to acknowledge the fact that Saskatchewan authorities maybe have to get serious, especially when our minister shows up to take in a discussion. The Assiniboine watershed system was all there. We had dignitaries from the Dakotas but not one MLA from Saskatchewan attended a very important meeting. So I would question members opposite, and we talk about the MLA in the southwest area of the province of Manitoba is saying

we're doing nothing. Well, I would ask if your cousins would consider that to be a serious situation. Maybe you should be talking to your cousins about the importance of it. That to me is a true sign of movement towards.

It is somewhat shameful that we don't see that kind of a co-operation. We talk about the great things of Saskatchewan from the members opposite, but when they're somewhat targeted as maybe not being helpful in our situation, there's a sudden silence that, oh, we can't acknowledge that, too bad. It's just too bad.

\* (16:00)

And I really feel that when we talk about moving forward as a united front that we chose not to do that. In fact, I had the opportunity to meet with some of the municipal officials in the southwest area, so I asked him, I asked the municipal officials, what is your biggest concern when we talk about surface water, we talk about excess moisture. So what do they say? It's not the 200 per cent of rainfall that we've got above normal, it's the 2,000 per cent over normal surface water that's coming through the provincial boundaries. And yet the people opposite are choosing not to acknowledge that.

We have the provincial government—we have the Conservation Minister meeting with them asking for it. They totally deny that that should be—I feel somewhat regretful that the MLA is choosing not to acknowledge that and talking to the fellows to the west. It is truly somewhat 'disrefable.' And you know what? When we have an MP that was sitting in the chair over there, chooses not to acknowledge that as being a serious situation. And let's be realistic. Let's be realistic. The only way we're going to solve this problem, we need to get together at the same round table. But yet we hear none of that happening today.

We've had numerous challenges and obviously we cannot control Mother Nature when we talk about 200, 250 per cent moisture. We continue to work with producer groups. We talk about the importance of ag recovery, and we've come forward with that. Today we are requested why ag recovery was not considered in certain areas. Well, let me tell you. We've had numerous discussions with commodity groups throughout the province of Manitoba since July. We were privileged to host the federal-provincial-territorial meetings with all the ag ministers and including Minister Ritz in attendance. We talked about the importance of surface water management. We talked about crop

insurance opportunities. We had the support—and I think you may know that keystone agriculture producers may have some resonance with them. But Mr. Doug Chorney spoke numerous times to Minister Ritz: We are in a situation that we need to have ag recovery. And I did the same thing. But yet there is no acknowledgement from the members opposite. We fought—we fought—as much as we could. And all of a sudden we are now in a situation that we don't want to acknowledge the situation where it's at.

But, at the end of the day, I'm very proud to stand on this side of the House with my fellow ministers and MLAs and say we were able—we were able—to get money for the agriculture industries, including the beef industry, who have suffered for numerous years. Mr. Speaker, being an agriculture beef producer for 30 years of my life, it's high time we finally got the prices that we should've been getting 10 years ago. Today, to the agriculture, the beef industry, this is a long time I've been waiting, and I'm very proud to say that we're finally going to have some returns back in the beef industry.

But we need some co-operation from the member opposite because obviously Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis are all being challenged, not because of rainfall; it's a true understanding of a watershed management that needs to be placed. Both the Liberals and the members opposite, Conservatives, are talking, we need to get together, and they're blaming the NDP party. Well, I'm sorry. Our Conservation Minister was there, the premiers talked about it with the Prime Minister, but where were they? They choose not to acknowledge it, and I'm very, very disappointed to hear that where that situation is going and it continues to hide behind the pillars of acknowledging the importance of discussions. So we continue to work with the opportunity.

In our Throne Speech we have put forward a proposal because obviously producers have been challenged with excess moisture. And, in fact, to the point, I'm very proud to say this is a government that brought in the excess moisture program in 2000. They were asking for it for how many years? But yet now the members opposite choose not to acknowledge that in any stretch of the imagination. And we continue to see that program enhancing and improving for the industry.

Crop insurance definitely is the jewel of the province of Manitoba. No other province across

Canada can compare to the province of Manitoba as crop insurance. Let's be realistic about it. We've got 90 per cent of eligible producers—92 per cent of eligible producers are in crop insurance. No other province has got that. We talk about the land available to be in crop insurance. Ninety per cent of eligible land that can be in crop insurance is in crop insurance. And you can talk to any producer, he'll say that is one of the best things we've ever done in the province of Manitoba, and I'm very proud to sit here and acknowledge the hard-working people that work in crop insurance, of the importance of the insurance-based program that we need to enhance, and that's why in the Throne Speech we are committed. We are committed to put together a task force team to reinvestigate how we can improve producers that have been subject to excess moisture for five continuous years. We need to have that commitment and we are going to deliver on—this government's going to deliver on that, and we will work to find alternative mechanisms to help producers. *[inaudible]* Mr. Speaker, well, I sure hope that the members opposite would consider the importance of it, of supporting us in the agriculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, we've had some challenges throughout a number of years of the Waterhen situation, obviously frazzle ice is building into the situation. I was pleased to be there on Saturday to talk to the people affected by it, and these are the challenges we are faced with water that's coming from outside our province of Manitoba, and we need to continue investing. And that is why our government is committed to build a controlled outlet structure in Lake Manitoba to help to deal with the situation that is being brought forward.

We had the great pleasure of meeting with some of the municipal councillors from Portage, and they respected the dollars that has been received and will be received on the fail-safe opportunity. We had numerous compliments on the forage production and the transportation issues. And I'm hearing members opposite saying that wasn't enough. I'll be very proud to say that I've met with a number of municipalities and they thanked us and they continue to thank our government and the attitude that we took. We fought—we fought—with Minister Ritz in the partnership, and we continue to do, irregardless what Mr. Sopuck may have said. So we continue to work on it.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about our commitment in agriculture, the Province of

Manitoba, in partnerships in Growing Forward 2, have \$176 million that we've invested and we continue to invest in agriculture. But we talk about \$176 million are invested into the economy of the province of Manitoba towards agriculture-added-value opportunities. And let me just talk about the numerous things that we've done in the number of years we've been here—and we will continue to work with *[inaudible]*. We talk about the hemp industry. We talk about the flax industry. We talk about the pharmaceutical and the nutraceutical industry that we have in the province, and it's going to do but nothing but grow. It's definitely going to grow.

In my recent trip to China when I had an opportunity to meet with a number of business people, when we started talking about the opportunity to develop a product that is grown locally and could be manufactured locally, there was an interest to no end by business people in China, and they continue to talk to us with Manitoba trade, jobs and economy. This is our opportunity. This is our connecting link to continue to provide the economy to grow, and it will, Mr. Speaker. And it will because there is the appetite, the diet component that we need to help to fix our diet situation in the health-care system.

And the other thing that's really starting to resonate is the opportunity—the general public is realizing the importance of a proper diet will save health conditions. But it also—and that's why GF2 funding, when we talk about innovation research, the opportunity is this: if we can provide alternative forms of diet and pharmaceutical, 'medicinal' opportunities, it's a cost saving to the medicare system in the province of Manitoba, and that is what we're working on to help out the economy of the province of Manitoba for people to live healthier and longer lives. And we will continue to do that, and that's strictly because the Agriculture Department is focused on the opportunity for that to happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the fact that Manitoba Crop Insurance has been recognized as probably one of the best-running businesses in the province of Manitoba. And when you have staff that have been through the floods of 2011, 2014, many times those kind of staff people take that home with them and are bothered by that. So I want to acknowledge the numerous staff that work in the Department of Agriculture such as the MASC people

that have gone through some pretty traumatic times to help out producers.

\* (16:10)

And let me go back to the water—surface water management. Those are things that eventually happen; they have no control. And we had a number of people involved in that, and I spent time talking to a number of the staff people, and there was people that were telling me they were crying on the phone because they were concerned of people that were—phoned in, and those are situations that we had no control of.

But I want to emphasize the importance, the sooner we get together with neighbouring provinces and the US side, that we need to find a mechanism so we don't have repeat social challenges of flood events that we've experienced in 2011 and 2014.

And, obviously, the challenges still exist with us, is to finally trying to recover from a \$1.4-billion flood event that has made it very challenging for us and our Treasury department. But we were there. We continued to work with producers that had been flooded, much like the AgriRecovery program that we fought with the federal government to assist the importance of agriculture in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

I want to refer to other topics that was announced in the Throne Speech and, obviously, being a parent of two daughters, and both our daughters did attend University of Manitoba, living out in the rural landscape, the announcement of interest-free loans truly will be a benefit and it's truly respected by a number of the people that live in the rural and northern components. The fact that we were—my wife and I, we were talking about 14 to 15 thousand dollars a year. That's what it cost us to support our daughter to go to university here in Manitoba. And this is an opportunity that provides a link to enhance students that want to go and that have some financial challenges. This is an opportunity that you have to move forward on that.

But I think it also resonates the importance of our government's commitment when we talk about health and education. I was very proud a couple of years ago to stand beside ex-minister of Education, Nancy Allan, who—as we put the spade in the ground at the sod-turning ceremony, the diesel and the apprenticeship that's been built in Swan River. And this is a typical example how proactive our government is towards the education component.

And let me just give you an example where our family, where we financially supported our daughters to go to university, but by having opportunities of the diesel apprenticeship shop being built in Swan River, the opportunity is this. It's when you have a grade 10 student that may want to be a diesel mechanic in life and has the opportunity to go into it and get into it at a slower pace, but all of a sudden, at grade 11 or grade 12 has chosen that's not the occupation. That, to me, is worth a lot of money because I'm sure there's a number of us or family members have chosen to go to university, and all of a sudden, that is not what they wanted. By having a diesel apprenticeship shop or any other type of job or education components available, it's the pre-opportunity to pick up, is this what they want to do in life? Is this what they want to do? Then it's a cost saving to the parents directly simply by the fact that's the choice they made at grade 11, grade 12.

At the end of the day, it's a saving for all of us, and I want to emphasize the opportunity. As I travel around my constituency and throughout the province of Manitoba, the opportunities are constantly knocking about the tradespeople. And I think, with members opposite, we realize the importance of the carpenters, the electricians, the plumbers, the diesel mechanics. Those are all jobs that are a necessity, and that's why when we talk about OCN, we talk about Assiniboine Community College, Red River community college, that is why this government is investing. To the young generation, opportunity knocks down the road.

We talk about hydro. We talk about 5,000 jobs in the province of Manitoba when the dam construction. This is an opportunity for the young generations to get trained and obtain a job in the province of Manitoba. You don't have to leave the province. Jobs will be had, and yet members opposite 'choon' to challenge the opportunity. They would sooner see young generation go to other provinces. They don't want to talk about surface water management to the province of Saskatchewan, but they talk about potash mines, they talk about the great things in Saskatchewan. Well, the members opposite, I think, need to be realistic and appreciate what our government has done towards keeping the young generations here.

But also, more importantly, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that family farms exist and they will continue to exist, and there's an opportunity for that to resonate because population drives rural communities, small towns. And I'm very proud to say that I come from a

small community of Ethelbert, Manitoba, and it's very challenging to see that members opposite don't seem to recognize the importance of small, rural communities, and they choose to favour the Saskatchewan side when we talk about surface water management challenges we face.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to come from the rural farm, and I want to assure the audience that that will never, ever leave me and it will always be. I'm very proud and I will continue to be very proud that I was born and raised on a family farm, and I want to contain that and expect that and you can be assured, as Agriculture minister, that we will keep supporting the agriculture industry in a number of fashions.

We continue to invest in the beef industry. We continue to invest into research and innovation. I'm very proud to make the announcement that Western Livestock Price Insurance is in effect, will be in effect. It's a bankroll. We want to talk about the importance of the—about the Ag recovery program that was announced in—recently, the importance of bringing back industry to the beef industry. As we all know, there's a lot of experienced cattle producers are probably sitting back and saying whether they're prepared to stay on.

And the reality is, as I talk to the beef industry and I talk to Keystone Agricultural Producers, those are the challenges they face. And agriculture is changing in that perspective, but I want to assure you that we will continue to work with commodity groups. We need to continue to work with the Port of Churchill. We see the Port of Churchill being a viable option of movement of grain. But not only grain, as in my discussion in China was referring to opportunity to make that an opportunity to move other multiforms of cargo through the Port of Churchill, and we need to be open-minded to that concept, working with OmniTRAX, working with the grain movement.

As you all know, the grain industry has its challenges and had its challenges, and I think when we go back in the transition of the Canadian Wheat Board it was pretty evident that the producers have suffered the largest consequences in that transition period. When we talk about 55 vessels sitting in Vancouver at a cost that is unbelievable, and it's a quote that made by some of the commodity groups, that was about a \$10-billion loss to the producers simply because somebody's got to pay—somebody has to pay—for those vessels waiting to get loaded. And that's the unfortune. The loss of the Canadian

Wheat Board lost a co-ordinated effort of the opportunity to somewhat have scheduled grain movement in appropriate fashion.

But yet members opposite, when we talked about the Canadian Wheat Board in 2011, I did not see one of the members opposite stand up and support the Canadian Wheat Board. And today the producers are—so the producers are sitting back and now are saying that, no, we had nothing to do with it. Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing a little bit of chirping from the members opposite, but they choose not to entertain and respect what the Wheat Board has done and had the opportunity to save producers a lot of money. And unfortunately this year producers have been challenged with adverse, because that dollar a bushel would have gone a lot further this year if they'd been able to save the dollars that they had to pay for the demurrage charges that—with the 50 vessels that were sitting out on the west coast.

And if it wasn't for minister—if it wasn't for the MIT minister and I talking to the CN of the importance of using the eastern seaport—they chose not to use it, but it was through us that we were able to talk to CN and CP, and you know what they said? Well, you know what? Nobody told us we should go out to the lakehead. So, unfortunately, producers lost out on an opportunity to *[inaudible]* In fact, some vessels showed up on the east coast and they said, no, you might as well go back because we're not going to load any grain. Everything was being funnelled through the west coast. That's the unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, because producers—and we were blessed—we were blessed—with 30 per cent crop above normal, opportunity to get \$8 a bushel, \$9 a bushel for wheat.

What did the producers end up getting? Maybe \$4 a bushel, \$5 a bushel. Why is that? And let's do the simple math of this. If there was such a surplus of grain or a shortage of grain now, why is the price so low? Why is the price so low, Mr. Speaker? We're talking about \$4 a bushel for wheat, maybe 4 and half dollars a bushel. We know the average crops basically was this year, so there seems to be somewhat a dysfunctional. But yet, at the end of the day, members opposite are choosing not to acknowledge their naiveness of the importance of the Canadian Wheat Board in the province and in Canada for the betterment of the grain industry and the betterment of money that was spent wisely by the Canadian Wheat Board.

\* (16:20)

We have the opportunity to talk about CIGI and CIGI is one of the greatest things we have in the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba, and we need to continue supporting CIGI as we have and we will. But also the reality is that the Canadian Wheat Board did support CIGI on a regular basis and had historically and will continue to support but unfortunately the challenges have that the freedom is now come and made it very challenging for the wheat—for the wheat producers and the oats producers of the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it is truly an opportunity to talk about the pork industry in the province of Manitoba and I am very proud of our department when we talked about the spread of the PEVD virus in the province of Manitoba. We have done—we have done remarkably well, simply due to the staff that has been involved with our department. We—I have to compliment the CVO or the acting CBO when the outbreak took place, we had spent numerous hours, numerous of hours, we done numerous tests through the university and we stayed on top of it and I'm very proud to say is that our staff had been very dedicated and to the—everybody that works in the department I would like to compliment them because definitely, in partnership with Manitoba pork, we need to do.

Now we talked about the opportunity of the hog industry in the province of Manitoba. I think the one biggest challenge is we're going to face is the federal regulations about workers working at those appropriate plants. It's not a matter of the hog numbers coming in, Mr. Speaker; it's a matter about who's going to be working those plants based on federal regulations I've been challenging. When we look at the HyLife and we look at Maple Leaf, 70-odd per cent of workers work in those plants and they're being challenged to retain work in that plant. That's the challenges we face.

And we've had numerous discussions with the CEOs in those plants. 'Productivity' needs to have not only in restaurants and other added-value occupations but the importance of Maple Leaf and the federal government's choices to make it so much more challenging where we go with hired labour forces in the province of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, the importance of agriculture truly is near and dear to this government and that's why we've put in investive ideas in the—in our Throne Speech to continue to

work with the governments and work with the federal government and provincial government.

I want to conclude my commentary, Mr. Speaker, is that the importance of the surface water management, if I can come back to that, and offer their wishes to talk to their cousins in Saskatchewan and maybe bring them forward to the table so we can start to have the conversation as we've been asking for for some time and also have the opportunity to solve the problem as I met with a number of the municipalities in the southwest area in the province as well.

I would like to conclude my comments on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and the importance of this government moving forward with a number of key components, but let me conclude by saying health care, education are one of the two main topics and will continue to be our main topic. And also to my friend from the Interlake area, and to commentaries about highway construction that happens in the east Interlake, there is a lot of travel—people travelling down there, much to the commentary that members opposite feel that there's—nobody lives in the Interlake area. I somewhat have to stand corrected and corrective opinion of the members opposite that nobody lives in the Interlake area.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, and truly I'm very proud to stand here as an agricultural minister and rural development, and I'm very proud to be on this side of the House because we see the visionary and the importance of agriculture and to the jobs and economy in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege.

**Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye):** It's great to be back in this Chamber for another session of the Manitoba Legislature. It is an honour to be here representing the constituents of La Verendrye and the people of Manitoba. I would like to welcome back all my colleagues from both sides of the House, the Chamber staff, yourself, Mr. Speaker, and for all the pages, I hope your experience will be a memorable one.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth Speech from the Throne that I've had the honour to listen to. And this one, like the other ones, is full of promises. After the last three speeches from the throne, the people of Manitoba are tired of promises that never come to

fruition. Manitobans want action, not empty promises.

The worst part of this, Mr. Speaker, is that this NDP government is not taken ownership over its failed promises. Instead they try to place the blame on everyone else. They blame the weather. They blame the economy. They blame the federal government and then they blame the governments of the '90s. The only one they don't blame is themselves. After 15 years, it should come to no one's surprise as to who is to blame. The NDP simply need to take a good look in the mirror and they will see where the blame lies: in the hands of their NDP government.

To make this acceptance of blame clearer, the following are just some of the NDP government's proud accomplishments: child poverty. Listening to the news yesterday morning, Manitobans learned that they are once again the child poverty capital of Canada. It is the province with the highest child poverty rate in the country. Three out of 10 Manitoba children live in poverty and Manitoba is a full 10 per cent above the national average, and this keeps growing because I believe last year it was around 6 per cent and has held this position for a number of years. The situation is only getting worse, not better.

Education, Mr. Speaker. Education is the building blocks of our future. It paves the way to success for our youth. This NDP government has failed Manitoba students and families. According to the latest Pan-Canadian Assessment Program scores, Manitoba scored last in assessment for science, reading and math. Manitoba's education is falling further and further behind other provinces. Pan-Canadian 2013 results show Manitoba's reading grade as the lowest across the country and has seen a significant decrease since 2010. Likewise, many other provinces have increased their math grade but Manitoba has not.

Mr. Speaker, since 2001, Manitoba has been one of the leading provinces in the nation for high school dropout rates and has consistently had the lowest high school and post-secondary graduation rate in Canada. It's obviously that this NDP government is leaving Manitoba students without the building blocks they need to succeed.

Education is the foundation of building a strong economy and creating hope and opportunity for our children and grandchildren. This is being put at risk by the NDP. They keep making promises to improve

the education system but the scores show that the problem is only getting worse.

ER wait times. Mr. Speaker, our ER wait times are the longest in the country and we have a record number of ER closures with at least 20 in our rural hospitals alone. Does the Minister of Health not realize that with all these ER closures, the ERs that are open will have more pressure put on them from an increased number of patients? On top of that, the over number of ER visits are not going down. As our population grows, the visits keep going up; therefore, we need more ERs. More and more Manitobans have to call an ambulance that drives hundreds of miles to find an open ER, or even worse, they have to rely on a part-time ambulance service where those in need are required to find their own ride.

\* (16:30)

I recently talked to an elderly couple that had that experience, what it is like to have a part-time ambulance. The lady slipped and fell about 6:30 in the morning. There was no ambulance service available, so her husband drove her to her doctor's clinic that was roughly an hour away. After waiting to see the doctor for a few hours and then finding out there was nothing could be done for her there, the lady and her husband got back into her car for another 45-minute drive to the nearest hospital with an open ER. Finally, at about 2 p.m., the lady had an X-ray that showed she had a fractured hip. From that hospital she was sent away to a Winnipeg hospital for treatment.

It is outrageous that this lady had to deal with the pain of a fractured hip for all those hours before being treated. No Manitobans should have health-care experiences like this one after the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has promised to fix health care that nobody should—doesn't matter where they live, should have the same health-care opportunities.

Emergency services are in a state of crisis in Manitoba. In 2013, Manitoba paid \$1.47 million in fees to the WRHA for ambulance off-load delays. This means \$1.47 million less for front-line services. Manitobans are paying more and getting less with this NDP government.

An item that's very close to me is the ER at the Vita hospital is still closed. And you've heard about it from me several times in this Chamber. It has been closed since October 17th of 2012. That's 770 days. On November 26th of 2012, the former, former Health minister said, and I quote: "Not only is it

important that the citizens of Vita have primary care, which, of course, is why we've made a commitment to all Manitobans that whomever shall wish to have one shall have access to a family doctor by 2015, but, indeed, we also care deeply, as I know the member does, about emergency care, which is why we are working with the regional health authority, Mr. Speaker," on security, additional physician services for the Vita area.

"I can inform the member that an additional physician has recently been hired for the Vita hospital."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is 770 days, and nothing but another bunch of broken promises. At the time of the ER closure, the people of Vita were told that the closure would be no longer than one month. To date, we have gone through three Health ministers and 770 days, and yet the Vita ER remains closed. There are only 37 days remaining until 2015.

And I would ask the Health Minister, do all Manitobans who want a family doctor have one or is this just another broken promise?

Doctor retention: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP took office more than 2,300 doctors have left Manitoba to practise in other provinces, according to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. Just in the last five years, more than 640 licensed doctors have left our province to work in other jurisdictions. Does that sound right? Manitoba boasts one of the lowest doctor retention rates in Canada. Of those first registered in 1999-2000, only 31 per cent are still practising in Manitoba 10 years later. This is a far cry from the Canadian average of nearly 60 per cent still practising. However, Manitoba is the only province in Canada not to have a dedicated stroke unit. Every other province has one, not Manitoba. And health care: It is the highest cost department when it comes to the Manitoba budget. Manitobans are consistently paying more for health care and getting less.

Child and family services: This NDP government is putting children and youth in a—in unnecessary risk. Just since 2009, 76 children have died while in the care of Child and Family Services or were involved in the CFS system. Tragically, 25 of those deaths have been by suicide. Mr. Speaker, in 2005, there were 6,629 children in care. In 2014, that number jumped to 10,647 children in care. That's an increase of 61 per cent. It is clear that this NDP government's plans are not working.

Manitoba has a government and a minister that do not have a clue of what they are doing. Manitoba has the highest proportion of children under 14 in foster care in Canada. Manitobans use food banks at a rate nearly double the national average. Sadly, Manitoba also has the highest rate of children using food banks of any province. Nearly 45 per cent of the more than 60,000 Manitobans using food banks are children. NDP waste means less for Manitoba's children and youth. This NDP government is failing Manitoba youth.

Manitoba has the highest incarceration rate of youth in all of Canada, 330 per 100,000. The NDP is also failing to protect Manitoba's most vulnerable youth. In 2014, Manitoba again had the highest rate of sexual assaults against children in Canada. Our youth in this province, our most prized possession, and this NDP government is failing to protect them, failing to educate them and to offer them a better future here in Manitoba. We are consistently losing our youth and brightest to other provinces. This has to stop. I've talked to several grandparents and parents who are tired of having to go visit their kids in Saskatchewan and Alberta. We should be able to keep them at home.

NDP waste means less for Manitobans. Under this government the only economic milestone reached by Manitoba is the high rate of debt, its dependency and high rate of spending. This NDP government needs to change its high spend ways and its high tax policy. It needs to focus on wise spending, reducing debt and taxes for all. This NDP government needs to realize that governments do not create jobs. It is not the government's responsibility to create jobs, but it's their responsibility to create the best economic conditions for the private sector that will in turn create the best competitive jobs for Manitobans. These private sector jobs are what will build a strong Manitoba economy that Canadians will flock to for opportunity of growth and success.

Manitobans pay some of the highest taxes in Canada, and under the NDP Manitoba's economy has grown slower than the national average. But Manitoba does lead the country in inflation, which has been consistently higher than the national average. This is embarrassing, Mr. Speaker, that this government has gotten away with this. Manitobans deserve better.

The NDP has done nothing to address the bracket creep. Adjusting tax brackets to compensate for inflation is done in every province except

Manitoba, Nova Scotia and PEI. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) has had the title of worst fiscal manager in Canada. This may be the result of his focus on more waste, more mismanagement and high taxation. Manitoba families pay the highest income tax in Canada outside Quebec. An average Manitoba family pays \$3,200 more than the same family in Regina. This is embarrassing.

\* (16:40)

However, Mr. Speaker, it is a shame to admit that Manitoba is one of the only provinces left in Canada that still levies a payroll tax. The more workers a company employs, the more payroll tax they pay. This is a direct penalty from the NDP government on business for being successful, and it is a direct deterrent for growth of those businesses.

Manitoba, we have a have province with a have-not government. Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, Manitoba has lost manufacturing jobs. In 2008, Manitoba had 72,100 manufacturing jobs. In 2013, that number dropped to 67,100; that's a loss of 5,000 jobs. This NDP government talks about their commitment to infrastructure, and yet they underspent last year's budget by \$344 million or 19 per cent. Since 2009, the NDP have underspent their infrastructure commitment by over \$2.2 billion.

The reannouncements of projects is commonplace for this government. A good example is the interchange project at 59 and 101. It was first announced in 2007, then announced again in 2011, and then again in 2013. Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the people of Manitoba no longer trust this NDP government.

Manitoba recently had their credit rating downgraded, the reason for—given for this is Manitoba's execution rate. What this means is that Manitoba's NDP do not do what they say they will do. What does this mean for Manitobans? Higher interest rates on the money that Manitoba borrows. With nearly a billion dollars a year going to pay the interest on Manitoba's debt, what will happen if interest rates go up by even 2 or 3 per cent? Where will that extra money come from? Less money to spend on health care, less money for roads and bridges. Manitobans pay more and get less.

Since the election of 2011, with all the broken promises, the lies, the illegal increase in the provincial sales tax and the cutting of the taxpayer protection act, Manitobans are tired of this NDP government. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has

lost all credibility with Manitobans. I will not be voting for this year's Throne Speech because this government cannot be trusted to do what they promise to do. I will be voting for the Throne Speech amendment brought forward by the member from Fort Whyte.

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, we have seen five front-bench NDP Cabinet ministers resign from Cabinet. Why? Again the blame game—the blame game. They're all blaming the Premier (Mr. Selinger) for all of the NDP's woes. They blame the Premier for the increase in PST. We all know all of them were there for the PST increase and they all supported it.

Why did these ministers wait so long to turn on the Premier? Where was their integrity when the PST was being raised? Where was their honesty? Why were they not concerned about the needs of Manitobans a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker? They did not think. In 2013, their political careers were being threatened; they all are more preoccupied with remaining in power than they are with the needs of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure at this time to say I will be supporting the amendment to the Speech from the Throne moved by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister). This is an amendment focused on the fact that Manitobans no longer trust or have faith in this government, and, as we have all witnessed, it is not only the Manitobans and the members on this side of the House that have lost trust and faith in this NDP government, there are several members from that side of the House who also lost trust and faith in the government.

Mr. Speaker, this is an amendment focused on the fact that Manitobans no longer have trust or faith in this government. It also focuses on the fact that a number of NDP MLAs no longer trust or have faith in the Premier. This is an amendment that focuses on this.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment has several good clauses that are probably right out of the mouths of the people who left the NDP party, but some government and all official opposition members agree that Manitobans are angry and believe that the provincial government has broken their trust, that some government members have concluded that serving this provincial government with integrity is no longer an option, that the same government members have said they do not regret speaking

honestly as being truthful and holding on to integrity is something that Manitobans have been raised to do.

But some government and all official opposition members are gravely concerned that priorities may move up the queue based on political interests and ahead of what Manitobans consider to be their priorities and needs, that there is a genuine concern amongst some government and all official opposition members that the provincial government has become more preoccupied with remaining in power than necessarily doing the things that are in the best interests of Manitobans.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've had several members from opposite jump ship. Now, they're jumping ship and are they coming back, or what's happening with them? They can't seem to make up their mind, but with the—if they're looking to save their integrity, that's an important thing for them to consider. I hope that they all realize that they should support this amendment.

I would ask the members opposite to support this 'mement'—amendment. I know that the five ministers that resigned should support this amendment in order to save their integrity and prove that their interests of Manitobans are first in their mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Multiculturalism and Literacy):** It is my pleasure to get up before the House as a Legislative Assembly member for Logan constituency and as the Minister for Multiculturalism and Literacy to add a few words to that already spoken by my colleagues on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, what a joy and privilege to join my government colleagues in declaring my support for the 2014 Throne Speech read to us by His Honour, Philip Lee, on November 21st.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased seeing you back in the House as well as the rest of my colleagues. We are all pumped up and ready to do work that our constituents have entrusted us to do. I would also like to welcome the new interns and pages. Their stint at this Assembly could very well be the beginning of an exciting career for them down the road, so I wish them the very best.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, her deputy, and the rest of the staff here at the Clerk's office for the valuable support they provide us.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to express my deep gratitude to my constituents in Logan for the trust they have given me since 2007. Today I am renewing my commitment to serve my constituents to the best of my abilities while I am afforded the time to do so. It is gratifying and fulfilling to work with various community leaders in my constituency as well as the wider constituencies under the Multiculturalism and Literacy department.

Mr. Speaker, briefly I'm speaking to my colleagues on this side of the House. Challenging times are still ahead of us as we decide on how best to go forward. But, instead of dwelling on the negatives, we are focused on the silver lining that accompanies challenges. The silver lining here is how we can use this as an opportunity for renewal and growth and moving forward with a clear focus.

I thank my colleagues for showing courage, commitment, and determination to focus on priorities important for the prosperity and well-being of all Manitobans. Personally, Mr. Speaker, I am inspired by my idol, Tommy Douglas, who said, "Courage, my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world."

\*(16:50)

And speaking of steadfast commitment, I want to say a special thank you for the commitment of my staff at the department and in the constituency office along with the Logan volunteers. I thank the staff in my office, the departmental and constituency staff for the long hours and tireless work that they do in and out of the office. It is truly an honour to work with people who care about their work and the commitment to the people that *[inaudible]* I thank the literacy and learning centre directors, instructors and students in Manitoba. You are a source of pride and inspiration to me for the work that you do each and every day. And always last, but never least, I would like to thank my husband, Orli, and my children for their support and love. They are always there for me when I need them.

Mr. Speaker, our government's Throne Speech is about investing in education and infrastructure to grow the economy, create good jobs and provide more opportunities for people right here in our province. Our government MLAs are focused on families, creating opportunities for our kids here in Manitoba and protecting the services that matter most like seniors' care, hospitals and schools. Our province is stronger because we're working together. We're continuing to invest in infrastructure like roads and flood protection. It's a plan that's growing our

economy and creating good jobs. Our government has rooted our priorities in those of everyday Manitobans. We ended a decade of cuts and underfunding and launched a new era of investment and growth. We have steady growth, good jobs and public services that people can count on. By continuing to grow, providing more good jobs and building on our great public services, we can make life better for all Manitobans.

In today's economy, Mr. Speaker, advanced education and training, including apprenticeships, is the best way to get on the path to a good career. Last week's Throne Speech acknowledges the importance played—important role played by adult literacy and learning centres province-wide. It says: "Literacy and adult learning programs are important stepping stones for many new Canadians and others seeking to upgrade their skills. We will continue to strengthen programming throughout our network of adult literacy providers to serve more Manitobans."

Mr. Speaker, I have visited literacy and adult learning centres in Winnipeg and those outside of Winnipeg. Those centres in Thompson, Cranberry Portage, Flin Flon, The Pas, Brandon, Virden, Carman, Winkler, Morden, Altona, Portage la Prairie, Steinbach, Beausejour, Pine Falls, Powerview, Lac du Bonnet, Oakbank, Steinbach, Roblin, Swan River, Waywayseecappo, Brokenhead. I have also attended several learning centre graduations last summer. These visits were inspiring and invigorating for me. It was an honour to meet adult learners who have shown courage and wisdom in making their decision to finish their high school education despite many challenges they are facing. It was gratifying to meet centre directors and instructors where I have seen and felt the care and concern they have for adult learners and for the centres they so passionately put time, effort and love in the work that they do. I thank them all for the wonderful contribution they make to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in 2014, more than 1,300 adult students graduated with a high school diploma from adult learning centres. Last year our funding for adult learning and literacy centres was more than \$21 million higher than in 1999. That means more Manitobans are getting the skills they need to get a good job and raise a family.

Government should open doors for people, not close them. The Leader of the Opposition's plan to cut \$550 million from the provincial budget would mean closing some of those vital literacy and

learning centres that serve Manitobans, especially those marginalized ones. When the Leader of the Opposition was a senior minister in the '90s, his government didn't ensure that training money was spent on students. In 1998, the Auditor General released a damning report that found that the Conservatives had completely mismanaged adult learning in Manitoba. They didn't have policies in place to make sure provincial funding was actually spent on adult learning. In 2002, our government brought in important legislation to restore public confidence in the adult learning centre system. The adult learners act imposes strict conditions and controls over adult learning based on program rather than on per student basis.

Adult literacy refers to the skill base that enables people to 'particikate'—participate and adapt to change in the workplace, the home and community life, and it provides the foundation for further learning. Higher literacy skills lead to reduced poverty and improved health and well-being of individuals, families and communities and give individuals the ability to take full advantage of current and future employment opportunities. Graduates of learning centres have greater success in seeing increased earning power and enhanced personal empowerment.

When the adult learning structure was formalized in 2003, several jurisdictions looked to our model and have subsequently adapted it for their adult learning programs. We imposed important conditions and controls over adult learning centres with special attention to finances, teacher credentials and program quality as well as legislating a program-based funding model. I'm pleased that for 2014-2015 my department is funding 34 adult literacy programs and 42 adult learning centres where students are not charged a tuition fee to enrol.

Mr. Speaker, another Manitoba pride is the diversity of our population. People from all over the world recognize that Manitoba is a great place to live. Newcomers to Manitoba have a chance to build a life with a good job. Our government's focus on steadily growing immigration has had significant and positive results for our province's economy and communities. Since 1999, over 140,000 new immigrants have settled in Manitoba. Over 30,000 of those newcomers have immigrated to rural Manitoba, contributing to the economic development of over 130 communities. Nearly 30,000 immigrants came to Manitoba over the last two years, in the year 2012,

so one of the highest levels of immigration recorded since 1946. Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program is a national leader, accounting for 70 per cent of all immigration to Manitoba.

In last week's Throne Speech, it acknowledges the need to build more personal-care homes and to provide culturally appropriate care for seniors and special supports for those suffering from dementia.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, there are over 220 registered ethnocultural organizations. In the year ahead, I'm very excited that our government will host consultations with these groups to strengthen community engagement and open paths to good jobs.

Manitoba's economy is steady and growing and we want to keep up that momentum. To do that requires not only commitment to growing our workforce but also strategic investment in our infrastructure. We will continue to promote new and emerging industries, improve key trade routes and introduce new initiatives to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start their business right here in Manitoba. Our government is continuing to put additional PST revenue to good use for better roads and flood protection.

We are taking new steps in the year ahead to protect and improve the front-line services that matter most to families. That includes helping families get the right care they need more quickly, building on our best-in-Canada home-care system and launching new programs to help Manitobans battling cancer. Unlike previous governments, who fired front-line service delivery staff, we're committed to improving the services Manitobans count on.

We believe in making smart investments now to save money down the road. So we are making the pilot Emergency Paramedics in the Community program permanent to help more patients avoid unnecessary emergency room trips. That's also why we're moving forward with plans to build 1,000 more social and affordable housing units because affordable, good quality housing provides the stability people need—

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

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable minister will have 17 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

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