

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 20, 2012

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Speaker's Statement

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon, colleagues. I have a statement for the House.

I must inform the House that Hugh McFadyen, the honourable leader–member for Fort Whyte, has resigned his seat in the House effective July 30th, 2012.

I am therefore tabling his resignation and my letter to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council advising of the vacancy created in the House membership.

Introduction of New Members

Mr. Speaker: Also, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter indicating the election of Mr. Brian Pallister as the member for the constituency of Fort Whyte.

I hereby table the notice of the return of the member elected.

On behalf of the honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and to wish you well in your parliamentary career.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Brian Pallister, member for the constituency of Fort Whyte, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Vita & District Health Centre

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for La Verendrye.

Mr. Smook: Yes, I forgot to read the first three names. My apologies.

Mr. Speaker: Did you wish to have the petition returned to you for a moment?

An Honourable Member: Please.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for La Verendrye.

Mr. Smook: The petition is signed by the following people: P. Spraggs, T. Kirkpatrick, L. Rempel and many more fine Manitobans.

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

Coulter Bridge—PR 251

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) The flood of 2011 caused the Coulter bridge on Provincial Road 251 west of Waskada to collapse.

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

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

Number 4: Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation to date has not provided any financial support for requests to develop an engineering plan for the local bypass in the Coulter bridge vicinity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by G.E. Miller, H. Walker, D. Vanbeselaere and many, many others.

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And the reasons for the petition are as follows:

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

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to the local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and the

potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

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

* (13:40)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by D. Ducharme, S. Ducharme, D. Milligan and hundreds of other fine Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Fourth Report

Mr. Larry Maguire (Chairperson): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I move, seconded by the honourable member—present the report first.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- September 22, 2010 (4th Session, 39th Legislature)
- November 3, 2010 (4th Session, 39th Legislature)
- April 25, 2012 (1st Session, 40th Legislature)
- August 23, 2012 (1st Session, 40th Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations – November 2009
 - Chapter 4 – Members' Allowances

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated January 2012*
 - *Section 15 – Members' Allowances Program*
- *Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature dated January 2012*
 - *Chapter 2 – Appointment Process to Agencies, Boards and Commissions*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the September 22, 2010 meeting:

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Ms. SELBY*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Committee Membership for the November 3, 2010 meeting:

- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mrs. DRIEDGER*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. HAWRANIK*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Ms. SELBY*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Committee Membership for the April 25, 2012 meeting:

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*

- *Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS*
- *Mr. WIEBE*

Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on April 25, 2012:

- *MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) for Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. WIEBE for Mr. WHITEHEAD*

Committee Membership for the August 23, 2012 meeting:

- *Mr. ALLUM*
- *Ms. BRAUN*
- *Ms. CROTHERS*
- *Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. GERRARD*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. PEDERSEN*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)*
- *Mr. WHITEHEAD*

Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on August 23, 2012:

- *Ms. CROTHERS for Mr. JHA*
- *Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park) for Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS*

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials speaking on record at the September 22, 2010 meeting:

- *Ms. Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Ms. OSWALD*
- *Mr. Milton Sussman, Deputy Minister of Health*

Officials speaking on record at the November 3, 2010 meeting:

- *Ms. Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Mr. Harvey Bostrom, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs*
- *Mr. Fred Meier, Deputy Minister of Conservation*
- *Ms. Linda McFadyen, Deputy Minister of Local Government*

Officials speaking on record at the April 25, 2012 meeting:

- *Ms. Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Ms. OSWALD*

- *Mr. Milton Sussman, Deputy Minister of Health*
Officials speaking on record at the August 23, 2012 meeting:
- *Ms. Carol Bellringer, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Ms. Joy Cramer, Deputy Minister of Housing and Community Development*

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of the following chapters of the Auditor General's Report – Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations – November 2009:

- *Chapter 1 – Meeting Manitoba's Obligations Under the 1997 Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement at the November 3, 2010 meeting;*
- *Chapter 2 – Personal Care Homes Program at the April 25, 2012 meeting;*
- *Chapter 3 – Assessment Services Branch at the November 3, 2010 meeting;*
- *Chapter 4 – Members' Allowances at the August 23, 2012 meeting.*

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 15 – Members' Allowances Program of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated January 2012 at the August 23, 2012 meeting.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Chapter 2 – Appointment Process to Agencies, Boards and Commissions of the Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature dated January 2012 at the August 23, 2012 meeting.

Report Considered and Adopted:

Your Committee has considered the following report and has adopted the same as presented:

- *Auditor General's Report – Report to the Legislative Assembly – Audits of Government Operations – November 2009*

Reports Considered but not Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated*

January 2012 (Section 15 – concluded consideration of)

- *Auditor General's Report – Annual Report to the Legislature dated January 2012 (Chapter 2 – concluded consideration of)*

Mr. Maguire: So, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that the report be of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the Manitoba Human Rights Commission annual report for 2011.

Mr. Speaker: And I have a report for the House. In compliance with section 4 of the Members' Salaries, Allowances and Retirement Plans Disclosure Regulation, I am pleased to table the reports of amounts claimed and paid for members for the 2011-2012 fiscal year.

Ministerial statements? Seeing none—

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have six individuals who are serving on the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 2012-2013 year, and they are seated in the Speaker's Gallery.

In accordance with the established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months, and they will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members. These interns commenced their assignments in September and will complete them in June.

They are, working with the government caucus, Ms. Rebecca Bock-Freeman of the University of Winnipeg, Ms. Marina Goodwin of the University of Winnipeg, and Ms. Svitlana Maluzynsky of the University of Manitoba. Also, working with the caucus of the official opposition, we have Ms. Cassandra Baker of the University of Manitoba, Mr. David Safruk of the University of Manitoba, and Mr. Michel Trudel of the Université de Saint-Boniface.

Professor Jean Friesen looks after the academic portion of the internship, and the administration of

the program is carried out by our Clerk, Ms. Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the Internship Administration Committee are the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) and the member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program, and hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly. Welcome to all of you.

Also, I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today 18 members from Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Mr. Swan). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

Also seated in the public gallery, from Steinbach Christian High School, we have 38 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Curt Plett. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also seated in the public gallery we have, from Springs Christian Academy, 53 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), the honourable First Minister. On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Basic Personal Tax Exemption Request for Increase

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see you again in that Chair and to say a special thank-you to all members of this House for the kindness of their welcome here today, which I, of course, naively hope continues.

Yesterday's NDP Throne Speech revealed a government that is tired and unfocused. What was missing from the usual self-congratulations and excuse making was any recognition of the very real damage being done by this government's high tax policies.

And to make matters worse, this year's NDP tax whack is hitting low- and middle-income families particularly hard. Manitoba now leads the country in food bank use, and our numbers of working poor are ballooning. Gas and house insurance and life insurance are not luxury items; they are essentials, and thanks to high NDP taxes, seniors, low-income families and students are paying a higher percentage of income for these essential items than ever before.

I'll ask the Premier today to take his boot off the back of the poor in Manitoba. Will he increase the basic personal exemption?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I do want to welcome the new member for Fort Whyte to the Legislature. It's good to see him back. We look forward to a constructive dialogue as we go forward.

And I would say, with respect to the personal exemption, the reality is that when he was last in office and thought things were great, the personal exemption was \$7,231. We have increased that by 26 per cent to \$9,134. That is—but in addition to that, not only have we increased the personal exemption, we have increased the spousal exemption as well.

Under the member opposite, when he was last here, it was \$6,140; it is now also exactly the same as the personal exemption, \$9,134, an increase of 49 per cent. We've also increased the eligible dependant amount in terms of an exemption, and we've similarly increased it by 49 per cent.

So when it comes to exemptions, we've made dramatic progress on that, certainly more than anything the member opposite accomplished during his time in the Legislature.

Mr. Pallister: While the Premier's backslapping, we've moved from middle of the pack on taxes in '99 to the highest taxed province in Canada, nothing to be proud of. The taxman pounds hardest here.

But what's creating even greater hardship is that the NDP taxman comes earlier here than in any other province west of New Brunswick, and that leaves struggling families with less to spend. It hurts Manitobans, and it's hurting the Manitoba economy as well.

An immediate increase of Manitoba's tax-free amount of the national average would put \$400 per year in each two-income Manitoba household. Now, I know that the Premier's used to dealing in millions and billions; I understand that. But to a struggling

Manitoba household, \$400 is a lot of money. It makes a difference. It can make a difference.

So I'm asking the Premier again: Will the Premier commit to increasing the basic personal exemption to the Canadian average?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question. He can see that in terms of personal exemptions, dependant's exemptions and spousal exemptions, the increases have been somewhere between 26 and 49 per cent, certainly far superior to anything he offered when he was in office.

Another major change we've made, Mr. Speaker, was the National Child Benefit. The National Child Benefit is now available to all families in Manitoba. Members opposite used to claw that back from families. That has been a \$48-million increase to low-income families in Manitoba. As a result, lone parents or single parents in Manitoba, 27 per cent of them—less of them live in poverty.

The members opposite had a mean-spirited approach to that; they would only make it available to certain individuals in Manitoba. We make it available to everybody in Manitoba.

And if the member really supports more support for low-income families, he will endorse the approach we've taken with the National Child Benefit.

* (13:50)

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans wouldn't trust a taxi driver that spends half his time looking in the rear-view mirror, and that Premier spends way too much time looking backward and not anticipating what he could do to help Manitobans in the future.

Now, \$400 is the difference between piano lessons or hockey or not for a Manitoba family. Four hundred dollars matters. It's a loan repayment for a recent graduate. It's a bill payment for a single mother. It's a grandparent's ticket to visit their grandkids once a year.

A Saskatchewan working couple can earn \$12,000 a year more tax-free than a couple in our province, and that is wrong. When I visited Manitoba—western Manitoba a few weeks ago, some local seniors asked me what my position was on moving the border with Saskatchewan 60 miles to the east. They said they were tired of saying goodbye to local young people.

Will the Premier understand that he can do the right thing for Manitobans and commit today to increasing the basal—basic personal exemption to the national average?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear quite a bit has changed since the member was last here.

Another example, the education property tax credit: Members opposite, including the new Leader of the Opposition, actually reduced the education property tax credit from \$325 to \$250. We've increased it to \$700, and for seniors we increased it to \$1,080. Members opposite have voted against every one of those tax exemptions, every one of those property tax credits and every improvement in the National Child Benefit.

Last year we increased the personal exemption again, and we made a commitment to increase the personal exemption by \$250, not only for the personal exemption, not only for the spousal exemption and not only for the dependants' exemption. We said we would do that over the next four budgets. We followed through on it in the last two budgets. We'll follow through it again.

And if the member's really interested in going forward, I look forward to him supporting that in the next budget.

Balanced Budget Government Pledge

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier who made a promise. He made a promise to Manitobans that he would balance the books of this fine province by 2014. It's a commitment that he made in the recent year. His Finance Minister restated it in the recent year, and yet yesterday in the media the Premier said something quite different: He is no longer committed to balancing the budget by 2014.

Will the Premier just acknowledge today, admit for this House, that he is breaking a promise that he made to Manitobans, that he made to every Manitoban, that the books would be balanced by 2014? He's breaking that promise, and we have no reason to believe he'll keep any other promise in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member for Steinbach because he will know that all governments in Canada, federal and provincial governments across the country, are

dealing with the global uncertainty out there, and the reality is—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the First Minister in response to the question posed by the member for Steinbach. I'm asking for the co-operation of all members of the House. Please allow the opportunity for the First Minister to complete his response. I'm sure if there was a breach of the rules you'd want me to rule on that, so I'm asking for your co-operation.

Mr. Selinger: We have always said that we will continue to shrink the gap between deficits—expenditures and revenues. We will do that while protecting those services, those front-line services that matter to Manitobans. We've said we'll continue to invest in things that grow the economy in Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen across the country, for example, last week we saw the federal government acknowledge that they will have a \$7-billion increase to their deficit this year, bringing it to a total of \$26 billion. We've seen other provinces that have also experienced challenges going forward. Economic forecasts are saying, with the global economic uncertainty, there will be a reduction in economic growth.

We have a priority to continue to grow the Manitoba economy, which has done better than the Canadian average over the last five years, to grow our labour force and ensure that young people have greater opportunity to have jobs in Manitoba while we shrink our deficit and protect front-line services. That's our commitment and we'll follow through on that.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't his commitment. His commitment to the people of Manitoba was that the books would be balanced by 2014. Sir, that was your commitment.

In fact, he's got no excuses. There's been record transfer increases from Ottawa and from other jurisdictions that we've benefited by. He increased taxes, breaking another promise, by the highest amount in the last 25 years in the spring.

Mr. Speaker, all of this leads to is a conclusion: Either this Premier and this government is unable to manage the finances properly or they're unable to keep their word. All I'm trying to do is figure out which one it is.

Maybe the Premier can help me. Can you not manage your finances, or are you unable to keep your word to Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate the question from the member. The short answer is neither, Mr. Speaker. The reality is we have managed our expenditure at a record level of reduction.

But unlike the members opposite—unlike the members opposite—that cut key programs from Manitobans, including nurses, including doctors, including teachers and including infrastructure spending, all of which made us a poorer province, a province where there were more gaps between the rich and the poor, a province where less people participated in the labour market and a province where less young people had opportunity, we've said that those things are important. And we said those things are important while we continue to manage expenditure and grow the economy.

I'm pleased to say that we've added between 25 and 29 thousand new employment opportunities in this province since the '08-09 recession. That is an indicator of robust economic circumstances in Manitoba. At the same time, we know we're dealing with global economic uncertainty. We will deal with—for that in a responsible way, unlike the members opposite—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know and Manitobans remember that this Premier made a promise to them, and the problem that we have today is that this Premier and this government can't manage finances. They can't manage finances in good times, and they can't manage finances in bad times. But at least they're consistent; they're always consistently bad.

And yet this is a Premier who said within the last year that not only was the government on target to meet that promise, but they were actually ahead of schedule to meet that promise.

All I want to know is: Will this Premier admit to the Manitobans—to the Manitobans that he made that promise to—that he's not the kind of Premier who can be believed anymore?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member will know this: The member will know that we will continue to ensure that those essential services that Manitobans need will be there when they need them, whether it's cancer care, whether it's an opportunity to get

training for a job, whether it's an opportunity to get an education as an apprentice, whether it's the ability to ensure Manitoba stays affordable by the proper use of our Crown corporations and the way we invest in those Crown corporations and the way they invest in Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know that this government balanced the budget 10 times, unlike the members opposite. The members opposite will know that the only way they balanced the budget was by selling off the telephone system, and they took telephone rates from being among the lowest in Canada to being among the highest in Canada. That is something they said they would not do.

They privatized the telephone system to balance the budget. We won't do that, Mr. Speaker. We'll grow the Manitoba economy.

Balanced Budget Government Pledge

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Well, if the Premier was so unhappy about the Manitoba Telephone System, why didn't he buy it back if he felt so strongly about it?

Mr. Speaker, in the election one short year ago, this NDP government promised no new taxes. Then they turned around and they broke that promise and they whacked Manitobans with the highest tax grab in 25 years. Now they are breaking a second election promise.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell Manitobans: Why is he breaking his promise to balance the budget by 2014?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, in the election one short year ago, this group of people across the way had two positions on coming back into balance.

One was very clear—one was very clear—and this might be helpful for the new Leader of the Opposition who maybe wasn't here and hasn't been updated by his friends across the way—that they had a position and a resolution right here in this House that would have done deep, deep cuts to services that matter most to Manitoba families. They matter to Manitoba families, and they were going to cut them. And it's in Hansard; it's on record here.

* (14:00)

On the night before the election, Mr. Speaker, at literally the 11th hour, these consistent people across the way, who are concerned about the fiscal situation of the Manitoba economy, come up with the idea that they should come into balance in 2018.

Are they going to now have a third position? How can we believe what they say on fiscal responsibility in this province?

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

Mrs. Driedger: This Minister of Finance is absolutely flailing; he's all over the map on this issue.

Many times over this past year this Minister of Finance repeated that he would balance the budget. Yesterday he sang from a different song sheet.

So can the Minister of Finance tell Manitobans: Was he misleading Manitobans over the past year, or did he always plan to break that promise?

Mr. Struthers: You know, I don't always agree with the current Prime Minister in this country, but Mr. Prime—but, Mr. Speaker, he's correct in saying—he's very correct in saying that the times that we lived in right now, economically, are very uncertain. In his words, uneconomic uncertainty is the new norm.

And I would ask members opposite to pay a little bit better attention to what the reality is out there for people, both the people live in Manitoba and people in Manitoba that are—that will be negatively impacted by these uncertain economic times. Members opposite merely need to tune in to the news in the evening to find out what's going on in Europe, to find out what's going on in the US, and to find out what that impact is on Manitoba here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that. We're going to move forward in protecting health services and education services. We're going to move forward in protecting kids who need—

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

The honourable member for Charleswood, on the final supplementary.

Mrs. Driedger: What is clear, Mr. Speaker, is this NDP government broke their promise to not raise taxes. Now, after misleading the public for the last year, they are saying that they are going to break

another promise and they're not going to now balance their budget by 2014.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell us: Why should anybody believe or trust anything he says, or his Premier (Mr. Selinger) says, from now on? They obviously don't know how to keep their word.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we said very clearly that we were going to make good, prudent fiscal decisions in order to protect those services that matter most to Manitobans, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite uses and throws around the term credibility. Well, when you look at the—when you look at that member and her party's history on this, both in '91 and '93, fuel tax increases of 2 and a half cents on the fuel tax and expanding the provincial sales tax at that time—the member from—former member from Portage la Prairie would remember that—expanding it onto such things as school supplies and baby supplies, hygiene products, safety clothing. The credibility loss on the other side on this issue is substantial.

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

Balanced Budget Pledge Government Record

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Hard-working Manitoba families don't have wiggle room in their budgets. These families must pay their bills on time or suffer the consequences.

This NDP government promised Manitoba families that they would do the same as recently as September 2nd, 2012, where they said, and I quote: The five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014. End quote.

Why did this NDP government break that promise?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, those same hard-working Manitoba families that the member opposite just referred to live in a province that is the most affordable province to live in in this country.

Mr. Speaker, if members opposite don't believe that, I would direct them to the Saskatchewan budget—the Saskatchewan budget—that consistently puts the province of Manitoba at the top of the list when it comes to affordability.

This isn't just a debate over taxes. This is a debate for how this resonates with Manitobans and how—what it means for Manitoba families. And we need to look at the affordability. You should have voted with us last year when we brought forward a bill that enshrined in legislation the lowest, Mr. Speaker, costs when it comes to those things that matter to Manitobans.

We live in a very affordable province. We're going to protect that.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Manitoba has the highest use of food banks in Canada. The minister should reflect on that.

Yesterday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, and I quote: We're giving ourselves more wiggle room to deal with reality, absolutely. Yet every day Manitobans have to pay their bills on time or face penalties. Being fiscally responsible is the only wiggle room Manitobans have in their reality; otherwise, their households will fail. The same should be true for this NDP government.

Why did this NDP government break their promise to be fiscally responsible?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that this member now maybe has fallen on the side of the first Tory position, which was to cut deeply into those services that Manitobans consider the most important. The member opposite can feign support for those Manitoba families, but, you know, we've come through for those Manitoba families time and time again.

We have adopted a very progressive approach to the basic personal amount, as the Premier has pointed out correctly just a few moments ago. We've increased that by 26 per cent, from \$7,231 up to \$9,134. That is a benefit to Manitoba families. That is something we have put in place. We have done that two years ago. We did it last year. We're going to do it again next year as we have said we would.

The real question is do they—

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

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, why would we support a budget that has given us the highest use of food banks in the country? The minister should reflect on his legacy: the highest use of food banks, bar none, in the country.

This NDP government knew that they would never actually balance the budget. They knew it when they presented it. Manitoba families must keep their own budgets in order, absolutely. They do not have wiggle room.

Why do Manitoba families have to live by that standard, and yet the NDP won't? Why, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, this is the same group of people who sliced children out of the benefit of the national tax credit. This is the same group that voted against the budget that put in place an increase to the basic personal amount. Those are real benefits for people, and you voted against that.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I hear members opposite here in the House, I really do question their credibility on this, and I do question the approach that they would take that would really cut back on the kind of benefits that they purport to support here in the Legislature.

Taxation Possible Increases

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it's hard to believe the credibility from someone who breaks their promise on a regular basis time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, last year the NDP ran a record deficit, and this year the Premier (Mr. Selinger) says he's going to miss the deficit mark again. It's clear the NDP doesn't know how to budget.

On CBC yesterday, the Minister of Finance was quoted as saying: We avoid a higher deficit by making sure our revenue numbers are higher. Under the NDP, high revenue is a code for higher taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Does he mean—does this mean the NDP is going to raise taxes on the backs of the hard-working Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I wonder why, then, Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the member—the new Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) so deftly dodged around the question about whether he would implement a harmonized sales tax or not.

* (14:10)

You know, on the one hand, the members opposite come into this House, they feign support for Manitoba families, and at the same time—at the same

time, Mr. Speaker—the new Leader of the Official Opposition would not answer a very straightforward question about whether or not he would put in place the HST. That would cost Manitoba families money. That would cost the province money. That was just irresponsible and not well thought out by the member across the way.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that he's missed the mark again on his answers. He doesn't answer the questions, and he—same as he misses his mark on the deficits.

The Minister of Finance likes to preach about responsible spending, but he hasn't done that. He can't meet their own budget targets but blames everyone else for his own failings. When this minister speaks of raising revenue, that can only mean higher taxes.

Mr. Speaker, how can we trust this minister when he says he isn't going to raise taxes?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've—I think we've done a pretty good job of reminding the members opposite, including the member who just asked this question, of all the tax increases that they have—that they put in place, all of the tax increases that they've supported since they were in government, and it's just not correct for members opposite to try to say that we haven't approached expenditure management on this side of the House.

If they were paying attention when I released the first-quarter numbers, they would have seen that we are taking a very substantial measures to make sure that we make smart spending decisions—smart spending decisions—that streamline government, that streamline the services that we are committed to doing here in this province, Mr. Speaker, and all the while making sure that the savings that we make are then translated to the front line of services.

I'll point to the amalgamation of health—regional health authorities in this province. When members opposite were in government, there was 13, I believe. Now, Mr. Speaker, we've reduced that to five, and that money that we've—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister is flailing away like a flag in the wind.

The NDP promised a balanced budget by 2014. They promised not to raise taxes. They promised a fair compensation for the 2011 flood victims in a

reasonable time frame, not 2013. None of this has happened.

Instead of responsible spending, the NDP wastes at least \$1 billion on a west-side transmission route. Manitobans also get longer wait times in emergency rooms, record levels of food bank usage and high levels of violent crime. This waste and mismanagement is paid for by new, hidden taxes on Manitobans' working class.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is going to raise taxes to pay for their wasteful spending and the deficits. Why won't the Minister of Finance simply admit this to the Manitobans today?

Mr. Struthers: I think it's quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, that this member would stand in this House, go through a litany of spending requests from our government, go through a list of excuses, and then stand in this House and support a motion that would have ripped out of the provincial budget in excess of \$500 million, that would have cut deeply into services, that would have cut deeply into the very things that that member just put on the table.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that members opposite try to be consistent. I would ask that members opposite would try to do some homework before they stand and complain in this House, and I would suggest that Manitobans appreciate the fact that they have a government that will—that will—protect health-care services, education, protection for kids.

And despite the economic uncertainty that we see in the world, we'll continue to—

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

Speedway International Safety Regulations and Inspections

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the fire and explosions at Speedway International in the heart of Winnipeg in early October, a Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act request has revealed that there had not been a fire safety inspection conducted at this site since August 2001, and government authorities were not aware of the type or the quantity of flammable, hazardous materials at this site. However, Manitoba does require companies to register these products with the Province and be subject to inspections.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister responsible tell Manitobans why they took credit for setting up

this business in the first place, before the explosion, but can't find any record of it when it blew up?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): The Office of the Fire Commissioner, of course, has been involved in the investigation of this fire, has been involved, and, of course, I think, as members know, it has been ruled accidental, caused by spontaneous combustion.

It's also important, though, I think, for everybody to understand that fire protection services are, at heart, a municipal responsibility. The Office of the Fire Commissioner does work with municipal officials. We have asked, through their committee with municipal officials, to take a look at the regulation that requires inspections, to give us advice if those inspections should be required more frequently. They will sit down and work with municipal fire officials as well as the office of the fire commission, and we'll take their advice, and we will take that advice accordingly and make changes if they're necessary. Thank you.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is no solace to the accountability of Manitobans and their safety. The NDP government has mandated the use of biofuels in Manitoba, used this company as a backdrop for their own promotion, and yet ran away when the plant exploded.

Why was the minister so lax in implementing the rules that their government has in place? Why did they not ensure an approved fire plan—safety plan was in place when it is required by them, by the Province? And why was his government negligent with the safety of local citizens surrounding this plant and its workers?

Ms. Howard: I want to be very, very clear. The responsibility for the enforcement of the fire code rests with the municipality, rests with the municipal government. That is who is responsible for the enforcement of the fire code in the jurisdiction; they have jurisdiction. They also have responsibility for zoning.

The Office of the Fire Commissioner was involved in the investigation of this fire. We have put it to them through their committee that works with municipal officials whether we need to make changes to the regulation on inspections. We'll take the advice that they—that comes forward.

But let's be very clear. When it comes to enforcement and inspection responsibilities, those responsibilities lie with the municipalities.

Balanced Budget Government Pledge

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to welcome the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) to the Legislature and wish him well.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this session I want to hold the NDP to account for their soaring justice, child and family services and health-care costs due to their continuous failure to provide all Manitobans access—actual access—to adequate food and shelter, and even to running water.

In the fall I presented to the Frontier Centre for Public Policy potential cost savings to the NDP if they would only spend our tax dollars more humanely. The Frontier Centre called it common sense.

I ask the Premier: Why does he continue to spend so inefficiently and so ineffectively while so many Manitobans continue to suffer, with the result that he will not meet his deficit and balanced budget target for 2014?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for River Heights because it allows us again to indicate what we've done to reduce overhead expenses in the government.

First of all, there were 13 RHAs put in place by the members of the official opposition, the Conservative–Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba. We've reduced that to five.

When the Norrie Commission recommended that we reduce the number of school divisions in Manitoba when we came into office, there was 54. We have now reduced them down by over a third, Mr. Speaker.

We're taking—you will see there was a recommendation brought forward in 1997 that said municipalities should be—new municipalities should be at least in the order of a thousand residents. We are now looking at what we can do to have municipal mergers that will create greater, more 'efficiency' units out there that will allow for economic development.

We've just merged together liquor and lotteries Crown corporations and seen the result of a \$3-million savings in administration, which goes along with the projected \$10-million savings from RHAs.

Mr. Speaker, if the member from River Heights has a practical, concrete suggestion of where we can reduce spending and target our spending more efficiently—

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

Shelter Allowances Rate Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, the Premier's spending \$360 million on his All Aboard antipoverty strategy, a fact—a strategy that's been an abysmal failure, as Dr. Frankel has so eloquently illustrated.

Now, Make Poverty History in Manitoba and dozens of other organizations have called upon this government to spend a fraction of that \$360 million, a sum of \$18.5 million, on increasing the shelter rates for those on social assistance so that mothers will not have to spend their children's food budget on paying for the rent.

* (14:20)

I ask the Premier: Will the NDP invest \$18.5 million a year so that all Manitoba will have shelter and can have enough food to eat? This is the humanitarian thing to do.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question again from this member from River Heights, Mr. Speaker, because when we added \$48 million back so that Manitobans would all, no matter what—where they came from, have access to the National Child Benefit, the member opposite voted against that.

When we put over \$8 million into RentAid—what used to be called shelter benefits—so that people would have access to that, the member opposite voted against that.

When we increased the targeted benefit for persons with mental health issues an extra \$200 a month so that they could have proper, stable housing—housing first, we call it—the member opposite voted against that.

When we launched a major commitment to expanding affordable social housing in Manitoba by over 1,500 units—and we're ahead of that schedule right now on that five-year plan—and that included rent supplements and controls on the rent that people pay in those units, the member opposite voted against that.

So if the member opposite's really concerned about increasing benefits to low-income people, let him explain to the public and the members of this Legislature why he has voted against every single measure we've taken in that regard, including—

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

The honourable member for River Heights, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's on another wiggle-wiggle rant.

October 17th, Make Poverty History Manitoba and many others came to the Legislature to urge the government to raise shelter rates to help poor children in our province. The Premier, in not acting, is abdicating his social responsibility.

Today is the International Day of the Child, yet yesterday the Premier's Throne Speech put the fast-forward on express liquor sales and gave the slow boat to poor children.

If the Premier isn't convinced of the need to increase shelter rates, I ask the Premier: Will he come with me to see the long lineups at the Siloam Mission this evening or any other evening during the session and talk directly to the people who are standing out in the cold because they don't have shelter rates—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The question's been posed.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, I can see the member squirming for not answering his own—the question put to him about why he has voted against every major benefit improvement we have made in Manitoba.

Again, when we had the Throne Speech yesterday, we announced we want to expand the labour force participation in this province by 75,000 jobs over the next eight years. Those are jobs that are going to be available to all Manitobans if they have the training and the support to be apprentices, to graduate from high school, to get the training they need to enter the labour market. That is the best solution to poverty is to having people working in Manitoba, which is why we're proud to say we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, both for young people and for families.

The member should support a strategy that grows the economy, that allows people to have more jobs and allows people to have more housing at an

affordable rate. That's what we're doing, and that's why we increased the minimum wage, that's why we committed to more housing, and that's why we made the National Child Benefit available to every Manitoban, along with rent supplements and RentAid—

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

Cancer Treatment Government Initiatives

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, cancer affects far too many Manitobans, and the disease can have a devastating effect on families, on patients, on friends. Yet when members opposite were in government during the 1990s, wait times in Manitoba for radiation therapy were dangerously high.

Our government has taken a number of steps over the last number of years to affect positively cancer treatment in this province, including the creation of the western Manitoba CancerCare treatment centre in Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health advise the House on new initiatives that our government is undertaking to positively help those affected by cancer?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, it's my great privilege to rise in the House today to inform all members that we had the privilege of standing with the professionals and patients at CancerCare Manitoba this morning to announce a number of new initiatives to help improve the cancer patient journey initiative that—which we committed to just over a year ago.

We'll be adding four new cancer hubs that will assist each patient on their journey so that the only thing that they need to concern themselves with is getting well.

In addition, we've launched a new five-year strategy in consultation with patients and professionals to ensure that we're doing absolutely everything that we can to ensure that we are screening early, that diagnosis is accurate, that treatment is efficient and that, indeed, palliation can be exemplary when needed.

Mr. Speaker, we know it takes many people in Manitoba to ensure that we get this journey right, and we welcome those ideas, and we were proud to stand and announce this today.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Dale Bradley Rempel

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Well, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my sadness at the untimely passing of Dale Rempel on October 5th of 2012. Dale was only 49 years old, but had packed a lifetime of achievement into that time.

Dale was born and raised in Morris and after graduation from Morris High School he studied agriculture at the University of Manitoba, obtaining his professional agrologist designation. As a means to supporting his education he began selling crop hail insurance which was the beginning of his first business, Dale's Hail Ltd.

After graduation he leaned toward a career in insurance business instead of agriculture. The family joked about Dale's mother, Edna, saying to him: But, Dale, you have an education. At the time, she could not have predicted that Dale would become the owner of Rempel Insurance Brokers in Morris and later become the president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Manitoba and the president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada, a term he was able to complete even though he was battling brain cancer.

Not only did Dale start and operate one of the most successful businesses in Morris, he gave back to his community in so many ways in sports and volunteer organizations. He was president of the Morris Community Development Corporation and a director of the Valley Agricultural Society and the Manitoba Stampede. Dale contributed to the Morris Chamber of Commerce, the Ag Expo Committee, Morris Wellness Centre, Southern Manitoba Convention Centre, Morris-Riverview Golf and Country Club, Café 75 and, more broadly, the Children's Wish Foundation, CNIBC and CancerCare Manitoba.

Proudly, Dale opened a brand new insurance office in Morris in 2010, and I was honoured to be part of that grand opening, Mr. Speaker.

Dale also spent many hours coaching minor baseball and hockey, and was instrumental in bringing the Pembina Valley Twisters junior hockey club to Morris and continued to serve as president until his passing. In fact, his friends say there would never have been a junior hockey club in Morris if it had not been for Dale Rempel.

Dale was nominated and chosen to receive the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal given to those who have demonstrated dedicated service to their peers, the community and to Canada. Dale was a most worthy recipient, and I was honoured to be able to present this medal to him one week before he passed away.

Dale was a friend and supporter. On a few occasions we were golf partners and, in fact, I was able to golf with Dale just this last August. At the time, he was back on treatment and things were not going all that well, but it certainly hadn't affected his golf game, Mr. Speaker. Many times we saw each other at the stampede and Dale was always involved; other times it was the IBAM banquets here in Winnipeg.

Dale leaves to mourn his wife of 25 years, Lynn, his lifelong partner and soul mate, as well as his son, Brent, and wife, Rebecca, who are expecting a child in May of 2013, and also a daughter, Leanne. A celebration of life was held on October 12th at the Southern Manitoba Convention Centre, was packed to capacity with friends and well-wishers not just from Morris and from this province, but across the country.

He will be hugely missed not only by his family, but by many others. He made friends wherever he went and whatever he did.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*(14:30)

Errol Black

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Errol Black, a principled politician, outstanding trade unionist and advocate for social justice. Errol passed away this month after a lengthy battle with ALS.

Errol grew up in the east end of Brandon and was always a fixture in the neighbourhood, particularly at the East End Community Centre where he played as a child and where he was a community steward as an adult. Errol spent his career supporting the rights of workers. During 30 years at Brandon University, he was respected across Canada as a labour economist and wrote about everything from the trade union movement to the minimum wage to gender parity in Manitoba politics, to name just a few. He was also an active member of both the university's faculty association and the Brandon and District Labour Council.

Errol's passion for improving the lives of people in Brandon and beyond showed in his lifelong political activism. He was a founding member of the Manitoba office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an institution that conducts collaborative social and economic research. An NDP supporter and candidate, he signed me as a party member when I was a teenager and taught me the values of independent thought, integrity, principle and speaking truth to power.

I was privileged to sit for a time with Errol on Brandon City Council where he advocated on behalf of his constituents in Riverview ward for 12 years, always with a view towards making the entire community a better place to live. His work was instrumental in the creation of the Brandon General Museum and Archives, the continued construction of the eastern access route and the development of the Assiniboine Community College campus on Brandon's North Hill. His initiative to ban public smoking in Brandon ultimately resulted in provincial legislation that made Manitoba an anti-smoking leader in Canada.

Errol was not only unflagging in his commitment to the less powerful, throughout his life he was also an inspiration, mentor and friend to all. To me, he was all of these and more. He was like my father and I loved him dearly.

Mr. Speaker, it is a rare person who works so tirelessly their whole life to build a better world. I ask all members to join me in remembering Errol Black and in offering condolences to his wife Margaret, his sons Sean, Dennis and Thomas, and the entire Black family. We will not see a man like Errol Black again.

Thank you.

Interlake Riding Club 50th Anniversary

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): This past summer the Interlake Riding Club celebrated its 50th year anniversary, and I was proud to be part of the festivities to mark this momentous occasion in Teulon's Green Acres Park.

In 1962, a group of individuals envisioned a form of inclusive, family friendly riding club for the enjoyment for the entire community. The club was dedicated to providing fellowship through horses, a variety of horse activities, educational opportunities for its members. Fifty years later, this vision is still being carried out with the people of all ages—skill levels participating in those clubs.

This week—the weekend held on July 6 and 7 included rodeo activities such as team roping and barrel racing as well as unveiling a new sign that commemorates the 50th year anniversary of the Interlake Riding Club.

There was no shortage of community members that came out to support the riding club as past participants who shared their fond memories of the club.

The 50th anniversary of the Interlake Riding Club is a marker of the thriving equestrian community all across this great province. The pastime is facilitated in countless clubs, racing, show jumping events that Manitoba's—enjoy taking part in.

I would like to take this moment to publicly congratulate the Interlake Riding Club for its long dedication towards equestrian activities, helping foster the passion for those horse riding among generations of Manitobans. I wish them continued success for the next 50 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northern Manitoba Educational Facilities

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce to the House that new training facilities have opened in northern Manitoba. Some of the great facilities in the Flin Flon constituency include the Northern Manitoba Mining Academy, a new University College of the North Regional Centre and Northern Manitoba Mining Academy. The Nelson House Atoskiwin Training and Employment Centre and Northern Technical Centre. These facilities give northern Manitoba the chance to learn hands-on skills which contribute positively to our communities and province in training northerners for jobs in the north.

September marked the official opening of the Northern Technical Centre in Cranberry Portage. I had the pleasure of attending and getting to meet some of the 200 community members, students and political dignitaries who were present to support the facility's opening.

This cutting-edge centre was architecturally converted from a retired aircraft hangar. Through this centre, students have the opportunity to take a variety of courses that address some of the northern labour shortages. Courses are offered in building construction, cosmetology and commercial cooking. The facility will also be introducing programs in power mechanics.

Last year, the students produced an 800-square-foot, ready-to-move house. They then sold the home to a community member, bringing money back to the school and providing housing for residents. Being able to see the work that the students created within the community brings great pride to them, to the school and to the province.

The students attending this facility came from 21 different northern communities. When the students complete their training, these communities will benefit from the enhanced technical skills that they bring home with them once they've returned.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in these educational facilities and the work being done, the hard-working students who participate and the goodwill this will do for all of the north. I know the members of this House will join me in 'congratulating' all those involved in our training centres. I'm excited for the great opportunities they will create for the youth of Manitoba's north.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Carson Burr

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Charles Alexander Eastman once said, children must—sorry—children must early learn the beauty of generosity. They are taught to give what they prize most, that they may taste the happiness of giving.

As the MLA for Riding Mountain, I would like to take a few moments—minutes to share with you today about a very young man who is a philanthropist within my constituency, Carson Burr. Carson was born with transposition of the great arteries, which is fatal if not treated with the few hours of birth.

Thankfully, the staff at Children's Hospital, at Health Sciences Centre, was able to operate within eight hours of his birth and perform an arterial switch operation.

Since then, Carson has had four more surgeries and is now a happy and healthy 7-year-old, 2nd grade student in Rapid City. Hockey, soccer, skateboarding, tap dancing—these are all activities that keep him busy outside of school. He continues to be monitored at the Health Sciences Centre and receives early checkups on a—I'm sorry—yearly checkups, and has not had any further health complications.

Every year since his birth, Carson's parents have participated in the Caring for Kids Radiothon. Like other parents, they shared their story on radio about Carson and how the staff at the Children's Hospital have helped. For a few years the radiothon jointly held in Brandon and Winnipeg, but now Winnipeg hosts the event yearly.

When Carson was two, his family made a collection jar to collect money from friends, family and co-workers. In the last five years, the Burr family have raised over \$5,200 for the Children's Hospital. This year, Carson was able to see where the money he has raised is going and how it is helping children like himself. Carson is setting a wonderful example for other children, showing that the efforts of one person can make a huge difference, not only to his community, to his family, but to very, very—tons of Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

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

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

Is there agreement? Leave? [*Agreed*]

* (14:40)

**THRONE SPEECH
(First Day of Debate)**

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for his gracious speech addressed to us at this Second Session of the 40th Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudreau: I thank you for the opportunity to rise today to speak on—about the Throne Speech.

I would like to start by thanking my constituents in St. Norbert again for allowing me to have the privilege and honour of representing them here today.

This past year and a half we have seen record flood waters on the Assiniboine watershed followed by droughts and wildfires that saw people lose their homes. It's obvious that global warming has an impact on Manitobans. We were hit hard by the images of those wildfires racing across Manitoba, and I know through the conversations that went on in the caucus room that all our thoughts and prayers were with those people. Certainly, my thoughts were with all the Manitobans who had been hit so hard by the forces of nature.

The Province of Manitoba was there for the people fighting the fires. Every brave man and woman on the front lines has my deepest respect for putting their lives on the line throughout the province fighting those forest fires and wildfires this past summer. I'm sure the new water bomber that we invested in last year was crucial in fighting the wildfires. This is just one example of how people that live in Manitoba know that they can count on our government and that we are here for them and we are committed to front-line services that Manitobans have come to know and respect.

After this past year, all of the natural disasters that Manitoba has faced, I know that we've right-made the right decision by not cutting front-line services. Cutting front-line services would have impacted all those Manitobans that faced the floods and the wildfires.

People that need health care, people that are sick, we've chosen a different route, a different path, a path that's about people and families. As you've heard in the Throne Speech, we're moving forward with projects that will help every Manitoban.

I would like to take this opportunity now to congratulate the new Leader of the Opposition on his return to the Legislature, and I look forward to a productive session and working with him and every member of the Legislature and building a better Manitoba for everyone. While we may have different views, we know we can work towards the common goal of making Manitoba a great place for people to come home to and raise families.

More people than ever are calling Manitoba home. We've grown by over 16,000 people, reaching one point—over 1.2 million people. People realize that Manitoba is a place to live, work, play and raise a family. While more people are moving to Manitoba, the Manitoba government has invested in creating over 29,000 new jobs, which is—most of them are in the private sector.

I'm honoured that the people of St. Norbert has chosen me to be their representative and I'm working hard to make sure that their voices are heard here in the Legislature. This past summer I spent many days out on the doorstep meeting wonderful people. I was at community events, picnics, coffee shops getting to know my constituents' needs. I'm out in the community listening to their needs and bringing them back to the Legislature to make St. Norbert a better place for families.

I want to thank all my volunteers that worked tirelessly with me throughout this past year knocking on doors: James; Jenny; Jude; Bob; Tony; Chris; Leah; Andrea; Owen; Jodie; my dad, Gerry; and my fiancée, Michelle—all simply amazing people. Without them, it wouldn't have been possible to reach over the 4,000 families that I spoke to this summer.

I owe my family a huge thank you for standing by me, from the late political dinners—sorry—dinners and political conversations, and coming out on the doorstep with me. I thank my fiancée again, Michelle, for supporting me and coming out to events and for understanding all the late meetings that we have with the community groups.

This past summer was very exciting for me personally in St. Norbert. After over 20 years of living in Waverley Heights I moved back into the

heart of St. Norbert less than one kilometre from my constituency office, just a few streets away from where my dad lived when I was young. I love Winnipeg and I've been here my whole life. Most of my life has been spent in my riding.

Manitoba is a great place to raise a family and do business because we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Things were not always as good as they are now. I personally faced many challenges in the 1990s trying to find work during the Filmon era. Manitoba is a great place to live, work and raise a family, but things weren't always this way. The work—trying to find work when the PCs were elected—instead, we have a different approach. We have a balanced approach, the focus on priorities of families—that the PC government put our schools and hospitals and other services at risk, nurses were laid off, there were fewer teachers and MTS was sold off. I'm glad that we are moving forward. I want a better Manitoba for my son and other families in Manitoba. That's why I work so hard and I'm so proud of being part of a government that puts people first.

There's been so many wonderful things happening in Manitoba that have been driven by a stable, responsible and caring NDP government. In November the Free Press reported that Manitoba's economy churned out 6,600 new jobs. The article spoke about how in August 3,400 new jobs were added and all of them were full-time. In September the Free Press reported that almost \$2 billion in projects were completed this year and that up to 20 cranes dotted the skyline in Winnipeg, and there was no slowdown anywhere on the horizon. Manitoba is building and moving forward.

The upcoming summit skills will offer advice on how we meet our target of 75,000 more workers by 2020. We have seen record investments in infrastructure in our province. This summer, I joined the Premier (Mr. Selinger) at the pedestrian bridge crossing over Highway 59 to Birds Hill Park. This project shows our commitment to healthy living by connecting kilometres of pathway, and for biking and walking into Birds Hill Park.

I was recently at the convention centre expansion announcement. This project will see a—much larger conferences coming to the city of Winnipeg that will bring in revenues for business. Studies show that each convention attendee spends over \$900 on food, shopping and accommodations, boasting the local economy.

The James Richardson international airport opened last year. This beautiful state-of-the-art facility is a gateway to Manitoba and our government had a hand in making that reality. This airport will be the centrepiece for CentrePort, a project that will see Manitoba become a shipping hub, bringing more jobs and more opportunities for Manitobans. Investing in CentrePort will see efficiencies projected to save truckers and motorists over \$450 million in 25 years by reducing fuel consumption and lost time and accidents.

Right outside the Legislature on the Osborne Street Bridge, there was funded, in partnership with the province, it just re-opened and it included active transportation. And I'm proud to say that the area—the bridge in my area of the south Perimeter over Pembina Highway is going to be rehabilitated this next two years and I've seen to it that active transportation was included in that project.

Earlier this year, I was at a grand opening for the first leg of new rapid transit corridor which includes active transportation as well. This corridor was made possible with the commitment from our government and we are committed to further development on the rapid transit corridor.

The floodway that protects hundreds of thousands of Manitobans was recently doubled in size to protect us from a one-in-700-year flood, and currently the gates are undergoing a massive rehabilitation over this winter. We are moving forward in Manitoba and building for our future.

We are providing more than \$3.5 million under the Community Places grants program to support local groups in developing and maintaining recreation facilities. There are many recreation facilities and splash pads that are built around the province that provide Manitobans with fun, healthy activities. Projects like, in St. Norbert, like drainage inside the dike, the Bairdmore outdoor classroom, and community organizations like St. Norbert's Farmers' Market and St. Norbert's community club, all take advantage of last year's Community Places funding, creating a better community for everyone.

Health care is the No. 1 priority for Manitobans and this government. Manitoba has seen health care is the envy of every other province. Yesterday evening, I gave a friend from Ontario and his co-worker, who is a nurse, a tour of our beautiful Legislature building. She commented on our health—how our health-care system is so much better than Ontario's and wishes that they could model theirs

after ours. Our home care is seen as one of the best in the country. After reckless cuts to health care by the Leader of the Opposition and his friends in the 1990s, Manitobans have seen gains: 500 more doctors and over 3,100 more nurses, and lower wait times.

There has been a flurry of activity at the Health Sciences Centre in the past few years, building a new ER, diagnostic centre and a mental health unit that is being built. And this year the women's pavilion is going to be built in a new Women's Hospital.

I know that health care is certainly a priority for my family and my constituents. My father had to have his hips replaced and during the process he discovered he needed a bypass. The fact that he's here today attests to our system. I am sure that we all want the same health care for our loved ones. We have seen a net gain of 66 doctors this year in the province, bringing our total to more than 2,500 doctors. We are ensuring that we continue to train and hire more professionals like the ones who cared for my dad, and the increasing—and by increasing the number of spots in universities for—by—for medical professionals, we are also training nurse practitioners for positions that never existed before we came into government.

We have opened and will be opening more access centres to QuickCare clinics to care for Manitobans. Last year saw a state-of-the-art beautiful birthing centre in St. Vital that see—that will have—see thousands of new Manitobans born into the world every year. We have added a permanent crew of 14 paramedics, nurses, and pilots responding to emergency calls across the province with the shock air rescue society—STARS—helicopter.

Last year, or two years ago, when my mother passed away from cancer, I know first-hand that the cost of cancer drugs, very expensive. I am proud to say that we have eliminated the deductible and the province is covering the costs of necessary cancer drugs and support drugs to patients for cancer during their treatment. This will help eliminate the burden of expensive cancer drugs when people should be focused on fighting cancer. This drug initiative will save—saved Manitobans \$3.5 million last year. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this NDP government cares for Manitobans.

* (14:50)

Our government has made education a priority with tax credits for students that see up to 60 per cent

of their tuition repaid if they stay in Manitoba. We have provided universities with steady funding of 5 per cent more every year over the next three years. This is a stark contrast to the 1990s under the Leader of the Opposition, when he and his Cabinet allowed tuition to skyrocket over 170 per cent due to lack of funding.

We have increased funding for public schools 13 years in a row, this year by \$25.5 million or 2.2 per cent. This will expand successful programs and give students the attention and support they need. We will support young people entering the—by entering education and training for the jobs of tomorrow.

We have made significant process lowering class sizes by hiring 79 new teachers province-wide and bringing down 176 more classrooms to 20 students or less.

I was personally very excited about the announcement that I was out with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) in St. Norbert at Bonnycastle School, that will see a 74 child-care seat facility built in the school and also gets an eight-classroom expansion as part of the lower class size initiative. We are building for today and building for the future of St. Norbert.

Even in Bridgwater Lakes—even though Bridgwater Lakes is the Leader of the Opposition's riding, I was the only MLA that attended the consultation for the Bridgwater Lakes school that we will be building, as we heard in the Throne Speech. This important announcement will benefit families in St. Norbert because of our commitment to put child-care spaces in every new school. We are taking yet another step forward expanding high-quality, affordable child-care spaces. The Bridgwater Lakes school will see 70 more—74 more spaces in the area, benefiting both residents of Whyte Ridge and St. Norbert. This Bonnycastle and Bridgwater announcement will add 148 child-care spaces in the south end of the city. Knowing that child care is one of the top priorities for the residents of St. Norbert, I'm very proud to say that I've worked on both of those projects.

I was also recently able to deliver a cheque on behalf of the Department of Education to the Pembina Trails School Division superintendent for lower class size initiative. This is all part of our commitment to make smaller class sizes for kindergarten to grade 3.

We have invested millions in the trades and colleges and to train Manitobans; \$60 million more will be invested at Red River College through a new state-of-the-art trades facility. We have increased the apprenticeship in this province by giving generous tax credits to businesses that employ apprentices. Being a journeyman, I can't tell you how happy I am that we've seen an 800 per cent increase since the opposition was in government in the success of high school apprenticeships.

Our government's new, vital, modern thinking will see upgrades to rural high school shop classrooms to meet apprenticeship standards.

This is how a modern government is going to meet the challenges of the trade shortages of the future: head-on with a plan—not doing the same thing like always, like in the 1990s. This is going to make a difference for some students to find meaningful, good paying jobs, to help employers find skilled workers to grow our economy.

Last year, I passed Bill 212, a bill that saw a first-of-its-kind apprenticeship legislation—recognition week being declared in November. This bill is designed to raise awareness and celebrate the positive impact that apprenticeship certification makes around the province. During that week, I was honoured to attend—be a presenter of awards at the apprenticeship recognition gala dinner on November 2nd. This shows our government's commitment in attracting potential apprentices and that education matters to Manitobans.

This past year we saw a record number of families coming home to Manitoba, and I want to see record numbers coming back still. We should all be very proud of what we have to offer here: affordable housing, great education, affordable child care, clean and, of course, publicly owned hydro—things we all for often take for granted.

In our first year of our mandate, we announced that Manitoba Hydro will now cover upfront costs of home renovations to reduce energy consumption through a financing program. Hydro will—Pay As You Save Program will finance the upfront capital costs of energy and water retrofits and cover those costs through a monthly charge on the consumer's bill. This—the customer will act—the bill will actually drop in most cases, when the cost saving is projected to be greater than the monthly repayment charges. This is another Manitoba vantage, another first of its kind in Canada.

Making all of these homes efficient is also making life more affordable for Manitobans. Reducing energy consumption protects all Manitobans' futures by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I know that we're renowned around the world for hydro and clean energy. With the weather events of the past year, we all know that global warming is real and has an impact on Manitobans. Our government is taking action by investing in clean, affordable Manitoba Hydro.

While we do face problems, we—that create challenges, we don't just let them beat us. We find solutions, and we keep the province and people growing and well cared for, now and into the future.

It is great to see that our government is supporting the development of more affordable housing in our community. We are well on the way to meeting our 5-year plan of 1,500 new, affordable social housing units. This past July, I attended the opening of La Charette with Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross) in St. Norbert. In this complex is a fully accessible 31, three-storey apartment complex and has six stand-alone bungalows for a total of 37 new income—new units for low-income and people with disabilities. We are looking after Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

I know that sometimes it's hard to navigate the auto repairs and cellphone contracts, so I was very proud to see that we are a government that brought in new rules that will provide greater protection to consumers for automobile repairs and cellphone contracts. We will continue to provide protection for consumers with cutting edge legislation this session on new home construction, car sales and cable bills.

Our government has made historic investments in community policing and neighbourhood revitalization. Last year we saw a proceeds-of-crime bill introduced that hits criminals where it hurts the most: in the pocketbook. We are now using that money to build safer communities in Manitoba. For the police that means having more access to tools they need and more resources for the victim of crime.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that not only develops job opportunities, takes care of people, but also looks after the environment. I was at the announcement, with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Mackintosh), for developing a new strategy to better protect species at risk that will include new funding for population recovery projects and developing new habitat

protected by legislation. Manitobans love and value their parks and we've been making record investments to improve the parks and amenities; camping in Manitoba is a pastime.

Because of the laws that we have passed and the partnerships that we have formed the City of Winnipeg is now modernizing its south and north treatment plants with—we're the largest single source of phosphorus entering our precious Lake Winnipeg. We are committed to working with our conservation partners to protect species at risk and ensure that they will be here for generations.

Mr. Speaker, St. Norbert is a fantastic place to live, work, play and raise a family. St. Norbert is home to very—wonderful amount of people with ethnic backgrounds. It has a history back to 1821, from attractions such as St. Norbert's Art and Cultural Centre, St. Norbert Provincial Heritage Park, the Duff Roblin Provincial Park, the rich history of the monastery and, of course, the much renowned farmers' market that over 10,000 people visited every Saturday this summer to shop and enjoy local grown produce and take in musical acts.

That is why the Province has provided grant funding to the St. Norbert Farmers' Market and partners to redevelop the land and work on natural solutions to drainage; making the space more usable with soccer, football, baseball; planting grounds; stages in community for performance; and walking paths.

This wonderful area and diversity comes with its challenges and problems, and I will meet those challenges and problems head on and I will work to resolve them. For all of you that know me, I am not afraid to get involved and roll up my sleeves and work alongside of community members to improve my constituents' lives. I get out every morning before my office opens and walk the strip along Pembina just to clean up the litter.

This past summer with the heat waves that we experienced, the splash pad in St. Norbert that was funded by the Province was well used. I enjoyed seeing the family and the kids out there having fun at a splash pad that did not cost a fortune for people.

While our government is committed to building a splash pad in Waverly Heights, I am working alongside the community to get that done.

I know that—as—one of the priorities in my area is child-care spaces in education, and I've worked hard over the last year to see that we have looked after

those needs and that's why we are building the eight-classroom expansion at Bonnycastle with a 74 more child-care seat facility. And we have promised child-care spaces and we will deliver. We have delivered 148 new spaces between the Bonnycastle and Bridgwater Lakes expansion, and as people move to St. Norbert I am committing to work with the constituents towards the potential of new schools in the Pointe West area as it expands.

This past summer I threw a community barbecue in the pouring rain. Over 330 people showed up though the weather was less than ideal. It just shows you the spirit that people in St. Norbert have.

During this past summer—I've—and into the fall I undertook the review of workplace safety and health on behalf of the minister of Labour and Family Services. I worked with the newly appointed chief prevention officer and community stakeholders around the province to identify steps to reduce Manitoba's time-loss injury. No one should get hurt at work. This review is a collaborative effort of industry, labour, technical stakeholders and the Workers Compensation Board. This review shows another way how we care for all Manitobans.

This fall I had the privilege of awarding Bob Roehle, Ron Buzahora and Bob Newman the Queen's Diamond Jubilee award. Working together with community leaders like them I believe that we can make St. Norbert grow and thrive, and I am proud to represent an area where people can live, work and play.

I had an opportunity to travel this province from the south border at Emerson to the north in Flin Flon and Thompson and witness first-hand all the great things that are going on in Manitoba. Now we will see how—now the world will see how great Manitoba is when the FIFA World Cup, the Junos and the Canadian summer games bring thousands of people from all over the world into Manitoba.

* (15:00)

Even when we face tough budgets, I know we are doing the right thing; we are looking after Manitobans. I was speaking to a senior in my area, and he was telling me how happy he was when he looked back at his property tax bills and realized that the Manitoba government has increased the property tax credit so his bill has actually been cost-neutral for over 12 years, despite the fact that property values have more than doubled.

He also appreciated all of the programming in place to keep seniors in their homes longer. This solidifies why I ran to be an MLA under an NDP government, to make life better for Manitobans. Even in these tight financial times, we have not lost the vision that people and families come first.

We have become leaner and more efficient by combining Crown corporations and WRHAs without hurting front-line services. We are trimming 600 jobs over the next three years through retirements, and we are going to undertake the combining of municipalities to realize savings and provide better service to Manitobans.

Over and over, you will hear from the opposition that bigger tax cuts are the way. Well, just hope you don't get sick. You better hope that your children don't want to go to university so you don't have to remortgage your house so you can pay the higher tuition rates. The Leader of the Opposition made his stance clear on Crown corporations in the 1990s when he sold off MTS, and I'm sure if he has his way, he will sell off Manitoba Hydro. It's great for a few people that will get rich but what about the rest of us, Mr. Speaker? How about his party's stance on cuts to safety inspectors? The statement that companies can self-police? We all know how that works out. Badly, for the workers.

We've refused to cut health care. You should have dignity in the health-care system, and everyone should be able to get treatment, not just the rich. We've also refused to believe that your kids can't afford to go to university and that they should have to borrow from their parents to make that happen. We funded universities and colleges and refused to let tuition get out of control. We refuse to sell Manitoba Hydro or put up the rates to market value as our opposition would suggest. We stand firmly behind a publicly owned Manitoba Hydro system.

We believe that a company should pay its worker a decent minimum wage, and workers should have a safe work environment. When decent wages are paid and workers go home unharmed, everyone wins. The worker can then use their fair wages to buy product from the company and the whole province does better. That's why we've increased the minimum wage and we've upped workplace inspections.

Manitoba put their trust in NDP because that means they will have a decent minimum wage, great child-care system, affordable education, free cancer drugs and strong health care. We have chosen a path

that looks after the front-line services, a path that is about services that Manitobans need and want.

The Leader of the Opposition has the unique privilege of being able to say whatever he wants in the media and not be held accountable for it, but his actions spoke volumes when he was in government during the dark days of the 1990s: cut, cut, cut. It's ironic that he spoke about a dying government in the Free Press this morning. It seems that he has not mourned the loss of his old, tired ideas from 1990 himself.

I know that governments can't solve all of the problems and that's why we must all work together. I reject that cutting services is the way to go. Our path may be harbour-harder, but it leads to a better place. We are truly blessed to be Manitobans, and I'm proud to work with my colleagues, a young, vibrant, diverse caucus on this side of the House. I will continue to put families first, working and continuing to make Manitobans a great place to live, work and play.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, once again, thank the people of St. Norbert for giving me the honour of being here and representing them today. The people of St. Norbert have put their trust in me, and they will have their voices heard because they have elected me to this Legislature. I will continue to work hard for St. Norbert and Manitobans, always keeping in mind that people come first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to rise and second this motion and follow my honourable colleague, the member of St. Norbert.

However, it is with a heavy heart that I announce that on Sunday morning, a plane carrying eight crashed near Snow Lake. Our deepest condolences go out to the family of Mark Gogal, the pilot who lost his life in the tragic event. There are few words to describe the heartbreak that Mr. Gogal's family must be enduring at this time. We offer our support, our thoughts to the family and the communities affected. Seven passengers were injured in the crash and are currently in hospital undergoing treatments. We wish the survivors a quick and stable recovery.

As a relatively new member of the Legislative Assembly, it is a pleasure and an honour to second the Speech from the Throne. I would like to extend my thanks to the honourable member for St. Norbert who moved the motion. I would also like to

acknowledge the presence of the honourable Leader of the Opposition and welcome him into the House. We have a history that goes back to our university days, and my hand still hurts playing ball with him.

I am proud to be part of a government with a leader who cares about the north. Premier Selinger has attended many of the events in our riding in the past six months. The constituency of Flin Flon is vast and diverse and I've had the pleasure of travelling from the south to the north. In fact, just last week I was lucky to catch the caribou migration going on at Lac Brochet. Needless to say, I did not run naked with the caribou.

As the second largest constituency in Manitoba, we have our challenges and our achievements. In times of ease and in times of tension we work together because we know that working together is always going to create the best outcome.

This year's Throne Speech addressed many positive ways that Manitoba is progressing as a province. Manitoba is immense, beautiful and rich in resource. In this province, we have a government that truly cares about its people and is dedicated to working for what is best for Manitobans.

In the Speech from the Throne, our government highlighted the educational opportunities being created for Manitoba's north. Our government cares about students and their education. As a former teacher, I dedicated 33 years of my life teaching students from grades 4 through 12. I understand that we must provide students with the tools they need to succeed and I'm happy to say that we are working toward that goal.

Manitoba's population is growing and getting younger. For the third year in a row, our population grew faster than the national average. In addressing Manitoba's young population, we have and continue to create opportunities for northern students. Over the past year, many northern communities have seen astounding developments, such as new training facilities and educational programs. These programs will help us reach our target goal of adding 75,000 more workers to our labour force by 2020. In my constituents, we have added training facilities focusing on the needs of northern residents and their industries.

This September marked the grand opening of three educational facilities in my constituency. The Cranberry Portage Northern Technical Centre

provides state-of-the-art programming. In Flin Flon, the government invested \$3.5 million in the Northern Mining Academy, which officially opened in September. The University College of the North's new regional centre opened in Flin Flon in September also, in addition to the existing satellite centres at Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Mathias Colomb First Nation.

Building training facilities specific to the needs of the north is essential to our continued progress. By providing opportunities close to home, we are creating experts to our communities and ensuring that northern jobs stay in the north.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that has invested millions in prioritizing apprenticeships. Since 2000, apprenticeship positions have increased by 800 per cent. This year, many new apprenticeship opportunities have become available in the north. The Northern Essential Skills Training Initiative has been working closely with the Northern Manitoba Sector Council to deliver quality programs.

Mr. Speaker, as a former teacher, I understand the needs to reach out to children and youth and how essential recreation and community centres are to the development. In October this year, our government announced a new program, Community Places North, which is designed to meet our unique needs. The program offers funding for upgrades to recreation, wellness and other community centres. It is available to remote and isolated communities, including First Nations, with approvals completed before winter roads season. We encourage all eligible communities to apply before the November 30th deadline.

By providing positive, accessible extracurricular opportunities for youth, our communities become safer, healthier and happier. I am pleased to know that we as a government care about youth and are working to ensure that many of the small northern communities have the ability to access through this grant program.

My constituency is a top leader in the mining industry with the world's most prolific greenstone mining belt. As I said last year in my first speech to the House, mining is essential to the economy of much—my constituency. Mining creates direct and indirect jobs and economic growth in many northern communities.

In August, I visited two new mines in the Flin Flon constituency, the Lalor mine near Snow Lake

and the Reed copper mine. These two mines employ hundreds of people and contribute greatly to the economy. I am also looking forward to the potential development of renewed mining operations both in Lynn Lake and in Sherridon.

We need to develop sustainability, have open lines of communication with all parties involved in these economic opportunities, especially the First Nation communities, whose population is the fastest growing, not only in my constituency but in this province.

* (15:10)

The time for working together has never been a higher priority in northern constituencies, and I'm working to change that because we are all treaty people. After all, we all both signed these treaties. Another way to take advantage of these mining opportunities is through our roads. Our roads, both all-weather and winter, are a lifeline for our communities. I work hard with our government to continue to fulfill our commitment to creating all-weather roads for many of our isolated communities. This is key for those in the north to make sure that our communities continue to have economic opportunity possible.

I look forward to the completion of the upgrade of the last 15 kilometres of the highway from the airport to Flin Flon. I'm proud to say that we, this year, are committing \$589 million for roads and bridges across the province. We are moving forward with year six of our 10-year highway renewal plan. In fact, we are ahead of our target to meet this commitment and have worked on 7,400 kilometres of roads and highways and nearly 200 bridges since 2007. While many of us drive, many do not and cannot due to harsh weather conditions. This is essentially true for many of the seniors who cannot afford exorbitant costs of flying and must regularly attend medical appointments. We must encourage or create public transportation services. I am fighting along with the government to find ways to make bus service competitive and accessible to our people.

Mr. Speaker, health care is one of the largest concerns for the people in my constituency and for the people across the province. It is also a top priority of our government. There are many

challenges in the health sector. This is why we are making the chemotherapy sites in Thompson, Flin Flon and The Pas into full CancerCare hubs. We are also continuing to work towards the expansion and upgrading of the ER facility in Flin Flon and have completed a new paramedic ambulance station. We have a dedicated crew of paramedics, nurses and pilots responding to emergency calls across the province with the introduction of the STARS helicopter ambulance.

I especially want to thank our government for taking the lead in apologizing for the Sayisi Dene tragedy. I thank this government for the understanding diversity.

I thank the leaders of our communities: Chief Delaphine Bighetty of Barren Lands First Nation, Mayor George Fontaine of Flin Flon, Mayor Geraldine Cockerill of Leaf Rapids, Mayor James Lindsay of Lynn Lake, Chief Andrew Colomb of Marcel Colomb First Nation, Chief Arlen Dumas of Mathias Colomb First Nation, Chief Jerry Primrose of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Chief Joe Antsanen of Northlands Dene Cree Nation, Chief Jack Dysart of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, Chief Jimmy Thorassie of Sayisi Dene First Nation and Mayor Clarence Fisher of Snow Lake.

Most of all I thank the people of my constituency for working together for all of us. We're all working for partnerships. The one thing I know for sure is that our government is committed to all the people of Manitoba, no matter where they live or where they come from, Mr. Speaker.

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with past tradition of the House and preparation of the Leader of the Official Opposition's address to the Throne, I wonder if it's the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Is there will of the House to leave the debate open on the Throne Speech and to call it 5 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 20, 2012

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