

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

Vol. LXVI No. 4 - 10 a.m., Friday, November 15, 2013

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
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CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	NDP
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CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
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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
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HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 15, 2013

The House met at 10 a.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.

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones)

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Moved by myself, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité des travailleurs dans les zones de construction), now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

This bill will enhance safety for workers by making speeding in a construction zone an offence and doubling the fine amount issued to motorists that speed in construction zones. When a motorist enters a construction zone, they are entering a workplace. These amendments will ensure construction zones are consistently marked and motorists are clearly informed of the reduced speed limit.

While these amendments are intended to enhance safety for construction workers, they will also improve safety for motorists. There are many other factors that warrant reduced speeds in construction zones, such as narrowed lanes, uneven surfaces and barriers.

Reduced speeds that are clearly marked and effectively enforced help to protect everyone. All Manitobans deserve to make it home safely and the proposed amendments in Bill 2 will assist us in making that happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill 201—The Family Maintenance Amendment and Garnishment Amendment Act

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 201, The Family Maintenance Amendment and Garnishment Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: I reintroduce this bill again to see—hopefully, the government will see fit to support this.

This bill simply allows Maintenance Enforcement to enforce legal costs at the judge's discretion when divorce cases are in appeal.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's submitted on behalf D. Nesbitt, K. Johnston, L. Harman and many other fine Manitobans.

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by C. Finley, D. Fisher, T. McGill and many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by A. Brown, H. Miller, K. Slamz and many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by W. Reimer, H. Wiebe, D. Harder and many other Manitobans.

* (10:10)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): It's my pleasure to table the annual report for 2012-2013 for Manitoba Family Services and Labour.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this morning Ms. Bonnie Ash, who is the executive director of the Morrow Avenue Child Care Centre. This individual

is the guest of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase

Finance Department Recommendations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker—*[interjection]* Oh, I'd like to thank the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) for that little applause.

Mr. Speaker, in a February 4th briefing note on raising the PST, the director of taxation advised the NDP that they must either hold a referendum or pass legislation to make it legal. The NDP did neither of these.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to explain to Manitobans why they refused to listen to this expert advice from their own department who advised them that they needed a referendum in order to legally raise the PST.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): You know, we all run for the privilege of representing constituents. We all run for the privilege of making decisions, hopefully, and some of those decisions are difficult. They're not all easy ones. Some of them are very difficult and the decision to raise the PST by 1 cent on the dollar was one of those difficult decisions that we had to make. And sometimes when you're elected you have to make a hard decision. You don't get to say, I don't know what to do, I throw up my hands, over to you, you guys are on your own, you guys figure it out for yourselves.

Sometimes you've got to make a hard decision. Sometimes you have to risk unpopularity because you have a vision for the future, you have a vision to grow the economy, you have a vision where people can live in Manitoba, can work in Manitoba, can build a life in Manitoba.

So it was a hard decision, Mr. Speaker, but I believe that if we can grow this economy, if we can invest in those roads and that clean water, our kids are going to have better jobs, they're going to stay here, they're going to build a life here.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that they asked for a briefing note from their department. The briefing note came from a senior Finance Department staff person, a senior

person, and based on the government's own staff advice, it looks like Manitobans are being illegally forced to pay a higher PST.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Finance—she needs to do better with her answer than the one she just gave: Why did the government ignore the expert advice from their own tax director?

Ms. Howard: As I was saying, that decision was a difficult decision to make. And I know that what the members opposite would have advocated is that we didn't take any decision, that we would see in the future that we had to invest in our economy, that we had to make sure we had the money to take advantage of a federal program that was going to give us two-for-one matching dollars to build Manitoba.

What would they have done, Mr. Speaker? What they would have done is throw their hands up, say, I'm not willing to risk making an unpopular decision. No, what I'm going to do is do what I did in the past. What I'm going to do is take that money from teachers. I'm going to take that money from nurses. That's what I'm going to do.

Those aren't the decisions that we made. We made a difficult decision. That is true, and it may be unpopular, but we are going to stand with Manitoba families and invest in their future—

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

Provincial Sales Tax Government Intention

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this is seriously ignoring expert advice from a senior member in their own Finance Department.

Also, in the FIPPA there's so much blacked-out information, it's almost impossible, really, to get a clear answer on something. But the briefing note did suggest that the NDP government may have been looking at a PST hike larger than the one they took for 8 per cent, and it looks pretty obvious that they may have been doing that.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to clarify for taxpayers: Did her government also look at raising the PST higher than 8 per cent?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I was party to no such conversations. That is just simply not true, what the member opposite is saying.

But what I will say is this. When Duff Roblin decided to bring in the sales tax, to raise it by 5 cents in one year, if he had decided, I can't—I'm not going to risk that, over to you, Manitobans, I'm not going to make a decision, we would not have a floodway today, Mr. Speaker. We would've spent billions and billions of dollars in the past several decades since that's been built, not to mention the cost in human misery. But he made that decision.

Now, they're going to say I'm no Duff Roblin; they're right. But I aspire to the kind of leadership that he showed, the kind of leadership that Tommy Douglas showed to sometimes take an unpopular decision in the short term because it builds for the future.

Manitoba Economy Employment Figures

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) keeps shuffling—shifting the deck chairs on the other side, but the new Minister of Jobs and Economy kept one thing from her old portfolio: her ability to throw out false numbers. Our economy lost 4,300 jobs, full-time jobs, in the minister's first month on the job, and in an effort to cover her failure she puts false information on the record.

Mr. Speaker, how does this minister explain 4,300 jobs, full-time jobs, lost while—when her mandate is to grow the Manitoba economy?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): The member's incorrect.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the member, as I said yesterday and I'll endeavour to say it more clearly for him, so far this year our economy has added 8,300 more private sector jobs than over the same period last year. That is above the national growth. It's, you know, in the top five in the nation.

I would also reiterate for the member that we have among the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, Mr. Speaker, third lowest, and we're going to continue to work through our investments in great highways, safe bridges, clean water, in building 2,500 new jobs. Simply on the announcement of the building of Highway 75 alone—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I'll rely on Stats Canada's numbers before I would rely on her numbers.

The unemployment rate is defined as those seeking work in the economy, the participation rate and measurement of those who are employed or actively seeking work. The participation—participation rate has gone down 0.5 per cent over the last year, 0.4 per cent in the last 30 days. Fewer people looking for work, fewer people employed is the hallmark of a failing economy.

Mr. Speaker, why has this minister failed so miserably in her first 30 days on the job?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, again, basic arithmetic from those StatsCan numbers alone will tell the member that 8,300 more private sector jobs than over the same period last year have been created.

Why, Mr. Speaker, don't we discuss another set of numbers, like, for example, when 3,000 people a month were leaving Manitoba—or 3,000 people a year were leaving Manitoba under their watch—*[interjection]* I beg your pardon, I said month instead of year. I'll correct that. That is thousands and thousands of Manitobans that left the province under their watch.

We have people coming to Manitoba getting employed, population increasing, unemployment going down. Why is it that these nattering nabobs of negativity persist on looking down on Manitoba?

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric only gets thicker coming from this new minister.

Thirty days, this government has lost 4,300 full-time jobs. That's an average of 143 jobs each and every day leaving this province and not coming back. When fewer people are participating in our economy and fewer people are actively seeking work in Manitoba, it means one thing: businesses are losing money and they're leaving the province. Saskatchewan employment is up. Alberta's employment is up. Manitoban's is way down, and employers and employees are leaving this province.

* (10:20)

Mr. Speaker, does this minister have a plan to stop losing jobs and businesses to this province, or is she just going to create more communications jobs for their government to make her look good?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, nearly 15,000 people came to Manitoba in the last year, in contrast to 3,000 people leaving Manitoba each year when the members had their hands on the wheel.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks about a plan. The Throne Speech clearly laid out a plan for investing—on the good advice of Manitobans—investing in core new infrastructure that will assist Manitoba in continuing to be a trade and transportation hub, that will make our economy remain steady and grow. And in the construction of those projects, Manitobans are going to get great jobs, good paying jobs, so they can put down roots here, buy houses, buy a cottage if they want. That's the plan. Get on board.

Postpartum Depression Support Programs

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, earlier this week, the Chief Medical Examiner for the Province of Manitoba indicated that there would not be an inquest into the death of the Winnipeg woman and her children who died earlier this year in causes that were related to postpartum depression.

My question for the Minister of Health this morning is: What is she doing to address this important issue?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. As a parent, I have to say how tragic a situation this was, and, of course, I want to extend my sincere condolences to the family while they deal with what must be an unimaginable hurt, a very, very difficult time for them.

Mr. Speaker, of course, as the member opposite did say, that government and the health community agencies co-operated fully with the Chief Medical Examiner on this investigation, as we do on all investigations. In this case, of course, the Chief Medical Examiner decided not to call an inquest, but that doesn't mean that there isn't things that we will learn from this tragic situation.

We do respect that the Chief Medical Examiner has requested that the College of Physicians and Surgeons consider if there are ways that we can better prevent such tragedies in the future, and, of course, we'll be listening to that.

Mr. Friesen: The minister speaks of co-operation, but clearly what is needed is leadership, and it's lacking so far.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when there were support groups for women in Winnipeg who got referrals through public health, who assisted mothers and newborns with peer support groups with women who were experiencing mild to moderate postpartum

emotional disorders. They were able to flag dangerous situations. They were able to get extended hospitalization for those who needed it. Blues and Beyond was such a program; that program no longer exists in Manitoba. As a matter of fact, there are no such programs in Manitoba.

Once again I ask this minister: If she has a plan on this, now would be a good time to share.

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, in the face of such a tragedy, I think it's really important that we put facts on the record. This is not a time to be scaring mothers unnecessarily.

Mr. Speaker, new moms—it's challenging to be a new mom, and particularly with your first child in particular, so I think it's really important to reassure moms that there is support in Manitoba. A public health nurse visits moms, usually within the first four days of coming home. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, this is the soonest contact, the quickest contact, of anywhere in the country.

When that post—when that nurse, public health nurse, is there, they can not only provide information for new moms, things like support groups, perhaps information on how to learn more about lactation, postpartum depression, but also to actually diagnose the patient and see if there is something that the new mom needs further in terms of support and recommend it.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the minister wants facts on the record. The facts are these: There was a successful program that once operated specific to addressing the needs of women with postpartum depression and avoiding tragedies. That program no longer exists in Manitoba. What is needed is a program just like it.

Yes, there are supports. Yes, community and resource groups are doing amazing things on their own dime to try to create safe conditions. But what is needed is for the minister to lead. The Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba is doing good things right now in terms of public awareness and their clinician conferences, but right now we need leadership from this minister.

What is this minister doing to make sure that help is accessible and available to moms? Because this tragedy shows that after 14 years the struggles and the needs of these women are not being adequately addressed.

Ms. Selby: I think the most important thing we do is we come to new moms. New moms are sometimes overwhelmed with caring with a newborn, and that's why the public health nurse comes to their home to both provide information of support groups, support groups like at the new birthing centre, where there is a postpartum support group that has seen hundreds of moms just this year alone. There are supports on many things, including breastfeeding support, postpartum support. But the most important thing that the public health nurse can do is evaluate how mom and baby are doing, to see how their health is doing, to see how their mental health is doing, Mr. Speaker.

And in cases, tragic and thankfully very rare cases, of postpartum psychosis, we do have a mental health ER that is there for those most pressing needs should family members or the public health think that a new mom needs that extra support.

Fentanyl Abuse Public School Awareness Initiatives

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba issued a warning about fentanyl, a prescription drug when used as a street drug can be deadly.

Recently, RCMP seized fentanyl from a home in Steinbach where, allegedly, it was being distributed. RCMP 'plee' believe that the drug is responsible for deaths in the area. We applaud the RCMP for their efforts and for their seizure, but we know that this doesn't end the problem or end the concern.

What specific efforts are under way within our schools to ensure that young people, teachers and also parents understand the warning signs and whether or not their kids might be using this deadly drug, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): What the member for Steinbach raises is, of course, of concern to all of us, certainly those of us who are parents, those of us who live in communities where this is an issue.

And we have invested, of course, greatly in public schools. And that has allowed there to be teachers in place, that has allowed for there to be guidance counsellors in place, and that has allowed also for us, through both Health and Healthy Living and other organizations, to engage in public education and discussion with young people that leads us to understand why they are being led to

addiction, why they are being led to alcohol use. I know that the minister—the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) led a very effective strategy to help deal—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, also in the warning by the Addictions Foundation earlier this year, they noted that many of the people who will be trying fentanyl might not know what it is, might not know what its deadly effect is. And many of those people will be young people.

It's important that, within our schools, teachers, young people, parents understand what fentanyl is, understand what the consequences of it are and understand what to look for in terms of warning signs.

I want to ask the new Minister of Education: What efforts—what specific efforts are happening within our schools to ensure that teachers, young people and parents understand what the effects of fentanyl are, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Howard: We know that investing in schools has been one of our priorities since becoming government. And we know that through those investments we've been able to keep teachers and guidance counsellors employed.

We've also invested in programs that I know personally, programs like the Teen Talk program out of Klinik. That's a program where young people go out and they talk to other young people, and they talk to other young people not only about the dangers of drugs, which is important information, absolutely, but they also go out and they talk to kids about the issues that lead kids to use and abuse drugs. They go out and they talk to kids about building healthy relationships. They go out and talk to kids about what it is like to survive bullying, for example, in schools, what it's like to survive abuse in the home. We know that what leads a child, what leads a young person to addiction, it—many, many issues, and we have to address all of those.

So I take the concern of the member very seriously. He's absolutely right. We need to—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, prior to the seizure of fentanyl in Steinbach it was a significant concern within the community, but it still is a significant

concern, and while I applaud the RCMP for that drug bust on the alleged distribution of fentanyl from that home in Steinbach, that doesn't mean that the problem is over. In fact, that's a recognition that there is a problem and that there needs to be proactive measures in place.

And one of the places where that proactive measure could happen is within our schools to ensure that students, to ensure that parents, ensure that teachers understand what fentanyl is so that, as the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba indicates, there won't be young people who'll become addicted accidentally or perhaps die accidentally because they weren't aware of the drug.

* (10:30)

So I want to ask the new Minister of Education whether or not there are any specific programs, information that are going into our schools to ensure that young people have the information they need to equip themselves against this deadly drug.

Ms. Howard: I take the concerns that the member is raising very seriously and I think that what he is talking about is important to do. Absolutely, parents want to get good information. They also need information about how to talk with their kid about these issues. Whether it is a drug like fentanyl or other drugs, we know that prescription drugs that we keep in many of our homes are growing in terms of use among our young people.

And so we're absolutely committed to working with parent councils, to working with school divisions, to working with teachers, but also making sure that those resources are in the classroom, and the best resource in a classroom is a teacher and the best resource in a school is a guidance counsellor because those are the folks that can talk to teachers that have relationships with parents. That's why we invest in community schools, schools that aren't just there from 9 to 3:30, but schools that are—

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

Manitoba Hydro–Bipole III Biosecurity Protocols

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): The NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro seems intent on ignoring landowner biosecurity concerns regarding construction of the Bipole III transmission line across agricultural land.

My question is: What protocols for biosecurity for agricultural enterprises will the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro implement before any further work, including surveying, is done?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): This is a challenge, I think, that Manitoba Hydro takes very seriously. We take it very seriously on this side of the House. Manitoba Hydro has protocols in place that they employ when they visit with Manitoba farmers.

Mr. Speaker, growing the Manitoba economy and using hydro to do that is very important to the farm community. It will provide jobs. It'll provide a long-time sustainable source of energy that is—has the lowest rates amongst any jurisdiction in the continent. Our plan on this side of the House is to continue to invest in Manitoba Hydro, continue to work for stakeholders such as farmers in an effort to make sure to make the most of our hydro development for the betterment of our economy.

Mr. Pedersen: The minister needs to be brought up to speed. Manitoba Hydro on Wednesday told the Bipole III landowners group that there is no such protocol in place right now, and to date the only biosecurity protocol being used is for surveyors to sneak onto farmland when the owner's not watching. In fact, the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro is now having the surveyors call the RCMP to try and intimidate landowners into submission when the surveyors are asked to leave.

So when will this minister finally get serious about preventing diseases spread by Manitoba Hydro crews, such as clubroot in canola, Goss's wilt in corn, and order Manitoba Hydro to implement and adhere to an effective biosecurity protocol?

Mr. Struthers: The member opposite is incorrect, Mr. Speaker.

The—Manitoba Hydro has worked with the Department of Agriculture. They've developed a policy to prevent the distribution of disease, to prevent the distribution of invasive plant species. They've worked along with the department to make sure that they address those policy issues, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't want the member opposite to go around spreading conspiracy theories all throughout rural Manitoba with one farm to the next. We'll do our best to prevent the spread of disease in Manitoba. He should do his best to prevent the spread of mistruths.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, all I have to do is tell the truth. I'm just telling you what the landowners told me from their Wednesday meeting. And ignorance, arrogance, intimidation and bullying is what this government is about, and these are not reasons to put the agricultural industry in southern Manitoba at risk.

So when will the minister responsible for the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro finally get serious about agricultural biosecurity, sit down with the landowners to work out an accepted-acceptable biosecurity protocol before they do any more work?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that members opposite want to delay these projects, they want to cancel these projects, all with their goal of privatizing Manitoba Hydro. It's pretty obvious that what they're doing is setting this up for a privatization of Manitoba Hydro.

I can tell you this: We're going to work with every stakeholder, including farmers. We're going to work with the departments in this government and we're going to work with Manitoba Hydro to make sure that those members opposite don't get their way, make sure that those members opposite don't get their hands on the wheel to privatize Manitoba Hydro, because that will mean, Mr. Speaker, that rates will go through the roof, we'll lose export contracts and that will work counter to building a strong economy, which is what this government is going to do.

Mr. Speaker: During questions posed and answers in the Chamber here this morning, there are a few members of the House who are making it difficult for me to hear both the questions and the answers. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Please allow me to hear both the questions and the answers. I'm sure if there was a breach of the rules, you'd want me to take that under consideration and to deal with that. So I'm asking for your co-operation, please.

Manitoba Hydro Development Concerns

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, in an open letter to this NDP government, it says, and I quote: Past growth rates and credible projections show a domestic growth rate well within Hydro's present capacity for a few more years. Why rush on a multibillion-dollar scale into a very uncertain export market? And we do have the time. Imagine, just imagine, ending up having to subsidize electricity

sales to another province or another country altogether. Yet this could so easily happen; indeed, based on present costs and prices, it's almost certain to happen.

That's former NDP Premier Ed Schreyer.

Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro tell us what his response is to former Premier Ed Schreyer and former Premier Ed Schreyer's concerns?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Schreyer said, and I quote: The only possible logic there could be for delaying hydro development now is a very real probability that you would never build it at all. But if there was any prospect that you were going to build it after all, it would be the height of absurdity to delay.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Schreyer is correct. Mr. Schreyer has put his finger on what the members opposite are up to, and that is to delay these projects past the deadlines, cancel those projects, just like they did with Conawapa, just like they tried to do with Limestone, leading to their ideological position that Manitoba Hydro should be privatized. We're not going to let that happen.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, Leonard Evans, former NDP Cabinet minister; Eric Stefanson, former deputy premier; Graham Lane, former chair of Manitoba Public Utilities Board; Garland Laliberte, former dean of engineering; Karen Friesen, president, Bipole III Coalition; Tom Adams, energy consultant; Jim Collinson, energy consultant, former chair of UNESCO committee on World Heritage Sites; Doug Chorney, president, Keystone Agricultural Producers; Canadian 'taxpederfer'—Taxpayers Federation, and the list goes on and on, and they all have concerns about this NDP government's plan for Manitoba Hydro.

What is this NDP minister's response to all of these pre-eminent Manitobans, including Premier Ed Schreyer, who just wrote that letter a month ago?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Schreyer said that the—it would be the height of absurdity to delay—the height of absurdity to delay—he was right.

Mr. Speaker, within the decade, our province could run out of power. If we take on a big user or if we—to grow our economy, that could even be a shorter time span. We are running out of power because we're growing our economy. We have an

increasing population. We're—this is growth, and we need the power.

Members opposite would leave us in a position where we would have to import expensive, unpredictable natural gas. We have an advantage with Manitoba Hydro. It's clean power. It's inexpensive power. It's consistent power. We're going to take advantage of that power on behalf of the Manitoba families—

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

* (10:40)

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, all of these pre-eminent Manitobans, including former Premier Ed Schreyer, are calling for a non-partisan, independent review of Manitoba Hydro development.

What will it take for this NDP government to listen? Why won't the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro do the right thing and listen to these pre-eminent Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the development plans of Manitoba Hydro are undergoing the most extensive in-depth review in the history of this province through the Public Utilities Board. There's thousands of pages of a report that has been handed over to the Public Utilities Board and their consultants are going through that. That review is already being done.

Clearly, what the members opposite are up to is they're trying, through their grassy-knoll treatment of Manitoba Hydro, they are attempting to discredit Manitoba Hydro in an effort to delay projects, which leads to cancellation of projects, which leads to the privatization of the Crown corporation. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

Fiscal Management Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, when the NDP government came to power in 1999, they promised to balance the budget. In 2008, because this NDP government had failed to put Manitoba's fiscal house in order, they passed legislation so that they would only have to balance the budget every four years. In 2010 they failed to keep even this watered-down promise, and again legislation was changed to allow the government to excuse their own failures.

After 14 years of failures, Mr. Speaker, why on earth would the people of Manitoba now trust the NDP government to honour their current fiscal promises?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): And I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the member for River Heights on what I know was a very exciting and a very well-earned night of tribute that happened last night in the city.

This government, since coming to power, did balance the budget, did balance the budget 10 times. And when, around the world, we were going into economic uncertainty, when, around the world, there was a crash all over—all over the world there was a recession going on, and at the time I remember that the opposition—I remember very clearly the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) said that what we should do in the face of that is cut deeply into the services that matter to Manitobans, that we should cut half a billion dollars out of the budget.

Every province, including the federal government—

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

Social Well-Being Indicators Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I thank the deputy premier for her comments about last night, and, yes, it was a great night with Justin Trudeau at the reception and then—former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in great form at the event.

Mr. Speaker, not only in fiscal matters has this government failed to deliver. When the Broadbent Institute recently rated provincial governments for delivering on social well-being to their populations, Manitoba was found to be at the bottom of the barrel. Manitoba, under this NDP government, has done very poorly on such basic measures as infant mortality and educational scores compared to other provinces.

What is the NDP government's explanation for 14 years of failing to deliver on their promises to improve social well-being in Manitoba?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Finance): I'm happy to hear that the federal leader was in town, the federal Liberal leader. My pastel invitation must have gone missing to that event.

I will say to the member opposite that there are, of course, big challenges in Manitoba. There always have been. But we have moved forward. We've moved forward by doing things like increasing the minimum wage every year we've been in office, and that means that those minimum wage earners, two thirds of whom are women, Mr. Speaker, they are able to earn more money for their families. We've caught up on the minimum wage, and we're proud of those accomplishments.

We have a lot left to do; that's absolutely true. In the recent health study that was released, we saw that Manitobans are living longer. They're living healthier lives. Not all Manitobans, that's true. We have a lot that we have to do for those that don't yet share the prosperity of our province. That's exactly why we're investing in skills—

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

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

Environmental Management Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, not only is this government failing on economic issues and social issues, but they're taking a balanced approach; they're failing on environmental issues as well.

Mr. Speaker, today Lake Winnipeg is still the most threatened lake on our planet, yet in 2003 this NDP government said they would clean up Lake Winnipeg in two or three years.

The year before that this NDP government said they would meet, indeed, they promised to exceed their Kyoto targets by 2010. This was later put in legislation, although, of course, they delayed it then 'til 2012. Now, a year ago the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had to acknowledge his failure in keeping even this belated commitment as well.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, I join other members in recognizing the contributions of the member, and we also join in recognizing the new leader of the Liberal Party. We welcome her to the Chamber. We notice, by the way, that the former Liberal leader, though, doesn't welcome her all the

way and doesn't allow her to run for his seat in the Chamber, so the welcoming goes so far, but so far so good.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that maybe some of the contributions that we didn't hear about last night that the member was recognized for—excluded, perhaps, is his ignoring of the challenges of Lake Winnipeg when he actually had his hands on the steering wheel in Ottawa as the member responsible in the House of Commons for science and technology, when, in fact, the Department of the Environment, in fact, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was actually decimated when that member sat and looked at it and represented communities—

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

New Master of Science Degree Brandon University

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, our government has invested in Brandon's educational infrastructure at levels never before seen in the province's history. Nearly \$100 million has been invested in Assiniboine Community College and Brandon University. It has been invested in the Manitoba Institute of Culinary Arts, in the Len Evans centre of trades and technology, in the Henry Champ Healthy Living Centre and in other capital projects.

We're also investing in capacity in academic programs, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to ask the Minister of Education if he can advise the House of some recent announcements building education capacity at Brandon University.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I thank the member for the question. He does a fine job representing Brandon East. He does a fine job representing Brandon. He does a fine job representing all of western Manitoba. At least somebody's standing up for them.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, our government is focused on jobs and the economy and a skills agenda, and at the core of that agenda is education. The new master's program at Brandon University promotes that objective by preparing students to work in research on environmental and life sciences and then translate those skills into jobs for students into the future. The new program also promotes sustainability in the growing energy sector in western Manitoba and takes advantage of matching federal funds, which we never want to miss.

Our plan focuses on improving the quality of education for Manitoba students, making sure that it's accessible and affordable. We have a plan. They don't.

Manitoba Hydro Rural Office Closures

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, the closure of 12 rural district offices at Manitoba Hydro will occur effective January 15th of next year. Twelve additional offices will be closed shortly after that. This direction has come from senior management. This is the same direction the NDP have followed in closing other government service centres and offices.

Mr. Speaker, why has Manitoba Hydro and this NDP government refused to consult with its customers, affected local governments and, just as importantly, its own staff?

* (10:50)

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro is looking for ways in which it can become more efficient in delivering its services and it's looking for ways that it could save money, and my understanding is that Manitoba Hydro will save money by moving forward in this manner.

It's funny, Mr. Speaker. One day the members opposite come in and they tell us to cut, cut, cut. The next day they come in and say spend, spend, spend. I guess this is a spending day on the behalf of the Conservatives.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, this continues the NDP theme of consolidation and centralization and the theme of no consultation.

Doug Dobrowolski, AMM president, who knows the NDP track record on consultation or lack thereof, says the utility should have consulted with the association before springing the bad news.

Clearly, this decision will have an impact on communities, employees and customers, Mr. Speaker, and I suggest these changes will not be positive. Response times for repairs and emergency calls will be longer. This could be a matter of life and death.

Why does the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro—what does he have to say to the employees and the Hydro customers in his own backyard in Roblin on the pending closure of that office?

Mr. Struthers: I would say to members opposite and I would say to every Manitoban that this government is going to build our economy. It's going to continue to increase our population. Mr. Speaker, I would say to members opposite that Manitoba Hydro is a key component of our plan to build our economy and to grow our economy and to put people to work.

I would say to Manitobans and I'd say to members opposite that hydro to us in Manitoba is like oil to Alberta, and we should not tell Alberta to not develop oil and we should not be telling Manitoba Hydro not to invest and not to grow and not to build the infrastructure that carries our power to our export partners so that we can make money in Manitoba and reinvest that into roads and bridges and reinvest that into flood protection and build our economy and put people to work. That's what I'd tell—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: It's time for members' statements.

Family Doctor Week 2013

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): A dynamic society is dependent upon good health and good health care. It is my absolute pleasure to recognize the outstanding contribution that family physicians in Manitoba make on a daily basis to ensure the health and well-being of Manitobans.

This past week, November the 4th to the 9th, was national Family Doctor Week in Canada which celebrates family doctors across Canada.

Family physicians are an integral part of the medical system because they put the patient at the centre of family medicine by providing, arranging and co-ordinating care with specialists and other medical professionals. For these reasons, family physicians are highly valued members of the medical profession who work tirelessly to provide patients and their families with the care they need.

Each day, family physicians across Manitoba work to promote health through preventative care, diagnosis and treatment of disease and advocating healthy lifestyles. Because of this it is my pleasure to convey to the House that from November 7th to 9th the College of Family Physicians of Canada's annual

Family Medicine Forum was held in Vancouver with attendance estimated at over 4,300.

It's also my pleasure to inform the House that Dr. Mark Duerksen from Steinbach is the Manitoba recipient of the Reg L. Perkin Award for 2013. This award is presented to a family doctor from each province every year to recognize the work that they do in primary care, education and advocating for patients' interests.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in showing continued support for family physicians and Family Doctor Week in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Morrow Avenue Child Care—Bonnie Ash

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Today I'd like to recognize the Morrow Avenue Child Care Programs for Families and their executive director, the invincible Bonnie Ash, who joins us today in the gallery.

This year marks Bonnie's 25th year as executive director. Her organization is dedicated to enriching the lives of children and their families in St. Vital. They offer flexible child-care arrangements out of nine different locations, providing more than 230 care spaces for many parents in the community right in St. Vital constituency.

Bonnie and her colleagues helped design the innovative Kids Club summer program which is geared towards the older children in care. They identified that although children in care until age 12, those aged nine and up needed a better experience; they were growing up and their child-care experience needed to mature with them. The Kids Club engages these children by giving them the responsibility of organizing the program's activities themselves. Every year the Kids Club puts on a summer carnival organized entirely by the club. They also participate in an exciting, age-appropriate activity, such as overnight camp-out.

The children enjoy their new-found responsibilities and rise to the challenge. Programs like this help bridge critical transitions in children's lives, allowing them to grow and move on to their next level of development.

In addition to Bonnie Ash's work with the Kids Club and Morrow Avenue Child Care, she is active in many committees and groups in my area. The St. Vital Community Action Network and the St. Vital Parent Child Coalition, to name a few, benefit from

Bonnie's vision and passion. Bonnie is an amazing individual committing to helping families in every way she can.

On behalf of my colleagues and the many families in St. Vital, I'd like to thank Bonnie for her hard work and her dedication. Bonnie, you truly are a gem.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Further members' statements?

Nick Smerechynski

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Remembrance Day is a day—is a time to pause and reflect on the sacrifices that the brave men and women of our Armed Forces gave to our country.

I am honoured to attend many events across my constituency on or around Remembrance Day and meet the veterans that helped make our province and our country what it is today.

One of those veterans is Nick Smerechynski. Born in Medika, Manitoba in 1924, Nick enlisted in Winnipeg with the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, training in Fort William and Shilo. He was sent to England and Italy, finishing his training there. His stint on the front lines included stops in France, Germany, Belgium and Holland, staying there until the war ended. He signed up to fight in the Pacific, but after bombs were dropped in Japan, the war ended for good and he was able to return home.

Nick was awarded the France and German star, the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, the star of Italy, the War Medal from 1939-1945, the King George VI medal, the volunteer star in 1945 and the star clasp for his bravery and service in World War II, being a member of the Lac du Bonnet Legion for 10 years and the Beausejour Legion for 30 years.

Upon returning from the war, he worked in the mining industry and was the postmaster in Elma, Manitoba, for 20 years. Nick and his wife Mary now live in Whitemouth. Nick is now one of the few remaining veterans from World War II in his part of Manitoba and one of the few remaining veterans of World War II in Manitoba.

Stories like Nick's are important to share and are important to hear, and his service to this country is something that should be honoured and applauded.

On behalf of all members of this House, I want to thank Nick for his service to this country and wish him only the best in the years to come.

Thank you.

École Guyot Parent Council

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay my respect and gratitude to all those people who take time out of their busy lives to volunteer, specifically for those who volunteer for their local school's parent council.

Teachers, administrators and support staff work to nurture our children and provide them with a safe and stimulating learning environment, but very often it's the volunteer work of our dedicated parent councils that provide those extra things or fun events that build happy memories and turn schools into communities.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize those parents who help create an enriched learning environment for children at École Guyot in my constituency. École Guyot has a beautiful play structure thanks to the parent council. They worked with the help of Community Places grants to upgrade their school's play area into something more accessible for all and a pretty spectacular place for children.

* (11:00)

With the play structure project complete, École Guyot's parent council set their sights on improving their sports field. We encourage our kids to be active, but every spring the muddy fields at École Guyot meant that kids weren't able to get out and play. The parent council presented this concern to me last spring and, I'm happy to say, together we have found a solution that will mean a dry field, more room for the kids to play and hopefully less laundry.

Today, with the help of a grant from the Winnipeg Community Infrastructure Program, the École Guyot parent council is working on a redevelopment of their school field. The field will include a natural playground and will have buried tree stumps and log benches to create seating for an outdoor classroom. No doubt this project will include the—will improve the quality of play for children at Guyot, but thanks to the work of the parent council, the entire community will have a new dry field to play on, a climbing wall and 500 feet of walking and bike paths.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the École Guyot parent council on future projects and helping make happy, active childhoods.

Thank you.

Jodi Moskal

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jodi Moskal on being sworn in as the seventh woman to chair the 140-year-old Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce on October 9th. Jodi and her husband, Steve, are also co-owners of their business, Moskal Electric.

Jodi is used to breaking the stereotypes. She did that when she became an electrician in their family business. She was motivated to take the step of becoming chair at a recent Winnipeg chamber board meeting when she noticed the diversity around the table: female, Aboriginal, Lebanese, Muslim, French. Jodi realized how much the chamber has changed in 140 years and embraced the opportunity to chair this board.

The underlying motivation for this decision came about because of her young sons. She is doing what she can to help the city become what it needs to be, so her sons—both young adults in university—won't have to leave the city. Her decision is very personal as she hopes that they will remain in Winnipeg when they graduate.

Jodi is a Charleswood resident, as was Brian Bowman, the past chair of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce.

This is not Jodi's first foray outside of her day-to-day job duties. She has served as a director on the board for the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce since 2005; committee member of Habitat for Humanity, Women Build; member at Metro Club of Winnipeg; member at We Believe in Winnipeg Toastmasters; and Jodi Moskal was also recently elected to the provincial advisory committee for the trade of construction electrician.

Jodi and her husband also run their business as supportive corporate citizens. In 2011, Moskal Electric became an investor of Yes! Winnipeg because they believe in our great city and strive to contribute to its success and growth. They promise to fulfill their role as a good corporate citizen with their volunteer efforts and donations to the community. They contribute to many local charitable organizations due to their underlying belief that they have, and that is because we live

here, because our children live here, because our employees and their families live here, because our clients live here, because we believe in Winnipeg being the greatest city in the world and we are so fortunate to be part of it, because it's the right thing to do.

Congratulations, Jodi, as you tackle your new challenge as chair of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. We have no doubt that you will do a great job.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And I really did just want to wrap up by reviewing what happened on Wednesday of this week, Mr. Speaker. The Bipole III landowners association, which is a group of landowners concerned about how Manitoba Hydro is treating them, or mistreating them, in terms of construction of the Bipole III line, the landowners association met with Manitoba Hydro—a short meeting on Wednesday. Manitoba Hydro tried to claim that they had a biosecurity protocol. When this was questioned, they then admitted—Manitoba Hydro admitted that, well, we're still working on a biosecurity protocol, so that theory went out the window and the minister should know that.

The next conversation coming out of Manitoba Hydro employees was, well, doesn't matter. We'll just expropriate you. That is upsetting, Mr. Speaker.

There is no will at Manitoba Hydro to bargain in good faith with the landowners and address their concerns, and they do have legitimate concerns and it's far more than just biosecurity, Mr. Speaker. There are many issues, and the landowners are adamant that their concerns be dealt with, and they're asking Manitoba Hydro and the NDP-controlled Manitoba Hydro to start dealing in good faith with these landowners.

These issues are not going to go away, and the sooner this government and Manitoba Hydro realizes that, the sooner we can get on to addressing the issues that the landowners have and come to a

satisfactory land lease agreements in order so that this line can be built.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I just urge this minister to wake up, realize what's going on, start to take this seriously and deal in good faith because bullying and threats of expropriation is just not the way we do things in Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to rise today. It's indeed a pleasure to be back in the House and working with yourself and all MLAs representing every square inch of our great province.

I really—Mr. Speaker, I always look forward to coming back to the Legislature, and then I always look forward to getting out of the Legislature. That way, it gives me always something to look forward to, and certainly dealing with the big issues of the day that have so much impact on Manitobans, whether they be my constituents or anybody else's constituents, I think, is a very honourable pursuit and one that I always do look forward to.

I think we presented a very good Throne Speech the other day. I know that members opposite might not be surprised that I say that, but, Mr. Speaker, when you look at what was in that Throne Speech, it's hard to come to the conclusion that was—that that was not a good endeavour on behalf of the people of Manitoba. I would suspect that members opposite—*[interjection]*

The member from Emerson talks about believing. The last people Manitobans should trust with anything, whether it be the Manitoba economy or Manitoba Hydro or Manitoba Health or Manitoba Education or Manitoba Agriculture—the last person that should be worried about believability is the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon).

Mr. Speaker, our Speech from the Throne outlined very clearly a very clear path to success in this province. It outlined a path that builds an economy here in Manitoba—that builds on an already-growing economy. Our population is growing. Our economy continues to grow. It's not growing at the rate that a lot of people would like it to grow but, you know, given the economic downturn worldwide, across the country, the Manitoba economy has fared pretty well.

But, Mr. Speaker, we just—we can't take a laissez-faire kind of an attitude members opposite

have. You know, maybe I'm giving them too much credit when I say laissez-faire. You know, when I hear that they want to cut deeply into services that the public depends on, when I hear they talk about across-the-board, indiscriminate, 1 per cent reduction, maybe they should go back to their laissez-faire, hands-off approach, rather than sticking their fingers in and cutting and hacking and slashing and making life worse for Manitoba families. Maybe they ought to re-evaluate that policy that they've put forward.

For my money, I'll go with our plan any day, Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Speech from the Throne the other day. Our plan builds an already-growing economy; our plan builds to bring more people to this province; our plan builds on our successful record of being the—one of the best provinces in terms of employment, one of the lowest unemployment levels in the country. Retail sales remain strong. By any number of—our debt to GDP ratio remains one of the strongest, certainly outperforming the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we need to build on these successes and we don't do that by cutting services that Manitoba families depend upon. Our plan, as laid out in the Throne Speech, very clearly is a growth plan, very clearly puts in place some building blocks that builds our province and moves us forward in a positive way.

* (11:10)

Key, absolutely key to that plan is Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro, who, to Manitobans, you know, this is our version of oil and gas. This is our key to the future. Members opposite would not go to Saskatchewan and tell them not to develop their potash. Members opposite would not go to Alberta and tell them not to develop their oil—*[interjection]* Well, maybe they would, from what I hear coming across from the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon). Maybe they would tell other provinces they shouldn't develop their natural advantages either. But in Manitoba we have a government that takes very seriously the potential that hydro is to our province and the potential that hydro is to growing our economy, and we fully intend on taking advantage of that advantage.

Mr. Speaker, the—it's very clear that within 10 years our province could run out of power. We have a growing population. We have a growing economy. We have businesses that want to set up in Manitoba and we have opportunities into the future

that will demand more hydro generation. Our government takes that challenge very seriously. We understand that Manitoba Hydro represents a huge opportunity in the future. Over the next number of years the hydro exports are estimated at \$29 billion—that's over the next 30 years—\$29 billion that members opposite seem to just sneeze at. That's not surprising, I suppose.

I remember when the Leader of the Opposition and Gary Filmon and Conservatives at the time messed up the Conawapa generation station. They messed up an opportunity to build Conawapa, to inject that kind of stimulus into our economy and to build Conawapa for the future. I remember how they squawked about Limestone back in the day. I lived in Norway House when Limestone was being built, and I know people from Norway House who participated in training programs. That's where I met former Speaker George Hickes when he was running the training programs there, and there were people from Norway House who became carpenters, who became plumbers, who became electricians and then—and got jobs at Limestone. They got jobs at Limestone, which the member for Emerson is not in favour of. They got jobs at Limestone.

And then you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? And to the credit—I will say—to the credit of the former government, a Northern Flood Agreement was signed with the chief and council at Norway House, because that government back then understood that they needed to work, I suppose, in this case, anyway, with First Nations, something the present-day Conservatives do not get, don't care to get. They signed a Northern Flood Agreement producing great changes in the community at Norway House, putting those folks who were trained as electricians and carpenters and plumbers and others, putting them to work in the community again, and you can see the results in that community on that First Nation. The key to that was education. The key to that was training and the key to that was leadership on the part of the provincial government and on the part of the First Nations government, and when it all comes together, it works. It doesn't fit in to the ideological nature of the members opposite. I understand that. But it works for the people that live in the North, live in communities that have 80 and 85 per cent unemployment rate, which really should matter to members opposite but doesn't seem to faze them at all.

Mr. Speaker, in early years when we built hydro dams we would build the dam, we would see what

kind of damage it would cause and then we would compensate up to—into the order of a billion dollars. We would—that was what we did in the old days. Today we don't follow that kind of a process. Today, when we build a dam, we start by talking to Aboriginal people who live in the First Nations across the North. It's not what they say, says the members opposite. We signed an agreement when we—before we started on Wuskwatim, we signed an agreement with the First Nation. We built the Wuskwatim and that—for future use for Manitobans and now we're coming through on the agreement with that very First Nation. And people were put to work and people are continuing to be put to work and those folks have some income that they can invest in their communities. It's a model that works; it's a model that's a lot better than it was before. We have agreements with First Nations to talk about adverse effects, and that deal with adverse effects and, in some cases, yes, we have agreements where money is flowed to those First Nations on the basis of those adverse effects, but we turned on its head the process that was used to deal with First Nations and now it's working to the benefit of those First Nations, so I can understand why members opposite don't really like it.

Mr. Speaker, the—I can't underestimate the role that Manitoba Hydro can play in attaining the goal of creating 75,000 new jobs by the year 2020. A lot of Manitobans that talk to me about that statement that we made in last year's Throne Speech, it's a Throne Speech goal that we've built on ever since and we've built on again with this Throne Speech. We built on it in the budget in—back that I presented in—on April 16th.

Mr. Speaker, that goal will do more than anything else that I can imagine to move our economy forward. The goal of 75,000 new jobs by 2020 will do that and a partner in this is going to be Manitoba Hydro. Manitoba Hydro, who already employs a lot of Manitobans in every part of our province, a Manitoba Hydro that will play—they can and they will play a major role in making sure that we meet that goal. That is in exact contrast to the vision that members opposite have when it comes to Manitoba Hydro.

Manitoba Hydro, in the minds of Conservative members, is simply an organization that should be turned over to the private sector. And, Mr. Speaker, they can deny this all they like but when Ed Schreyer said, very correctly, when Mr. Schreyer said that the only possible logic there could be for delaying Hydro

development now is the very real 'probably' that we would never build it at all. He said, very clearly, it would be the height of absurdity to delay. That is absolutely correct today, here in 2013. And that's exactly what the Conservative Party is up to. They were talking about delays, step back and review, which we're doing anyway. We're reviewing as we go along. We've made sure we dot the i's and we cross the t's. Hydro is committed to that, and we expect Hydro to do that and they are doing that.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear what the plan of members opposite is: they want us to delay the projects that are moving through the system now. They want to delay past the dates by which we have contractual obligations with our export partners, Minnesota, Wisconsin, others. They want us to delay past those dates so that then we're in a position where those contracts get cancelled and then we cancel the projects and you can just see every Conservative opposite standing in their seats and saying it was a big mess and we have to have the private sector come in to clean it up.

* (11:20)

That's exactly what they did with the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System. I was in this Legislature when the member—the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House and voted to privatize MTS. Mr. Speaker, it was real and it hurt Manitoba families. We saw rates go through the roof. We remember that. We remember that clearly.

Mr. Speaker, in the last election, Tory candidates said we should privatize MPI—privatize MPI. That's not me making this up. That's a Tory candidate putting it in his election pamphlets and talking about it. He was interviewed on that and he said it over and over, privatize MPI. The Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) on CJOB said very clearly that he was interested in a private, for-profit, two-tier health-care system. That framework—he said that's what Manitobans need. Very clearly members opposite are interested in a privatization theme. Very clearly, if members opposite had their chance they would privatize Manitoba Hydro. Who know what else they would privatize?

My submission to you, my submission to Manitobans is that we cannot trust members opposite with Manitoba Hydro. We cannot trust members opposite with Manitoba Hydro. Everything that they talk about is totally destined for privatization. It's totally destined to delay and cancel these projects, these projects that mean so much to Manitoba

families and represent so much hope for our province and so much hope for our future. Mr. Speaker, they would cancel those projects. They've said that. It's not me making it up. They're on record, and to quote the Leader of the Opposition yesterday: The best indication of future action is past action. And when this—these members opposite try to weasel their way out of some of the things their leader has said, they need to remember their leader's own words and be judged by their actions; and, when it comes to Manitoba Hydro members, actions speak loud and clear: delay, cancel, privatize.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to put a few remarks on the record on the Throne Speech debate and the amendment to that debate.

But, first, I do want to welcome all the members back to the House. It was a long session this summer and it was a nice break to get home and actually do something in my constituency for a while, but it was a fairly short break. At least this, I'm presuming, may be a fairly short session. You never know what's going to happen in here, but I'm presuming it's going to be a fairly short session—[*interjection*] Well, we hope, you know, and it's—so it is great to be back. I want to certainly welcome the new pages that are here.

And, you know, out in my wonderful constituency of Agassiz, which I sometimes choose to call constituency of Utopia, the—it was a fairly good summer for us out there—I understand, I spent most of it in here, as I said. But we had unprecedented crop yields in the area and we're seeing—although because of this government's rules there are no hog farmers left in my constituency just a couple of—there might be a couple of operations left, but pretty well all gone because of legislation this government has passed. But we're seeing a recovery in cattle prices in the north end of my constituency. It's very definitely cattle country and that's a rebound that's been a long time coming. I was in the cattle business after the BSE in 2003 and the follow-up problems that went with it. It took over a decade to recover and the cattle ranchers certainly aren't recovered yet. It's been a rough and rocky road for them. And a lot of those ranchers in my constituency are located along Lake Manitoba, and you throw in the flood in 2011 and the ongoing results of that flood, it's—they're still not out of the

woods and it's been an extremely difficult time for them.

You know, we hear this government put forward their—the Throne Speech and try and—they've tried to regain some of their spin by trying to say it's concentrating on infrastructure. It's been an interesting process since they put the PST increase in place or said they were going to increase the PST. First of all, off the bat, when they made the budget announcement, the spin was it was going to be flood protection and flood protection was the big thing. We had this massive flood we got to recover from and then we're going to do all this protection work. Well, to this date, they've done very, very little protection work of any sort. There's been a little bit of diking done in Brandon. I think that's about the sum total. They've made some promises. They've made some promises that are seven to nine years down the road, that they're going to maybe put another outlet into Lake Manitoba, maybe address that issue, maybe—maybe—just maybe make the emergency channel a permanent drain, but they're so far down the road that it's obvious that they have no intention of doing those things.

The second try at the PST increase spin was the—they decided then that it was going to be for flood costs, highways, bridges, hospitals, PCHs, schools, rec centres, hospitals. All these things were going to be covered by that PST increase, and the public didn't buy that either. What they were in essence doing was taking the capital budgets out of health and education, transferring them over and calling them infrastructure and creating a slush fund back in health and education.

Finally, the third—not finally—the third spin, when the first two spins weren't working, were, well, it was going to be for front-line services, nurses, doctors, teachers and police. And, unfortunately, they hadn't realized that they were already paying for those things and they didn't really need the PST increase to continue paying for them.

Finally, now we've gone almost full circle, and in the Throne Speech it's highways, bridges, strategic infrastructure, whatever that means. I think that's just a catch-all for anything that the government may want to do, and the minister—catch-all for ribbon cutting. Roads, water and sewer, those are the things now they're saying in the Throne Speech, but I don't believe that spin any more than I believe the first three spins.

Probably what they should have done and didn't do is actually come out and say right off the bat, we're putting this PST, this 1 per cent, this 14 per cent increase in place to fight the deficit and then direct it toward reducing the deficit. They didn't do that. They're going to continue the deficits. Deficits going up every year. They're going to continue the deficits and spend all the new money they get besides.

* (11:30)

You know, so many things that just don't seem right here. I noticed the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) in his remarks, through his rose-coloured glasses, is talking about all the wonderful things that are happening and he was quoting Ed Schreyer. And he was quoting Ed Schreyer, I think, from about 40 years ago. Recently Ed Schreyer said Bipole III is breathtaking in its wrong-headed disregard for reality, lacking in merit and plausibility and a waste of public-sector dollars. This is Ed Schreyer, former premier, former ND premier of this province. He said it's an unconscionable piece of nonsense. Ed Schreyer said it's an unconscionable piece of nonsense.

And, you know, we hear this spin over and over again, and the member for Dauphin was at it again today. And he operates with the attitude that, you know, it's not about what is true so much as it's what the public can be persuaded to believe, and that's how he operates. They tell—the NDP government tells so many lies that we lose a reference point to the truth, and it goes on and on and on.

You know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said just the other day, he said we believe a partnership between government, the communities and the private sector can grow the economy and create jobs. Well, that's pretty fantastic, you know. He talks about partnerships but won't consider—won't even look at joining the New West Partnership which we've talked about many times in this House. A partnership with the three provinces to the west creates a huge economy to work with and through—and a voice, a larger voice than just the one province working by itself.

The other thing the Premier's been very reluctant to look at is P3s, private public partnerships. P3s, I think, are certainly something that need to be explored. I heard very recently that the Winnipeg Airports Authority is operating at a P3 to upgrade the airport. And I heard something like a half-a-billion-dollar figure, the airport in Iqaluit, in

Nunavut, and it's a P3 project. A lot of merit to P3 projects, especially when you've got a government that's misspent for years and years and years.

You know, there's any number of things that this government should be addressing, isn't addressing, and the list goes on and on. We've got doctor and nurse shortages in rural Manitoba, in my own community. I've lived in that community all my life. I was born there, raised there, born in that Neepawa Hospital. For the first time in my whole life I do not have a family doctor in my own community, first time in my whole life. That wasn't true in the bad old days that they talk about all the time. There was—I always had a family doctor.

We've got about—we have a hundred-bed personal care home there which is about 90 per cent full. I'm told that the empty space should be around 3 or 4 per cent, not 10 per cent, and the reason given is they don't have enough nurses to operate the place. So recently, just a couple of months ago we had about half a dozen births on one weekend at our hospital. There's a number of people that should—should be into the personal care home, but they can't go there, even though there's empty beds because there's no staff. So then they needed to free up beds for the new mothers of the new babies. So they had to move some of the people that were panelled for the personal care to Minnedosa hospital to make room at our hospital when there were—beds were sitting empty in the personal care home, but they haven't got staff to handle it. That's what we're facing in rural Manitoba. That and 19 closed ERs.

You know, they talk about Gary Filmon, who, in my view, was one of the finer premiers this province has ever had, and they talk about all these cuts and so on that supposedly happened in the '90s. You know, I don't recall nurse shortages or doctor shortages in the '90s. We had the staffing in our facilities, and we had the staffing in those ERs. And now we don't. And it's under this government we don't. It wasn't true in the '90s; they were there.

The—you know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) had one thing right about core infrastructure, and once again I'll go back to the strategic infrastructure. I may be a little naive but I wonder at the difference between core infrastructure and strategic infrastructure. I'm sure strategic is just so they can rubber-stamp anything they want.

The Premier said—he has one thing right, the core infrastructure needs help because it's been ignored for 14 years by this government. Municipalities have

told him that he's ignored it, the totally dysfunctional howling coyotes and insolent children have been telling him that he has ignored that infrastructure. He hasn't been catching on. And I know the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) may have made a couple of those statements at one time, and so.

Another thing I—you know, the member—whoops, those are sensitive—the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) went on about Hydro. You know, built Wuskwatim, Wuskwatim went double the budget, from \$800 million up to 1.6 or 1.7 billion. And they talk about—the fear tactics he throws out that the lights going to go off in about 10 years, the lights are going out.

Well, Wuskwatim has excess power right now, and it's even excess over our contracts for the US, so we're selling it at spot price into the US, which is about 3 and a half cents, which means that Wuskwatim will lose \$100 million a year for at least the next 10 years. That's real sensible development to me.

And it is excess power. We'd be better off actually using it here than exporting it because at least here—I looked at my hydro bill, I'm paying 7 cents a kilowatt—we're selling it for half of that. I wish I could get my hydro at spot price. I'd like—how do you do that? Like, the US can get it at spot price, why can't I? I live in Manitoba, we're producing the hydro. Why can't I get it at spot price? It just would seem like the right thing to do but it—not about to happen.

You know, the Throne Speech with all these—all about supposedly what's going to happen with the increase in PST, but it's still very troubling to me that this government has went out and broke the law, broke the legislation that was there. They imposed the PST increase on July the 1st of this year; they've now collected \$100 million of PST, provincial sales tax, illegally—a hundred million dollars collected illegally.

And the legislation couldn't be very much more clear. It says subject to subsection (2), the government shall not present to the Leg. Assembly a bill to increase the rate of any tax imposed by an act or part of an act listed below, unless the government first puts the question to the advisability of proceeding with such a bill to the voters of Manitoba in a referendum, and a majority of the persons who vote in that referendum authorize the government to proceed with those changes.

Now that—the PST is one of those that's listed.

* (11:40)

If it's such a great thing, if we're going to do all these wonderful things with it, why are we afraid to go out and convince the general public to vote in favour of a referendum? Like, why wouldn't you? You believe in it, you should be able to sell it. Go out and sell it to the general public that we have to raise this PST because of these reasons. No, we're going to instead tear up the legislation that exists, the taxpayer protection act; we're going to tear it up; we're going to write legislation that allows us to proceed. And it just—it's no wonder the people of Manitoba have lost faith in this government.

You know, we got—we've now got to the point where we've got, to me, a critical mass of debt, and the house of cards was going to start to crumble very shortly. We increased almost everything that could be increased and yet I know next spring they'll come up with a number of other things that they can increase. There's so many hidden taxes in the increases in our smoke and mirrors that the government's done. Like, not just the major taxes, but registration fees and fuel tax. Fuel tax, I—just looking for the number, and I don't see it right now—but something like 45 million extra dollars last year supposedly going to infrastructure, highly doubtful if it did.

You know, the—quite recently, Stats Canada did some comparisons of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and we lost in just about every category. Average weekly wage: Saskatchewan, \$914; Manitoba, \$832. Wage growth in Saskatchewan, 4.2 per cent; in Manitoba, .4 per cent. And this is Stats Canada. Inflation in Saskatchewan, 1.6; in Manitoba, double that, 3 per cent. PST—of course, we all know that one: 5 per cent in Saskatchewan, 8 per cent here. Equalization: zero to Saskatchewan, \$1.8 billion here. Interprovincial migration: Saskatchewan, -3,926; Manitoba, 2,447. Population growth in Saskatchewan, 2.1; Manitoba, 1.2. You know, the—just—the list goes on and on and on.

There was a recent article in the Dauphin Herald that said the NDP is thumbing its collective nose at Manitobans, and this is what I'm talking about when I say let's go out and do a referendum. Sell what you want to sell. Tell them why you need that extra PST. The NDP is thumbing its collective nose—this is actually the editorial—this is actually the editorial: The NDP is thumbing its collective nose at Manitobans, vowing to change the laws to suit its

needs, ensuring taxpayers have no say in the increase. It is that type of arrogance the NDP has shown over its time in power, and especially since the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) took over the reins of the party from Gary Doer. And that's the kind of arrogance you see.

We hear them talk over and over again about this wonderful package of electricity, home heating and MPI. But, you know, a office worker in Neepawa did a comparison at her—at income tax time, her and her husband. And this is just strictly on provincial income tax. In BC, she would pay \$6,388 less in provincial income tax than she does here. In Alberta, she would pay \$4,885 less provincial income tax than she does here. In Ontario—surprised somewhat—Ontario, she would pay \$3,760 less than she would here. And in Saskatchewan, she would pay \$2,555 less than she would here. Now, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), of course, assures her that in Saskatchewan that bundle of electricity, home heating and MPI is roughly \$650 cheaper than it is here. I won't necessarily dispute that figure. I just take a look at that, though, and she still ends up \$2,000 better off in Saskatchewan and then pays 3 per cent less on the PST.

The PST increase is crippling this province, no doubt about it. It's just a fact of life. It's something that we're going through at this time and it's devastating. It will take years down the road to start to realize the full implications of it, but it has been really, really tough on this province.

You know, they talk about how much they need this PST, this 1 per cent. What I would certainly suggest is maybe there are some cost savings. They talk about hacks and slashes and cuts and so on. I think there's enough money spent foolishly by this government to probably more than make up the PST increase. Number 1 would be the extra billion dollars the west-side bipole is going to cost.

But I've heard one of the ministers and the Premier talk about affordable housing and all these affordable housing units they're going to put up. Well, I'm just somewhat unsure of what is classified as affordable housing. The most recent one I believe I heard was in Ste. Anne, and when you work it out, it's some \$360,000 per unit—\$360,000 per unit. You could build a 1,200-square-foot house for just over half of that, you know, for \$200,000. The ones in Brandon were, I guess, a little more affordable; they were somewhere around \$265,000 per unit. But how is this classified as affordable housing? I guess the

only thing that makes this—affordable an adjective in this is that it's government-spent. That's the only thing that makes it the so-called affordable.

You know, over the last few years there's been several ambulance—new ambulance garages built around the province. There was one built in Neepawa, my hometown. It's 2,400 square feet. Now, this is an ambulance garage. There's a little office, there's a supply room, but mostly it's a garage. It was \$900,000 for 2,400 square feet. You can build a 2,400-square-foot fully furnished house for half of that. There was another one built in Altona, 2,100 square feet, \$770,000; another one in Ste. Rose, a little larger, it was a three-bay one, for \$1.1 million. I actually would love to have the contract on these things, because somebody's sure getting ripped off on them.

But, you know, when you're short of money as this government claims—poverty, misspending, but I guess it's poverty too—there's a lot of things you can do to help out. Forget about the vote tax, put that money back into the budget. Cabinet ministers, there's probably at least five of them we could get along without; I think there's probably closer to 18 of them we could get along without, but there's at least five that we could get along without.

*(11:50)

So you could save some costs there. Misspent money in some departments. I've been trying for quite some time to find out where the money went in student financial aid, over \$15 million and I can't find it.

Just one last comment that I want to touch on that I picked out of the Throne Speech, and I found it kind of hilarious. It said kids are going to be taught to think critically and communicate effectively. Wow, really? What have we been doing up to this time? You're going to teach them—you're going to start teaching them now to think critically and communicate effectively? I am just underwhelmed. You know, that's an affront to my friend from Lac du Bonnet who was a schoolteacher. He actually thought he was teaching kids those things before, but I guess we weren't. But this government in their wisdom are going to start doing that. I think that's really, really, really an interesting comment. You know, I actually even think back, and I know it's the dark old ages, but I actually think back to when I went to school. I'm pretty sure I was taught to think

creatively and communicate effectively. I hope I was and I hope I still—still doing it to this day.

And I know there are a number of other people that want to put their remarks on the record on the Throne Speech and the amendment to the Throne Speech.

So, with those few words, I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Good morning to you, and it's my pleasure to rise to respond to the Throne Speech today, and I would like to begin my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by acknowledging your good works in the last session. I know it was a highly problematic session with members opposite orchestrating a filibuster in order to delay the passage of legislation. I know that things got quite heated in the Chamber over the course of a hot summer, and you really did a wonderful job of keeping a lid on it and getting us through. So I think all of us would acknowledge your good efforts in that regard.

I do want to also begin my remarks by expressing my condolences to the entire Philippine community with the massive event that occurred just recently, the typhoon. Something that we should all bear in mind, the Pacific Ocean is a mighty force and when disasters occur there resulting quite often in the loss of thousands of lives, sometimes tens of thousands of lives, we do have to—all people globally have to pull together to try and bring them out of that. We do experience disasters here in Manitoba as well, but never anything in my memory anywhere near approaching that magnitude. You know, we suffer mosquitoes and wood ticks in the summer and cold winters, but nothing can compare to the power of a tsunami like that or an earthquake or a typhoon. So again, my condolences to all people of the Philippines.

Speaking of disasters, from my perspective as MLA for the Interlake, I keep—I like to keep the flood of 2011 in the front of everybody's mind. It is something that is far from over yet from our perspective as people in the Interlake, in particular people who live around the great lakes of Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. And until such time that all people are returned to their homes, and I'm speaking specifically about the Aboriginal peoples who lived around Lake St. Martin and are still evacuated, until such time that all of those people have been restored to their homes then I will not rest and in my mind this flood is not over. This was the

greatest natural disaster that Manitobans, I think, have experienced in recent times, and it is not over yet.

I also look to the ranchers around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin. A lot of ranch land was damaged during the course of that flood. Land being inundated for years or a period of months succeeding a year, at the very least. That land sustained damage. And, if we talk about infrastructure and repairs to infrastructure, from a rural perspective, from a farmer's perspective, land, as well, is infrastructure. And the government should never lose sight of that fact and should do everything in their power to see that those people as well are restored to their original condition.

And I do know that the provincial government did a lot in that regard. During the flood, the flood year 2011, we went above and beyond the call of duty, I think it's very safe to say, in putting in a range of programs over and above standard disaster financial assistance.

But we cannot continue to do that alone as a province. When we experience a massive disaster like that—much like in the Philippines, when the world community gathers to help them out—when a disaster occurs in Canada, all Canadians should pull together. That's why we are Canadians first and Manitobans second and Interlakers third, because when a region is faced with a disaster such as this and the costs that are inherent in that disaster, all Canadians should pull together and thereby lessen the load for individual people or individual provinces. And sadly that has not happened here in Manitoba.

Our government did all it could, but the federal government has stuck to its guns that DFA is the be-all and end-all; that's all the money there is and they will not go outside the box in that regard. And I know we continue to lobby them and we continue to go beyond what is technically our provincial jurisdiction. But we can never lose sight of the fact that the national government has to be there as well on behalf of all Canadians to see that people who are impacted by disasters are treated with fairly and honourably. So I will continue to make that point as well, until such time that all of the people that I represent have been fully restored to their lives.

Now, looking forward, post-flood—if I may say post-flood—is mitigation works. And I do want to acknowledge our Premier (Mr. Selinger).

Our Premier (Mr. Selinger) has stepped up to the plate not only in 2011, but he's made the very difficult decision to raise the PST by an extra point in order to generate the revenues that we need as a province to step up and put in place the infrastructure so that going forward, should we ever experience high waters like this again—and we will, whether it's a hundred years from now or 10 years from now—governments of today have to be looking at mitigation in order to lessen the impact of future disasters, which will ultimately come.

And, again, we hope that the federal government will be there. And I know that they've recently announced to their next big infrastructure project, and maybe they will actually come to the table when we begin construction on things like the outlet out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, to increase the outflow capacity.

I know we've certainly heard a lot of rhetoric from federal members of Parliament about that, oh, yes, we'll be there. But I'm skeptical, frankly, Mr. Speaker, because I just have to look back to the emergency outlet that was built by this government out of Lake St. Martin at a cost of close to \$100 million, which was classic disaster-related infrastructure done during the disaster that should be fully eligible for DFA funding. To this date, not a dollar—not a dollar—has been committed by the federal government. So, when they—when their members of Parliament prowl around the province and start yammering about where they're going to be for the next big drain, let's just go back and address the works that have been done to date before we start making false promises about the future.

* (12:00)

So, you know, I'm hopeful—I'm hopeful that they will come to their senses and start representing Manitobans and be there when the need arises.

We should also be looking to all the various communities around Lake Manitoba, in particular Lake St. Martin as well, in terms of mitigation works, and by that I mean diking. A lot of the dikes that were put up during the flood, of course, in order to be eligible for DFA cost sharing had to be removed, and were. But some of these communities—and a good example would be the RM of Coldwell. Reeve Brian Sigfusson, some of the works that he has done, frankly, over the course of the flood were extraordinary. If ever there was a man who used his skills and abilities and experience, Brian typified that and I just want to take my hat off to him. And I look

to the works that he did just in recent times reconstituting dikes around communities such as Lunder Beach and Sugar Point. Those are the types of works that the provincial government should be involved in and the federal government as well. So that type of work we have to do.

Now, a lot of people say, well, if you're going to dig a big outlet out of Lake Manitoba, why do we need to invest in diking or in elevating our cottages, our homes, for instance? And I will say I was at a meeting that the Minister of Infrastructure arranged not too long ago, and we were talking about that outlet. And even if we had an outlet, I believe the staff said an outlet that would've flowed 10,000 cubic feet per second out of Lake Manitoba, Lake Manitoba would still have risen to 816 above sea level. So we should always bear this in mind that man's ability to control Mother Nature is limited, quite often extremely limited. So we have to bear that in mind, that even though we're going to potentially spend 200 to 300 million dollars on another outlet out of Lake Manitoba, the need is still there for the mitigation works from community to community, from home to home. We cannot lose sight of that fact.

I noticed in the—well, I do want to comment on the PST increase a little bit more, Mr. Speaker, because I chaired the standing committee that dealt with Bill 20 and, you know, the majority of the people who came to present to the standing committee were urban. I think we dealt with our rural and whatever northern speakers from out of town within the first hour, and then for the next hundred-or-so hours they were urban people. And the message that I was hearing from them was that the flood was over, the flood was years ago and we have floods all the time in Manitoba. This was just a flood like all other floods. And I—you know, I was quite amazed and I have to say a little bit upset as a rural member, as the representative of the people around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, to hear that attitude, that this was just a normal occurrence of flood like any other and that it was over. That is not the case, still is not the case, and we need that percentage increase to have the capital to put in place. So this government is doing exactly the right thing in increasing the PST, and I take my hat off to the Premier for the difficult decision that he had to make. Again, I'd like to put that on the record. So thank you for that.

And I see the clock is ticking. I better move on here to other forms of infrastructure. You know,

health infrastructure, very important, and again, the Throne Speech makes a good reference to improvements. Just from my perspective in the Interlake, I am looking forward to rebuilding the clinic in Lundar. It wasn't mentioned in the Throne Speech, but soon to be done and soon to be mentioned in future throne speeches, I am hoping, and as well as a commitment to a new EMS station in the community of St. Laurent. You know, our record on EMS services—when I look back to 1999 when we were dealing with those old ramshackle ambulances, this government replaced the entire fleet of ambulances across this province. These are now mobile hospitals, staffed by professional paramedics, not volunteers. And I don't mean to denigrate volunteers. Their work was very much appreciated.

But, frankly, when it comes to life-or-death situations, I would rather have an EMS individual hooked up to a triage doctor in Brandon, in the centre there, that can advise on administering clot-busting drugs, for instance, for stroke attack victims. This is a modern system put in place by this government—should never be underemphasized. And our work continues on that front. And I do look forward to the mobile—or mobile clinics that reference was made to in the Throne Speech, as well; first one going into the Parkland region and, I hope, another one soon to be coming into the Interlake region, as well.

Education infrastructure is also important to me. And, you know, again, in the Throne Speech, I give kudos to the good works that we have done up in the North, the University College of the North, a hundred million dollars in investment over the years in the campuses in Thompson and The Pas. And I want to congratulate the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen) for some of the—for the announcement for the upgrade of the school in Cranberry Portage. Good job, there, in lobbying this government, as well as the work on Highway 10 from Bakers Narrows into Flin Flon. That's something very important, as well—an area that I am familiar with, as my brother owns a business on Lake Athapapuscow and I've driven that road many, many times over the years. And I think back to when I was a young man, it used to take me almost an hour to drive to Flin Flon because of all the curves. This government has worked wonders in reversing that, so congratulations on that front.

But, in terms of education infrastructure, I do want to state the need is in the Interlake, as well. I look to the First Nations communities, in particular, in the Interlake. I represent nine First Nations

communities in the Interlake, and we need infrastructure, as well. You know, there was reference made to Fisher River Cree Nation, the good works that they have done in terms of education, in terms of transitioning their students from high school into technical colleges or university. I was very pleased to see that in the Throne Speech—because Chief Dave Crate of Fisher River Cree Nation is, without a doubt, in my mind, one of the best chiefs in Manitoba, if not the very best chief, I would even go so far as to say, with some caution, because, as I said, I represent a number of chiefs. But Dave's record has been exemplary and his acknowledgement in this Throne Speech was well deserved.

And I would like to take it a step further. You know, in the area of Peguis and Fisher River, we have probably four to five thousand people, and the unemployment rates are still unacceptably high. We're dealing with skills shortages in rural areas, so we have to connect the dots, Mr. Speaker.

We have to start looking at actual infrastructure programmings, very much appreciated. We've done a wonderful job in that regard, particularly in those two communities. But what we need are some capital works. We need an actual centre in that area where all of these programs can be brought together into one centre where we can start delivering advanced technical vocational training at a higher level yet. So I know that this process is under way, that it's been ongoing for a number of years now, and I will be bringing this to this government in the days to come. I don't mean weeks and months to come, I mean in the days to come because this is very important to the people that I represent.

* (12:10)

The last thing I'd like to talk about, there was mention about a new Churchill port authority, which is very interesting to me. This whole CentrePort endeavour that this government has entered in upon will be historic. Future generations will look back at this NDP government's time in office and they will say that the CentrePort development was visionary, that it was game changing. This will change the face of our province going forward into the future, and enterprises such as this will only improve that.

I'm particularly interested in Churchill because of its close ties to the Russian city of Murmansk, and I have been to Murmansk, Mr. Speaker, in the company of the Minister of Infrastructure and

Transportation (Mr. Ashton), as well as the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha).

The potential for increased trade into this area is enormous, to say the least. The route from Churchill to Murmansk is relatively short, for example, in comparison to the route from Montréal to St. Petersburg and there's a lot less traffic, and Murmansk is a port that is ice free year round. So we have to look to this area.

Siberia is an area that spans seven time zones, Mr. Speaker; it's 5,000 miles from Moscow to Vladivostok. This is the, one of the most resource-rich areas in the world. And I don't exaggerate. I'll give you an example, and I do have a degree in East European studies and I wrote my thesis on the Russian oil and natural gas industry.

So let me give you an example in that particular field. There's one gas field in the west Siberian basin called the Urengoy gas field that has 7 trillion cubic metres of proven reserves of natural gas. We measure natural gas in cubic feet in North America; in Russia, they measure it in cubic metres, Mr. Speaker. Seven trillion cubic metres in one gas field is three times Canada's total proven reserves of natural gas, in one field in Siberia, and there are seven fields progressively smaller than that, but in that same order of magnitude that stem off of that. It's quite likely that half the world's natural gas supply is in Russia, in the west Siberian basin and in the Kara and Bering seas offshore where the continental shelf extends out over 500 miles. Just to give you some perspective. So just in that one industry alone there's that much potential for trade.

When I was in Krasnoyarska, leading a Manitoba trade delegation a couple of years ago, in the company of the Canadian ambassador, I got to get some idea of the scope just in that particular krai. You know, one in every four trees in Russia is in the Krasnoyarsk Krai. There's all kinds of opportunity for development in pulp and paper, in forestry, industries that are complementary here in Canada. So there's potential for upgrade.

And one of the things that I learned from our ambassador was that Russia is in the process of modernizing virtually every sector of industry in Siberia, and this is fueled by petro dollars, of which there is no shortage in Russia. So every industrial sector is being upgraded. And the way to move equipment into this area is the Trans-Siberian Railway, and Murmansk is the terminus point of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Churchill-Murmansk, the potential for trade there is enormous because all of these sectors within Siberia, within Russia, are being opened up to global competition for equipment replacement, replacing antiquated, poorly built Soviet-style equipment with the best equipment available in the world. Manitoba should capitalize on this; CentrePort should be a part of this. And I will do my utmost as the MLA for the Interlake to keep this foremost in the minds of this government.

And I will acknowledge that work is being done on this front. And in particular I again want to acknowledge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation for his leadership, for his determination and his tenacity in seeing that this file remains of interest to all of us.

So I will conclude my remarks on that note, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to put my thoughts on the record in regard to the Throne Speech today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to put a few remarks on the record, not so much on the Throne Speech as of what it had for content but what it was missing. And, in order to put things into perspective, I'd like to start with the proposed motion by the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), and the amendment thereto that were put forward by our leader.

And I will take the paper off of the microphone, and it will work better for Hansard. Thank you very much.

So we'll start with the amendments that were put forward by our leader that made a lot of sense, and these came from the people of Manitoba. These are the very people that we're elected to represent. We have a done a poor job of it up 'til now; at least, the sitting government has. And so, by starting out with the first amendment that despite hearing from thousands of Manitobans in opposition to raising the provincial sales tax and calling the idea ridiculous during the last election period, the provincial government has chosen to ignore both the will of the Manitobans and the law by 'chosing'—choosing to raise the PST by 14 per cent, from 7 to 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard the member for the Interlake stand up and use the word that I'm not familiar with about the MPs of our country, yammering around the country.

An Honourable Member: Yammering.

Mr. Graydon: Yammering. I've never heard the term before, but it was a derogatory remark after I heard what he put with the rest of it, but it had to do with false comments, I thought. And this was from a member of a government that knowingly went door to door in 2011, knocked on the door and said, hi, I'm here for your vote. I will not raise taxes. I will not raise the PST. The very member from the Interlake talking about yammering. He went out and deceived, along with the government, deceived the people of Manitoba. They raised—they ignored Manitobans' calls at committee not to raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker, (b) that despite calls, continued calls for respect for law, the provincial government's approach to continuing to disrespect the tenets of balanced budget and fiscal management act, including raising major taxes on Manitobans without a referendum and exempting ministers from established salary penalties during deficit periods, represents a failure to respect the rule of law and the democratic rights of Manitobans. We, as elected representatives, do not—we're not above the law. We don't have the right to break the law. We have the right to change the law. There's a due process for that, but that has been omitted by this government.

Mr. Speaker, (c) that despite the fact that Manitobans experience the highest food bank usage in Canada, especially amongst children and an inflation rate that is more than twice the national average, the provincial government continues to impose taxes on Manitobans at a lower rate of income than what was found in all but two provinces, and has failed to provide an increase in the basic personal exemption—tax exemption to the national provincial average. These are simple things. These are simple things that could have been in that Throne Speech. This has been suggested to this government for an extended period this summer and this spring. I believe there was many, many opportunities that they had to capitalize on some great, great suggestions. We're here to help. We're all elected by the people of Manitoba for the good of Manitoba, but they chose not to take any advice. It could have been in this Throne Speech. They could have regained a bit of respect.

Mr. Speaker, (d) that despite the many calls from individuals and community groups, the provincial government has failed to protect the most vulnerable Manitobans by refusing to raise the rental allowance

portion of employment and income assistance to 75 per cent of the median market rents.

* (12:20)

The most vulnerable people in the province of Manitoba, the people that need a hand up—they don't need a hand out, they need a hand up. They needed to be treated fairly. That has not been addressed in 10 years; it hasn't been addressed at 14 years by this particular government. They were advised of that prior to, and again I'll reiterate from last spring through the summer. Perhaps they missed the summer part of it; perhaps they took holidays or something. But we vigorously begged them to address this situation and they ignored that. They had an opportunity to gain the respect of many, many people in this province. Not all of them are in the same situation as this low income, but they got the respect, or could have had the respect of those that could afford to help those.

Mr. Speaker, (e) that despite the largest increase in revenue of any Canadian province in 2013 and the highest projected growth in revenue of any province in Canada over the next several years, this House regrets that the provincial government's commitment to increase spending and the absence of a comprehensive expenditure review to evaluate return on investment and program outcome—excuse me—across all departments of government.

And, again, we suggested there's ways to address certain issues to see if input and output are equal. Hasn't happened. It hasn't happened but they had an opportunity. I know that they can't know everything, and we probably don't know everything either, but our suggestions could have been used very constructively in this Throne Speech. We could have put Manitoba on a path to recovering from the bottom-of-the-barrel government that we have today. They could have done that by taking some advice from this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, (f) that despite the promise to invest in core infrastructure, the provincial government has consistently failed to follow through on past commitments, demonstrating to the House and the provincial government cannot be taken at its word since numerous core infrastructure projects cited in this Speech from the Throne constitute reannouncements of long-standing projects committed to prior to the proposed hike in the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, since the proposed hike has been tabled in this House, we have heard many, many, many different versions of what it's for, and just as recently as the Throne Speech, we heard that that is for core, core infrastructure. The definition, which is hard to come by, but the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) made it clear, it's for flood protection. No, that's what it started out for in the spring, but that all changed during the summer, all changed during the summer until the Throne Speech a couple of days ago, and it was clear it was for core infrastructure—core. Definition of core is missing. That is the problem. Some people have a different idea obviously on that side of the House. They don't know exactly what the minister responsible has in mind. They don't have a definite plan at all.

We know that they're using a shotgun. Fifteen, 15 different ways that they're going that are priorities. Fifteen priorities. Let me see. That's difficult. That is difficult to have five priorities, but here we have someone that can have 15, and you know what's happened with those? Every time that they've had so many priorities, we've had a larger deficit and our debt in the province has been rising.

But there's six amendments here that they would be well, well versed if they would pay attention to those and incorporate them. It would be to their benefit. It would get respect from Manitobans at all levels, Mr. Speaker.

And one other thing that member from the Interlake expounded on was the Port of Churchill and how important that is, and I agree with him. It is terribly important to the economy of Manitoba. It's terribly important to the agricultural economy, and the agriculture economy, I might add, Mr. Speaker, is one of the main drivers in the GDP of this province, and particularly this year. The GDP is up when manufacturing we know is down. Jobs are down. The economy's in a tank, but the GDP is being driven by agriculture.

But in order for the Port of Churchill to expand and become more profitable—and profit's not a dirty word. It really isn't. Profit is necessary, but I heard the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff). Him and I agree that we have to expand that port, and then he—and he went on to say that in Russia the closest port where they are exporting their gas and their oil, and they're doing it on rail. My goodness, it's on rail on permafrost because the areas that he talked about are on permafrost. And there is rail; it's not pipeline. If he would know what he was talking

about, that's exactly what they need to do as well in Churchill. You have to think outside the box. How do they hold their—how do they hold their permafrost together? He needs to learn a little bit more of what's going on rather than just checking out the menu in the restaurant.

Further to this, Mr. Speaker, that—I'll address some of the issues in the Throne Speech—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

If I—I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Emerson, but I notice that your papers are on top of the microphone and it's—I know it's a new microphone system in the Assembly and members are coming to terms with the sensitivity of those microphones. So, if I could inform honourable members, when you're speaking or you're working at your desk to keep your papers and your books off of the microphones. And also if you're having side discussions, please be aware of the sensitivity of the microphones to being able to pick up those side conversations.

So the honourable member for Emerson has the floor.

Mr. Graydon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I—I'm going to see if I can get that old elevator that they had on the last microphone and then I can't get the paper on top of it. But thanks for bringing that to my attention.

We also—speaking to the Throne Speech and addressing some of the shortfalls, we could start with the—with education that the member for the Interlake talked about in the North that's so terribly important. And I agree with him; education is very important and it's one of the steps to eliminate poverty—no question about that.

But what has actually happened is the NDP have cut funding promised in the—Manitoba's post-secondary institutions in half and slashed many of the apprenticeship training programs. So, on one side, he doesn't know what the rest of his colleagues are doing. He also talked about the North, and the NDP tout investments in UCN; however, due to their decision to cut funding to post-secondary institutions in half, the UCN had to cut its student accessibility services. This won't help the issues in the northern Manitoba either. But the member from the Interlake hasn't kept up to what's going on in his own caucus,

and it's unfortunate. I wish he'd spend more time there.

Agriculture Food and Rural Initiatives have had issues, and what we've heard from the NDP government constantly is that they would not slash front-line services. Well, my goodness, what have they done? In MAFRI, they've closed offices all over the province, Mr. Speaker. I don't know.

We consider them to be front-line services. We consider them to be essential services, and they're essential services to agriculture, the biggest economic driver in the province of Manitoba today. The reason that the GDP is up is because of agriculture and what we want to do is cut services to them. Let's do that, and that's what they have done in agriculture.

They also, back in 2003, just to give you some history, BSE hit in Canada and it cost Manitoba cattle—Manitoba livestock industry billions of dollars. In 2006, the NDP government said, we're here to save you. We're going to take \$2 off of your—off of every animal that you sell and we are going to match it two for one; we're going to match that and so—and the purpose was to create slaughter facilities

in the province because we have no federal-inspected slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we cannot export our product to Saskatchewan or Ontario let alone to the United States or anyplace else in the world. We do not have the ability to export.

* (12:30)

But the NDP government said we're here to help you and what we will do is we will match your \$2 two for one, and, as time went on, they said, okay, now we're not going to match it two for one, but we will do it one for one.

However, recently, what we have found out is the MCEC is broke; they have no money. And, to date, they haven't put one penny into the slaughter facilities—

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Emerson will have 15 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 15, 2013

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