

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 12, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome back. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 64—The Court of Queen's Bench
Small Claims Practices Amendment Act**

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard), that Bill 64, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le recouvrement des petites créances à la Cour du Banc de la Reine, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, this bill would amend The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Act to make the small claims court process more consistent with the principle of access to justice. It will provide Manitobans with a more appropriate and effective response to address their smaller monetary disputes.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 69—The Technical Safety Act

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 69, The Technical Safety Act; Loi sur la sécurité technique, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Braun: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce Bill 69, The Technical Safety Act. This legislation will replace six existing acts, each of which regulate a specific type of technical equipment. The acts being consolidated include The Amusements Act, Electricians' Licence Act, The Elevator Act, The Gas and Oil Burner Act, The Power Engineers Act, The Steam and Pressure Plants Act. None of these acts has undergone a comprehensive review in well over 20 years, leaving them badly in need of an update. Consolidation of these acts is appropriate since each of these acts has a similar purpose.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Good afternoon. 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 is submitted on behalf of C. McLean, L. Neufeld, B. Mozdzen and many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Effects on Manitoba Economy**

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Premier of Manitoba is on record calling the idea of a hike in the PST ridiculous.

Economists calculate the PST hike has cost the average family \$437 more in taxes after only six months.

Seventy-five per cent of small businesses in Manitoba agree that provincial taxes are discouraging them from growing their businesses.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association estimates that a 1 per cent increase in the PST will result in a loss to the economy of \$42 million and threaten hundreds of jobs in that sector.

Partly due to the PST, overall taxes on new investment in Manitoba recently stood at 26.3 per cent whereas the Alberta rate was 16.2 per cent and the Ontario rate was 17.9 per cent, according to the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce are concerned that the PST hike will make an already uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive to job creators in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the job-killing PST increase.

To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to reject or approve any increases to the PST through a referendum.

This petition is signed by C. Ramage, M. Elcock, B. Mowat and many other fine Manitobans.

**Beausejour District Hospital—
Weekend and Holiday Physician Availability**

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The Beausejour District Hospital is a 30-bed, acute-care facility that serves the communities of Beausejour and Brokenhead.

(2) The hospital and the primary-care centre have had no doctor available on weekends and holidays for many months, jeopardizing the health and livelihoods of those in northeast region of the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.

(3) During the 2011 election, the provincial government promised to provide every Manitoban with access to a family doctor by 2015.

(4) This promise is far from being realized, and Manitobans are witnessing many emergency rooms limiting services or closing temporarily, with the majority of these reductions taking place in rural Manitoba.

(5) According to the Health Council of Canada, only 25 per cent of doctors in Manitoba reported that their patients had access to care on evenings and weekends.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to ensure that the Beausejour District Hospital and primary-care centre have a primary-care physician available on weekends and holidays to better provide area residents with this essential service.

This petition is signed by C. Bender, A. Berry, J. Mellors and many, many more fine Manitobans.

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Cross-Border Shopping**

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

* (13:40)

Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston,

Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail sales tax is 6 per cent.

The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

This petition's signed by S. Jamieson, A. Sanduck, B. Fraser and many more concerned Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Reversal and Referendum Rights

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum to either approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.

(2) Despite the fact that our right to vote is enshrined in this legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July 1st, 2013.

(3) The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the government broke the law failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST tax increase on Manitoban families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the PST increase.

(2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

This petition is signed by M. Gurman, K. Gurman, E. Fosty and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Day

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I have a statement for the House.

I am pleased to rise and wish our province a happy 144th birthday. Today is Manitoba Day, the anniversary of the creation of our province. The Manitoba Act was passed by Parliament of Canada and received royal assent on May 12th, 1870.

Today is a day to remember how our history has been shaped by past generations. It is a day to reflect on what it means to be a Manitoban.

Aboriginal peoples in this region generously shared their experience and knowledge with fur traders, explorers and settlers. This helped them survive in an unfamiliar land and led to the emergence of a Metis people who championed recognition of Manitoba as a province with its unique and diverse culture.

These peoples have left us with a legacy to be proud of, welcoming people from around the world who have come in search of new beginnings, better futures and freedom: the Manitoba way. They bring with them their traditions, values and perspectives, creating the rich mixture of cultures that we have come to consider one of our greatest assets.

It is through building common understanding of our shared history that we have been able to grow our communities and shape our province. Communities, museums and heritage groups across the province have been holding events that celebrate our birthday in style. These organizations work

year-round to showcase our diverse history and recognize those who contribute to our appreciation of Manitoba's unique identity.

History is often seen as something ancient, irrelevant to our daily lives. It is about dates, battles, artifacts. In reality, history is something that happens every day. It is an open-ended story, one that grows with every passing year. When we understand our collective history, we strengthen our sense of Manitoba as a community and we can appreciate where we started and what we have accomplished. Whether you're Aboriginal, francophone or part of an ethnocultural community, you're also part of Manitoba's community. Whether you are new to Manitoba or whether your roots run deep, we all have a shared identity and a shared experience.

I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to explore our collective heritage to learn and understand more about ourselves and our place in the world.

Thank you very much. Happy birthday.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to our beautiful home, the province of Manitoba. We serve Manitoba and its fine inhabitants in this Legislature, and today is a day for celebration as today is Manitoba Day. As we are all aware, Manitoba was officially founded in 1870 with the Manitoba Act, although it should be noted that First Nations people have inhabited these parts of Manitoba long before the incorporation of Manitoba into Canada.

Manitoba has a rich history of a pioneer spirit, as we were the seat of the fur trade with the Hudson Bay company being created in 1670 and the transporting of fur to Europe. Manitoba is known for many things, from being the land of 100,000 lakes to our friendly, compassionate and hard-working people. Manitoba has raised some very influential and memorable people, from Nellie McClung, Terry Fox to Louis Riel. We have been at the forefront of many great achievements, most notably the right of women to vote. Manitoba is home to some of the world's finest agriculture production, something in which we take great pride. Our hard-working farmers feed countless people around the world.

We are blessed to have such a diverse province, from a wide range of cultures to our diverse topography. People from all across the world come to our province and are welcomed with open arms. This diversity strengthens our province and makes us

the amazing place we are today. Mr. Speaker, we are also the polar bear capital of the world, home to the Human Rights Museum, a beautiful prairie sky and countless other treasures, and even though we occasionally suffer through some of the coldest winters, flooding, mosquitoes and various other hardships, it only adds to our resilience and our strength of character.

Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to join with all of my colleagues and stand before this House today as a born-and-raised Manitoban celebrating this great province. Happy birthday, Manitoba. Happy Manitoba Day.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, on May 12, 1870, the Manitoba Act was passed by the Canadian Parliament by a vote of 120 to 11. Now, 144 years later, we celebrate this passage of the Manitoba Act and the creation of our province, Manitoba.

One of those who spoke on the Manitoba Act was the then-prime minister, John A. Macdonald, and he said, and I quote: It is considered proper that the province which is to be organized shall be called Manitoba, an Indian name meaning the God who speaks.

The name Manitoba, so translated, is the place where the Great Spirit speaks. It may have been given first to an island just north of the narrows on Lake Winnipeg where certain conditions of the wind and water give rise to sounds which are similar to whispering and speaking. A hundred and forty-four years ago the name was extended to all of the new province, Manitoba, and our province has grown in size and population and in its social and economic development in the years since.

* (13:50)

It's important that today we celebrate our province and its extraordinary potential. We have a rich diversity in our people and in our landscape, and we have much more that we need to do to achieve the potential identified 144 years ago. First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, as well as the early fur traders, the Selkirk settlers and the many who have come since then from astounding array of cultural

and ethnic backgrounds, have all contributed to who we are right now.

As we dedicate ourselves inside and outside this Legislature to achieving that potential, I join others today in celebrating what we have achieved so far, in recognizing where we are today and in challenging ourselves to address the issues of today to achieve even greater goals in the future.

Happy Manitoba Day.

Mr. Speaker: Any further ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us today Mr. Gerard Lecuyer, the former member for Radisson; and Mr. Jerry Storie, the former member for Flin Flon.

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

And also, seated in the public gallery we have with us today 25 grade 9 students from Chief Peguis Junior High under the direction of Ms. Anita Stepaniuk, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Immigration Agreement Resolution Government Knowledge

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): One of the benefits of working in a place like this, Mr. Speaker, is the relationships one can build over time.

And the Premier has had the chance to build a relationship with the former member—former NDP member for Riel, the present member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), over a considerable length of time, serving together in the caucus and in the Cabinet of the Doer administration, and then, actually, he chose to appoint her to three important portfolios in Cabinet as well in his own administration. And over that time that relationship would have been one which one would assume would be based on trust and on loyalty.

The fact that the Premier became aware that that trust and that loyalty had been betrayed must have

been—come as a shock to him; it would've demeaned the relationship. It would've been a memorable day the day that he learned of that betrayal, when that minister told him or someone told him that the civil service of this province had been wrongly impugned and their integrity smeared. The Premier must have been shocked.

So I have to ask him: On what day was it that he became aware that that relationship wasn't as strong as he thought it was?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we've canvassed these questions in the past thoroughly in the Legislature, and I can say to the member opposite that we look forward to a debate on the future of Manitoba where we put an emphasis on jobs and the economy, we put an emphasis on growing the province of Manitoba for all Manitobans.

And it's particularly important to have that focus on today, the 144th anniversary of the birth of the great province of Manitoba where the Manitou spirit lives and where we are going to honour one of our most esteemed members of the Legislature, Elijah Harper, today.

Mr. Pallister: Well, one of the things that we want to be proud of in this place would be the integrity of all members, Mr. Speaker, but when that is put into disrepute, then it should concern all of us.

And the Premier again failed to answer the question he's failed to answer before, and the fact of the matter is that belies a cover-up. It belies a deception that is not making him or his colleagues any more attractive, frankly, to the people of Manitoba.

His integrity is not the only issue here. His trust was placed in a Cabinet member who betrayed that trust, according to the Premier, for a considerable length of time, a length of time he refuses to disclose. But more importantly, the trust of his Cabinet colleagues was betrayed as well, and more importantly than that, the trust of all members of this Legislative Assembly was betrayed, and more important than that, the trust of the civil service and every person who works in it was betrayed by this deception.

Now, for over a year the Premier took no action and stonewalled in stoic silence. He covered up.

So I have to ask him: How long did he wait when he discovered this betrayal to have a meeting and discuss this with the member for Riel?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member from Riel was encouraged to fully co-operate with the Ombudsman's investigation, which the member did. And the Ombudsman's investigation identified the issues at hand, and the member fully co-operated in disclosing her role in the matter at hand.

And it is true that this was an—a very important issue that we were discussing at the time, the future of immigration in Manitoba, one of our most fundamentally important programs for the future growth of this province. We have seen somewhere between 13 and 15 thousand newcomers come into this province every single year.

And when the federal government made changes to the act, we rightly believed that it was important that all members of the Legislature have the opportunity to discuss that program because of its importance to the economic future of Manitoba. Members on this side of the House stood up for the program and the people that want to live in Manitoba. The members opposite stood up for Ottawa and did not support the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, immigrants come to this beautiful province to escape corrupt governments who cover up and hide facts. They come to escape the kind of environment that the Premier is creating here by trying to cover up at his—in his own defence and in his colleague's defence at the expense of the civil service of our province.

How many times did he even meet with the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick)? Zero times. He never even met with the member for Riel to discuss this issue, and he says he doesn't remember when he first became aware of the issue.

Now he claims it's an important issue. If it was important, why didn't he act on it? Why did he immediately lapse into talking points, the same talking points that the member for Riel used to blame the civil service for what we now know was being done by this government? That is not respect for the civil service. That's exactly the opposite.

Let me ask the Premier again: Why did he lapse into damage control and why did he hide behind civil servants instead of getting to the bottom of the issue at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Selinger: I would have to say to all the fictitious statements the member just put on the record, none of the above, Mr. Speaker.

This side of the House and myself, the member from Riel, were fully encouraged to co-operate with the Ombudsman's investigation. That investigation was the proper way to proceed. When a complaint is made, the Ombudsman reports to all members of the Legislature, has the authority to review all the facts of the case and seek co-operation from everybody. The member from Riel was encouraged to fully co-operate with the Ombudsman, which the member did.

Mr. Speaker, we know it's important to protect the integrity of the Legislature and the officers who serve the Legislature, as well as all members of the Legislature, and if the member wants to put fictitious information on the record, that is entirely up to him.

What we do, Mr. Speaker, is support a proper process with due process to ensure that the integrity of the way we investigate things is done properly and that proper responses are put on the record to correct those issues so they do not happen again.

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

Government Management

Mr. Pallister: And, of course, the proper response would be to tell the truth from the outset and to admit when a wrong had been done immediately upon finding it out, not cover it up for a year and a half. The proper response would be to negate the need for an Ombudsman's report in the first place so that the Ombudsman would not have to investigate the wrongdoing, which the Premier was aware of well in advance of the Ombudsman doing his work. The Ombudsman's work would not have been necessary had the Premier disclosed the facts when he became aware of them.

Now, he proceeded then to fire the member for Riel from his Cabinet. He hadn't met with her. He had not met with her to discuss this issue. He had not told his Cabinet colleagues of her transgressions and he failed to say a word to the public over a year—over a year. Now, that was not a failure of the member for Riel; those things were a failure of the Premier.

Does the Premier consider, in hindsight, that he fired the wrong person?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, as I said, when the item was identified as an issue, the member was fully encouraged to co-operate with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's study and investigation had already been under way, and when it came to my attention

that the member needed to be fully co-operative and disclose her role in that matter, she was encouraged to do that and she did that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the integrity of members of the Legislature. He was a member of the government that perpetrated the largest vote-rigging scandal in the history of Manitoba on the people of Manitoba. To this very day he has never taken responsibility for that. He has never apologized for that, and he has never said that it was wrong and that—and said that it shouldn't happen again. That's the kind of integrity we have from the member opposite.

So I have to ask, if he wants accountability, when will he start with himself?

* (14:00)

Mr. Pallister: A desperate Premier doing damage control and doing a pathetic job of it.

This Rallygate issue didn't have to be an issue. This Premier made it an issue through his indecision and his inability to act when the facts were apparent to him. He did not act for a year and a half even though he admits he knew, well, in spring, summer or fall of that year.

Yet we know that the assistant deputy minister, of course, who was innocent of wrongdoing from the get-go, knew the first day of his innocence. And we know also, because we now have information that helps us understand this, that the deputy minister knew as well within hours that the ADM was completely innocent of wrongdoing, which leaves one person between the Premier and the facts and that is the clerk of the Executive Council.

Now, the Premier meets with the clerk of the Executive Council on a daily basis. Plausible deniability has to be plausible to work. This is his last line of defence.

Is the Premier claiming that the clerk of the Executive Council knew absolutely nothing about this issue for a time period equal to the time period he claims that he was in the dark?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, subsequent to the Ombudsman commencing his investigation, it came to our attention that the member from Riel needed to fully disclose her role to the Ombudsman. The member was encouraged to do that. The member did that.

The Ombudsman conducted their investigation and came to their conclusions, conclusions which we have accepted, conclusions which included the recommendation to have clearer guidelines on the relationship between civil servants and elected officials. Those guidelines are being worked on by the commissioner of the civil service. Those guidelines will inform how we handle these matters in the future.

And all the other fictitious statements that the member opposite is putting on the record are a smokescreen for the fact that when an ombudsman conducts an investigation it is our obligation to co-operate with that and not interfere with it.

Mr. Pallister: This Premier'll hide behind anyone, Mr. Speaker, in an attempt to protect himself. He blames the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick). He blames the Ombudsman for being late with his report. He hides behind civil servants and uses them as body armour, and now he's trying to hide behind the clerk of the Executive Council.

His defence is that the clerk of the Executive Council, the head of Manitoba's civil service, did not—or was not aware that his civil servant in the ADM's position was completely innocent, that he was in the dark just as the Premier claims he was. That's his defence. His very defence rests upon the total incompetence of the clerk of the Executive Council, who he now attempts to impugn with his own response.

I ask him again to finally come clean and admit that he knew within 24 hours that there was no guilt whatsoever on the part of a Manitoba senior civil servant and that a Cabinet colleague of his organized a partisan political rally with the assistance of his office.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the Leader of Opposition has a scripted set of questions that he's reading into the record regardless of what answer he receives from this side of the House. That's extremely clear.

I know he likes conspiracy theories except when it applies to himself. I know that he was involved in the largest vote-rigging affair in the history of the Manitoba but takes no responsibility for it. I know he likes to write letters to the editor and then to abdicate any responsibility for that.

The reality is this: After the Ombudsman's investigation was commenced, information came to our attention which—we said to the member from

Riel, we encouraged her to fully co-operate with the Ombudsman. That was subsequently done, Mr. Speaker, and the recommendations that came out of this are ones that we think are wise recommendations in terms of having appropriate guidelines for handling situations like this.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do say this: Immigration is very important to this province. Getting 13, 14, 15 thousand newcomers—our ambition is to have 20,000 newcomers every year in Manitoba, more people living and working in this province for the next 144 years.

MPI Rate Increases CEO Severance Package

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, after the 2011 election the NDP expanded the PST to put it onto insurance so that homeowners had to pay more for their insurance. Last year, of course, they increased the PST, making everything that Manitobans buy more expensive. They also increased hydro rates three times last year and now just increased it again at the beginning of this month. Added on to that, we've now learned that they intend to increase MPI rates by as much as 5 per cent.

Why won't this government just confirm that they won't be satisfied until they take every last nickel out of the pockets of Manitobans?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): It's a pleasure to welcome the Progressive Conservative caucus back to Manitoba after their week away.

I know that, like all my colleagues on this side, we were out talking to Manitobans, knocking on doors, listening to what people had to say, and the affordability of life in Manitoba continues to be one of our strong suits.

And, Mr. Speaker, just about everybody in the province recognizes the challenging winter that Manitobans went through. In fact, I don't know of a single Manitoban who doesn't appreciate the challenge of this past winter.

And it is true, Mr. Speaker, that the number of claims to MPI has increased year over year. It's also true the severity of those claims has increased year over year. And, indeed, this past year MPI paid out more claims for bodily injury and personal—and for vehicle claims than in previous years. But it is very

important with our public auto insurer, they'll be doing their best to—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Well, every winter that we have an NDP government is a challenging winter, Mr. Speaker. Same would be true for summer, spring and fall.

But, Mr. Speaker, now the government has decided they're going to go cap in hand to the PUB and say that MPI is broke, that the cupboards are bare. But they've hired a messenger; they've hired somebody else to go to MPI and say that the cupboards are bare.

And that messenger is somebody who is the retired CEO who was given a half a million dollars to retire and then hired back by changing the law by the NDP government to come back and tell the PUB, after she got a half a million dollars, that MPI is broke.

Does the government not see the hypocrisy of hiring somebody who got a half a million dollars to go to the PUB and say that MPI is broke and Manitobans have to pay more, despite what the winter was?

Mr. Swan: Indeed, MPI will be preparing their application, their general rate application, to the Public Utilities Board. That is an entirely transparent, entirely open process. And why does that exist? It exists because we have public auto insurance in the province of Manitoba, a public auto insurance system that is the envy of ratepayers in every other province in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, next door in Saskatchewan, also a well-run public auto insurance corporation, they're applying for a 5.2 per cent rate application. But filed with Saskatchewan's equivalent to the Public Utilities Board was their own calculations which demonstrate once and for all that Manitobans enjoy the lowest rates in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, when MPI finishes their application and when they go before the Public Utilities Board, I can guarantee Manitobans that will continue—

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

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, so the NDP want to go to the PUB and tell them that MPI is broke and

that Manitobans have to pay more. So they've hired somebody who just got a half a million dollars from MPI, and they had to change the law so that they could hire this person to go to MPI and say that they're broke, after she got a half a million dollars.

But it's more than that, Mr. Speaker. They signed a contract, and the contract says that the person who's going to go to the PUB and say that MPI is broke so Manitobans have to pay more is getting paid \$180 an hour to do that, plus expenses, of course, because there are expenses.

Why should Manitobans believe that the MPI is broke when this government decided to hire somebody, after giving them a half a million dollars, at the rate of \$180 per hour to tell the PUB that MPI is broke? Doesn't seem like they're broke to me if you can pay \$180 an hour.

Mr. Swan: I'm happy to talk about Manitoba Public Insurance and that public auto insurance commitment to Manitobans any day.

We know where the members of the opposition stand. We know where they stand on the public utility. What did their star candidate say in the last election campaign? He thought that privatizing the MPI was a good idea. What ever happened to him? I'm not sure what happened to him.

What I do know what's happened, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitobans have continued to enjoy the best service and the lowest auto insurance premiums in the country. In the past decade, since 2004—*[interjection]* Well, the member for Steinbach should be aware, since 2004 rates in Manitoba have decreased by 14 per cent. The member for Steinbach should know that since that time there have been rebates that have been sent—when money had been sent back to Manitobans. And I didn't hear the member for Steinbach complaining when I opened the new service centre in his—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Honourable minister's time has elapsed.

MPI Rate Increases Former CEO Contract

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, MPI is applying to the PUB for a 5 per cent rate increase, another fee increase to add to the increasing load placed on hard-working Manitobans by this spendDP government.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, I find it odd that MPI had to rehire the former CEO to try to guide this through the Public Utilities Board, this increase, and part of that increase will presumably go to pay her contract. Isn't this part of a conflict of interest?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I find the member for Brandon West's lack of understanding of the Public Utilities Board and MPI quite odd indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Let me explain again to the member, because I'm not sure he understands that because we have a public auto insurance system in Manitoba, every rate application is done through a very transparent and very open process. MPI will be providing—they'll—providing a general rate application to the Public Utilities Board. There will be a hearing which happens in the fall at which interested parties are able to present their views. The Public Utilities Board will then give their views and make their order.

That doesn't happen if you have private auto insurance, and I would challenge the member for Brandon West to find another jurisdiction in Canada, any other jurisdiction in Canada, where insurance rates have been as effective and as cheap as they are in Manitoba, because, Mr. Speaker, he can't do it.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, that's very rich. It's not what I heard from people that own motorcycles in Manitoba.

But this minister is so—he said that MPI is so good at forecasting rates, Mr. Speaker, that they should be able to forecast what was going to happen. They should've be able to add—there is money in the rate stabilization fund for circumstances like a bad winter.

And if they're so good at forecasting this—these are the people that worked under the former CEO. She trained them, she hired them, she made sure that they were doing the right job. But now you're going to hire this CEO back again to try to guide it through the Public Utilities Board, and maybe the problem was the rate forecasters that she hired.

So why, Mr. Speaker, is there yet another tax and fee increase on hard-working Manitobans? Why can't this government just spend within its means?

Mr. Swan: Well, I listened to the member for Brandon West and I believe he's criticizing MPI for not predicting what everybody would agree has been

the worst winter in decades, if not a century. And perhaps the member for Brandon West has a crystal ball; it is true MPI does not.

But what their forecasting and what their careful work has done has meant that Manitobans pay the lowest auto insurance premiums in the entire country. Other provinces, whether private or public systems, have increased their rates many, many times faster than ratepayers in Manitoba have paid. And, indeed, since 2004 alone rates have gone down by 14 per cent. That is not a record challenged by any other province.

The member needs to go back and do a little research.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, my crystal ball says that sometime in the next 18 months to two years we're going to have an election in Manitoba. And let me think: What happens when there's an election in Manitoba? Just prior to that, well, there's usually money comes back to the ratepayers of MPI. How—*[interjection]* Oh, we hear the heckling across the floor.

So is this rate increase not just an attempt to build up those reserves so that just prior to the election we can cut a cheque to all those ratepayers and pretend that they're getting money back, their own money?

How disappointing that this government continues to raise fees and just take it away from hard-working Manitobans. When can it stop?

Mr. Swan: Not at all, Mr. Speaker, but I will tell you that there have been five occasions when the Public Utilities Board has ordered rebates and, indeed, almost \$600 million have been returned to Manitoba ratepayers.

Now, if we had a private—if we had private auto insurance in Manitoba, which is what the member for Brandon West obviously prefers and the Progressive Conservative Party prefers, where would that \$600 million go? It would go to shareholders in Toronto, in New York, in London, all around the world.

We think it's much better that when MPI has a positive experience, that money gets returned to Manitobans. That's what public auto insurance is all about. That's why New Democrats support public insurance. It's unfortunate Progressive Conservatives just don't get it.

Manitoba Hydro Future Rate Increases

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, last week the NDP forced another rate hike on Manitobans. Hydro rates went up 2.95 per cent. Manitobans are tapped out with tax increases, hydro increases, fee increases, the list goes on and on, and that's on top of paying the CEO \$600,000 in a severance package.

I ask the minister: Will—responsible for Manitoba Hydro—commit to no more further rate increases for Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, it's nice to see the member for Lakeside, Mr. Speaker, has joined that grassy knoll with all the rest of his colleagues. It would be nice—nicer even if the member for Lakeside would attach those conspiracy theories to some facts of the matter. That, I think, would really be helpful for him as well.

I would like him to take his leader along that road with him and connect him to some facts, because the leader across the way has said on a number of occasions that Manitoba has the highest rate increases of any Canadian province. Well, that just is not true.

Let's take a look at—let's look at BC Hydro, Mr. Speaker. BC Hydro increased theirs by 9 per cent and 6 per cent next year. SaskPower has increased by 5 and half per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we keep our rates low in this province because we sell into the high—into hydro's market—we sell into the export market, something—

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

Mr. Eichler: This is the same government that went door to door and said any fear of tax increases is nothing but nonsense. They have no credibility.

Mr. Speaker, hikes of at least 4 per cent for the next 20 years—that's the Manitoba government's numbers—have predicted. The PUB says that number is probably wrong; it's probably in the closer of 6 per cent over the next 20 years, each and every year. Manitobans cannot afford to mismanage what this government is doing.

I ask the minister again: Will he put a stop to further hydro rate increases?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the things that those guys across the way won't put a stop to: things like selling hydro into the export market, hydroelectricity, clean, green, cheap hydroelectricity that people want to buy from us.

They say we should put a stop to selling into our export market. Well, that will drive the rates up decade after decade in this province. We have kept our rates the lowest—amongst the lowest on the continent by selling into the export market.

It must be an awful tough day in this Legislature for members across the way when they get up and all they can do is complain that we got the lowest rates in Canada for hydro and the lowest rates in Canada for Autopac.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has asked for a 4 per cent rate hike, which was denied. Manitobans cannot afford more hikes in their hydro rates. What did the PUB say when they denied the 4 per cent rate hike? Prices for electricity exports have continued to decline, resulting in less revenue to offset requirement for domestic rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is selling power at a loss and Manitobans are left to fit the bill.

Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that they are so bent on raising Manitoba's rates at the cost of their export sales?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, the member from Lakeside is absolutely incorrect when he says that, again and again and again.

Mr. Speaker, even the Frontier Centre gets it. David Vardy, presenting at the Frontier Centre, said, and I quote, in Manitoba you are using export revenue to reduce domestic rates.

What else did they say? Well, Mr. Vardy continued, Mr. Speaker, when he was making his presentations. He says, and I quote, your rates are close to the lowest on the continent. Our retail rate is 64 per cent higher than yours at 12.55 cents a kilowatt hour in St. John's, Newfoundland, compared to 7.63 in Winnipeg.

How many times can the member of Lakeside and his colleagues tell those kind of things that are clearly incorrect? Why won't they just look at the research, look at the data, look at the truth—

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

* (14:20)

Zebra Mussel Infestation Conservation Dive Update

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, while this government seems to be flying by the seat of their pants when it comes to the ecological and environmental disaster the zebra mussels pose to Lake Winnipeg, I understand divers from Manitoba Conservation were out recently looking for zebra mussel evidence outside the four affected harbours, the reason being to see if the curtaining of the harbours and the dumping of 400 tonnes of liquid ash would be too late.

Can the minister update the House on—as to the findings of the Conservation divers?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think on Manitoba Day it's a good day to pay tribute to all of the Manitobans who have been coming together on the struggle against zebra mussels in Lake Winnipeg.

I want to in particular signal the great leadership coming from the fishing communities. We've had a number of meetings, whether it's in Gimli or Winnipeg Beach or in Selkirk or St. Clements, in the last number of days, and we've seen the scientists come together with the fishers, come together with the other officials in the department.

And, yes, as a result of some of the discussions and the sharing of information and the eagerness to do whatever we can, Mr. Speaker, divers did go out there. And I understand that they have completed some work within the harbours and that four additional zebra mussels were found within the harbours and that—are the results so far that will now be submitted to the science advisory—

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

Decontamination Unit Plans

Mr. Martin: While eradication must be the government's primary goal in dealing with the zebra mussel infestation, 'containment' must also be a component of the strategy.

Almost one month ago I asked the minister whether there were plans to acquire additional decontamination units so that each affected harbour had one on site. At that time I received no answer. A week ago I asked the same question; again, no answer.

Mr. Speaker, they say third's the charm, so today I'll ask the minister: Are there plans to acquire additional decontamination units so that each affected harbour has one on site?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, as we look at the efforts that are required to distribute liquid potash in the affected harbours, we are at the same time looking at other efforts in terms of taking our struggle to a new level in terms of both surveillance—what the member talks about—as well, awareness.

And, as well, I've asked the department to do another look to see if any regulatory reform is required at this time, looking to see what we are learning from the efforts currently at hand, as well as the experiences elsewhere where zebra mussels have become entrenched.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, regulatory reform isn't required to acquire two additional decontamination units so that all four harbours have one on site.

The minister has publicly stated, quote, we're going to do this right. To do this right, as the minister puts it, each harbour requires its own decontamination unit.

Mr. Speaker, a simple question: Will each harbour have its own individual decontamination unit as part of this government's zebra mussel strategy?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the member may want to self-proclaim some scientific great insights; we will take our advice from the science.

There are some world-leading scientists that have been advising on our effort, and the purchase of further decontamination units are—is one option. There are other options as well.

Manitoba has invested about half a million dollars over the last four or five years in prevention efforts. Very notably, just this last spring two decontamination units were purchased by the fish enhancement fund, and that remains a very live option in terms of the best ways to contain this going forward, Mr. Speaker.

But we have a science advisory committee, and it's very important that we listen to those that really know best. I'm inclined to take the view of both science experts and experts that live and breathe this lake, those that fish.

Manitoba Hydro Demand-Side Management

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, rising hydro rates are a curse looting the wallets of Manitobans and burdening Manitoba's economic potential.

To rein in such increases, many states in the United States have shown leadership in developing demand-side management as a pillar of their energy policy. The results in the United States have been impressive, as these graphs I table show. Demand for electricity in many states has stabilized.

Mr. Speaker, why has the NDP government been so ineffective in implementing demand-side management in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Demand-side management, or energy efficiency programs, are fundamentally important to Manitoba Hydro's mandate and serving the people of Manitoba.

When we came into office there was no residential demand management program, no energy efficiency program. We have since put a program in place which is ranked No. 1 in Canada. It includes the ability to get no-cost insulation into your home. It allows you to get an energy audit. It allows you to have a loan on your hydro bill that pays for the cost of any improvements that you make.

And we brought in innovative legislation as well called PAYS, Pay As You Save, where the first month after you install new technology and/or insulation into your home your bill is lower than it was before and at the same time you're able to pay off the cost of that new technology.

So we believe energy efficiency is very important and we think we can deliver those programs throughout Manitoba, particularly in areas where energy costs are high because of housing conditions, and we will continue to do that in partnership with local communities, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to further questions on demand management from the—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: And yet Manitoba's way behind what's happening in the States on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro is projecting growth of 1.5 per cent in electricity demand each year for the next 20 years. This NDP government

needs this projection to justify spending billions of dollars and to drastically raise hydro rates for Manitobans. A modestly effective demand-side management program in the mean of US efforts should decrease growth by half and obviate this NDP government's apocalyptic view that Manitoba will run out of energy in a few years.

I ask the Premier: Is his NDP government so slow to implement effective demand-side management because that would undermine his government's race to build additional dams and Bipole III?

Mr. Selinger: Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing we know is that Manitoba will need additional energy because of our growing economy and our growing population sometime probably within 10 to 12 years, perhaps even slightly longer. And we need to have that reliable energy by building ahead of time and by having \$10 billion of export contracts that will pay for the cost of that new generating facilities. By paying for that cost with export revenues, we will keep the lowest rates in North America.

Also, we will continue to work with Manitoba citizens, families, businesses to reduce their energy consumption through wise and efficient and modern energy efficiency programs, Mr. Speaker, and we will have innovative financing to support that.

We believe we can keep the cost of energy the lowest in North America. I know we can do that. Members opposite want to stop that. They want to halt export sales. They want to halt building Manitoba Hydro. They never had any energy efficiency programs when they were in office. They cancelled everything that would move Manitoba highward—Hydro forward. We're going to build it and keep the lowest rates in North America.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, last week at the independent review of Hydro, we heard that this NDP government's deliberate policy of not implementing effective demand-side management is resulting in a Manitoba Hydro projection of 1.5 per cent annual growth in Manitoba energy demand, a growth that is close to double the projected rate in the United States, as this document I table shows. For all of the Premier's fancy spin dancing, Manitoba's efforts have been ineffective and dismal.

When will this NDP government implement an effective demand-side management policy for

Manitoba to give us a more sustainable and more affordable growth rate in electricity use?

Mr. Selinger: It's an important question. We do want very high-quality, good energy efficiency programs in Manitoba. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it's part of the review that's being done by the need-for-alternatives study.

Demand-side programs are part of the way we can keep growth down in Manitoba and at the same time build our hydro assets before we need them and meet our customers' demands for \$10 billion of new energy to go into our export markets. That \$10 billion of clean, reliable energy will pay down the cost of the new dams and keep the lowest hydro rates in North America. That's a good story. Only members opposite, who would have customers that say they want \$10 billion of savings, would say, let's delay that, let's not meet that customer service obligation. That \$10 billion will give us the lowest rates in North America just like we have right now. Demand management programs will allow us to sell that power into the export market for an even longer period of time.

We support good demand management programs. We support building hydro. We support good jobs for Manitobans here in Manitoba.

* (14:30)

Price Industries Update

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, today is Manitoba's 144th birthday and things have never looked so good here. We know that Manitoba is a great place to do business and our government is committed to working with businesses and industry to keep it that way.

When we came into government we had the highest corporate tax rate, at 17 per cent, of all the provinces, and we've cut that corporate tax rate down to 12 per cent. Small business tax was 9 per cent; we've cut that down to zero per cent. Because of this competitive business environment, companies are choosing to open and expand their business in Manitoba, creating good jobs right here at home.

Can the Minister of Jobs and the Economy please tell us about the exciting announcement that took place at Price Industries earlier this morning?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I thank the member for the question.

It was a great privilege to be at Price Industries this morning with the Premier (Mr. Selinger), with the mayor, with Mr. Gerry Price, chairman and CEO of the Price group of companies, to demonstrate that we're working together with industry to create new jobs here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, our investment of \$1.5 million to assist with training, in addition to a \$10-million MIOP loan—a fully secured, interest-bearing repayable loan—will assist in Price Industries developing a 50,000-square-foot addition to their business here in Manitoba, which will translate into up to 175 new jobs.

We're very excited to partner with the City of Winnipeg and with Mr. Price to build—

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

Farmland School Tax Rebate Cap Late Application Rejections

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, the farmland education tax rebate is another victim of this government's tax-and-spend policy.

The amount of rebate has been capped at \$5,000 per family unit, as well as a deadline for application has also been introduced as March 31st each year. The government was late getting the forms out, but yet has invoked a strict March 31st deadline on applications.

Can the minister inform the House as to how many applications have been rejected as late applications?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): Thank the minister—member opposite question—bringing the question forward.

The value of the education tax has definitely been a credit to this government. Just to remind the members opposite, when we came into power we brought in school tax capped to 80 per cent. When they were in power they were at zero. This side of the House is 80 per cent.

That's all I have to say for the question that the member brought forward.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

Vision Health Month

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): This month we recognize Vision Health Month. Every 12 minutes someone in Canada suffers the effect of vision loss. We experience so much of the world around us through our vision which is why it is essential to protect the health of our eyesight.

The Manitoba Association of Optometrists, MAO, works across the province to ensure Manitobans have access to vision health treatment they need. Members of the Manitoba Association of Optometrists are our front-line eye providers—health-care providers. From vision correction and evaluating eye health to treating problems associated with vision, optometrists work to protect not just our eyesight, but the overall health of our vision. Their work examining the eye can often detect other health issues like diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, multiple sclerosis and brain tumours. Visiting your optometrist means that you are not only protecting your vision but your overall health and well-being.

I've experienced first-hand coming close to losing some of my vision. In my work as a welder I once had a spark catch my left eye and caused me to be blind for almost a week. Thanks to the work of my optometrist my sight came back and I'm relieved to say that I have 20/20 vision.

The work optometrists do to promote healthy vision truly extends to all Manitobans. The MAO has partnered with Siloam Mission to deliver free eye examinations to those in need in their state-of-the-art eye clinic.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members of the Manitoba Association of Optometrists who are in the gallery today and the front-line eye-health providers. Your work ensures Manitobans will continue to receive the essential vision treatment they need and deserve. Thank you.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Day

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, May 12th is a very important day in the province of Manitoba. With Manitoba Day celebrations in full force, what some people may not be aware of is that today is also the 22nd annual awareness day for myalgic encephalomyelitis, slash, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivity.

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a complex and 'debilitating' physical illness characterized by extreme fatigue, pain, cognitive problems and sleep dysfunction, among other symptoms. It is comparable to a flu that just will not go away, Mr. Speaker. As of 2010, more than 411,000 Canadians have been diagnosed with this illness, and although it is more calming—common in women, it affects all demographics.

Fibromyalgia is also a very complex and 'debilitating' physical illness. It is characterized by chronic widespread pain in muscles, ligaments and tendons. As of 2010, fibromyalgia has been diagnosed in over 440,000 Canadians and, like chronic fatigue syndrome, is most common in women.

Multiple chemical sensitivity is a chronic medical condition that is characterized by symptoms that the affected person attributes to low level chemical exposure. These can include smoke, perfumes, plastics and various other chemicals. The symptoms have been known to include nausea, fatigue, dizziness, headaches and other various systems.

These diseases all share a few crucial elements in common. Most significantly, they are not easily outwardly observable. Many people struggle with these illnesses without anyone around them having any idea of the difficulties they are experiencing. This can lead to self-esteem issues, bullying and many other systematic barriers to the success and happiness of individuals with these conditions.

As a school counsellor, I dealt with individuals who had ME and fibromyalgia. Most importantly, we tried to help and make an environment to help them to thrive, but also an environment of understanding on the part of their teachers and peers. With conditions such as these, education and awareness are absolutely instrumental in making sure these individuals are being treated fairly and are able to live their lives to their fullest potential.

This year, for the 12th of May, the ME/CFS fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivity awareness committee are organizing international Light Up the Night Challenge, encouraging individuals and businesses to light up their buildings in either purple, blue or green to show their support for the awareness of these debilitating conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

National Day of Honour

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the brave men and women who served their country during the military mission in Afghanistan.

On May 9th, Canadians recognized the National Day of Honour. Vigils were held across the country to honour and remember the sacrifices of those who served in Afghanistan.

I was privileged to attend the memorial service held at Brookside Cemetery's Stone of Remembrance. The ceremony was hosted by 38 Canadian Brigade Group, and veterans, serving members, family and friends were all in attendance.

In the presence of the brave men and women who served in Afghanistan, I reflected on the magnitude of their sacrifice and the strength of their character. It was truly an honour to share this day with them. Together, we honoured the 40,000 Canadians who served and recognized their accomplishments over the 12-year mission. It was with a heavy heart that we also paid tribute to those who died in Afghanistan; 158 Canadian soldiers lost their lives. My deepest condolences go to their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, the words inscribed on the Stone of Remembrance at Brookside Cemetery read: Their name liveth for evermore. With the mission in Afghanistan having come to an end this March, these words have deep meaning to me. Our troops and the sacrifice they made will always be held in the highest regard. This mission has helped shaped who we are as Canadians, and as the years go by and the mission recedes further into history, we must never forget the commitment, bravery and strength of our women and men in uniform.

Thank you.

National Nursing Week

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): It is with great honour that I rise before the Manitoba Legislative Assembly today to recognize the hard work and tremendous talent of Manitoba nurses.

As a nurse myself for 23 years, I understand the quality and difficulty of the work that our nurses perform, and the irreplaceable role they occupy in our province's medical system.

As many might already be aware, May 12th to the 18th is celebrated as National Nursing Week.

This year's theme is nurses leading change, to highlight and honour nurses who exemplify what it means to lead much needed change in the health sector.

Nurses play an integral part in delivering front-line services to Manitobans who need it most. Moreover, nurses help to keep our ailing health-care system from collapsing.

Manitoba has over 12,000 registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners and operating-room technicians.

* (14:40)

Under our current NDP government, we have wait times for diagnostics and treatments that have put our province at the very bottom, long ambulance off-load times, multiple family physician vacancies unfilled, thousands of seniors waiting for PCH placement. This substantial gap in service has been graciously, albeit with difficulty, mitigated by the fine work and dedication of our nurses and nurse practitioners.

Mr. Speaker, there is no questioning the value that nurses hold in our province's health-care system, and I would like to take this moment and commend these health-care professionals for their commitment and dedication to caring for and serving Manitobans.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus I would like to thank all nurses in Manitoba. The PC caucus recognizes the essential role of nurses and acknowledges the contributions and leadership skills nurses make in our communities and for our families every minute and every day. I encourage everyone to join me today in congratulating nurses, the work they do and the celebration of Nursing Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Corrina Abrey

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): Dauphin is ripe with opportunity for entrepreneurs looking to build a successful business. One local business owner, Corrina Abrey, has had tremendous results since opening her restaurant, Corrina's on Main.

By staying true to her ideal of straightforward home-cooked meals, Corrina has built one of the best eateries in town. Breakfast, lunch or dinner, Corrina's is always bustling with hungry customers. The

welcoming atmosphere and local menu favourites like the kings burger keep customers coming back time and time again.

The buzz around Corrina's business has spread far and wide. Corrina is now a finalist for the business owners of Manitoba's annual women entrepreneur of the year award. The award recognizes today's trailblazers for tomorrow's emerging business leaders. The staff at Corrina's on Main nominated her for the award.

Like any savvy business owner, Corrina knows that the key to her success is treating employees with respect. Many of her employees have stuck by her side since the business opened its doors five years ago. With this nomination, her staff are thanking Corrina for her dedication to the business and constant kindness.

Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurship is a noble career path. You pour your heart and soul into building a business that reflects your identity and values.

Corrina, you're an inspiration to other entrepreneurs across the province. Your story from humble beginnings to success is a great one.

This Thursday, the Women Business Owners of Manitoba will hold their gala event where the winning Woman Entrepreneur of the Year will be announced. I want to congratulate all of the finalists for having the courage to start their own business and the skill to make it successful. You are already winners, but, of course, in Dauphin we are all rooting for our hometown foodie Corrina to take home the top prize.

Good luck, Corrina.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you please call the condolence motion for Elijah Harper.

MOTIONS OF CONDOLENCE

Mr. Speaker: We will now call condolence motions.

Elijah Harper

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier of Manitoba and the Minister

of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that this House convey to the family of the late Elijah Harper, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincere sympathy in their bereavement and its appreciation of his devotion to duty in a useful life of active community and public service, and that Mr. Speaker be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the family.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak of a man who has shaped Manitoba and Canadian history through his unwavering commitment to our Aboriginal people.

Elijah was born at Red Sucker Lake in northeastern Manitoba in 1949, where he learned the Cree language and culture and how to trap from his grandparents. Despite his experience in residential schools between the ages of eight and 16, his appreciation for his culture and heritage remained strong for the rest of his life.

Mr. Speaker, Elijah discovered his political roots early on, when, along with Ovide Mercredi and Phil Fontaine, he established the first Aboriginal student organization at the University of Manitoba intended to fight racism on campus.

In 1978, Elijah was elected chief of Red Sucker Lake First Nation when he was just 29 years old. He was first elected to the Manitoba Legislature in 1981 as the NDP member of the Legislature for Rupertsland. He was first—he was the first Aboriginal MLA in our province and the first elected to any provincial government in the country of Canada. He held provincial office for 11 years, serving two years in Cabinet, first as Minister responsible for Native Affairs and then, later, as Minister of Northern Affairs.

In June 1990, Elijah Harper made his now-famous stand against the Meech Lake Accord in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. In response to the lack of consultation with Aboriginal groups during the accord's drafting, Elijah stood, eagle feather in hand, and said no to Meech Lake.

In Elijah's own words: During those days when I stood in the Legislature to speak for Aboriginal people, our voice was one. I could feel the strength of all our people, a generation of people giving strength to my voice. In unity, there is strength. In unity, there is power. In unity, there is hope. It is a feeling I know our people felt every day hundreds of

years ago and is a feeling I want all Aboriginal people to share again.

Profound words, indeed, Mr. Speaker.

His resistance made the fall of Meech Lake possible. Shortly following his no to the accord, Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells did not allow a vote on Meech, as he considered it finished, based on the no of Mr. Elijah Harper.

Elijah resigned as a member of the Legislature in 1992 in order to run federally, and he served as Member of Parliament for Churchill from 1993 to 1997.

Elijah's courageous stand and words struck a chord with many across the country. He garnered many awards and accolades over the years, including the title honorary chief for life—for life by the Red Sucker Lake First Nation and the Stanley Knowles Humanitarian Award in 1991.

Following his departure from elected office, Elijah remained an activist and public speaker, promoting human and Aboriginal rights both nationally and internationally.

He is survived by his wife, Anita Olsen Harper, Elizabeth Harper, his children Marcel, Bruce and Holly, stepchildren, Karen Lawford, Dylan, Gaylen and Grant Bokvist. He leaves behind grandchildren: Anna-Lise and Kieran Lawford; Wastehya and Anna Khesic-Kway Harper; Elijah, Kaleigh and Juliette Andreassen-Harper; Dayna and Blake Harper; and Edward, Christopher, Nicholas and Madison Harper.

Mr. Speaker, many of us attended at the funeral when it was held in Red Sucker Lake, and we saw the strength of the community there, the coming together of not only relatives but the entire population, old and young and everyone in between. We saw chiefs from all across Manitoba in attendance and chiefs from Ontario in attendance—past chiefs, present chiefs and future chiefs, leaders in their communities. And they all took inspiration, and many of them spoke of the example that Elijah Harper had provided to their lives, to their desire to serve their people with humility, with grace, with a sense of wisdom.

And that's how he conducted himself, Mr. Speaker. He was a gentle soul. He used an economy of words. As a matter of fact, one word changed the course of history in the province of Manitoba and across the great country of Canada. That word was no, but really what he was saying, he was asking the

rest of us to say yes to Aboriginal and First Nations people being part of the future of this country, yes to opening the door to their participation, yes to them playing a full and complete role as citizens of this country—the first citizens of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, to that, we owe him a debt of gratitude, and, today, by our speaking in this Legislature, we honour his memory, not only here but at the federal level as well. And we honour the contribution that his family made in supporting him to provide that heroic service as a leader in this Legislature, at the community, at the federal level and on the international stage. We honour his memory and we honour his example and we honour his approach to politics, approach based on humility and wisdom.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:50)

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), for those great words. I think all of us share some regret at having to stand today to express condolences, but we must and we deserve—he deserves those offers of condolence from all of us today very much.

Elijah Harper was a fine Manitoban and a fine Canadian, not only a great chief and leader but also an excellent person of politics, Mr. Speaker, and someone that we—you and I both had the pleasure of serving with simultaneously, as I recall, in this Chamber. A family member, a friend, a mentor, a community builder, it is a privilege for me to actually rise today to help honour the legacy of Chief Elijah Harper and the contributions that he's made to his community and to his province and to this country.

The Premier has outlined—and I won't duplicate the comments that he's made, I hope, but I do want to say on behalf of our party that we offer condolences to his family and we remember them also in our comments and our thoughts today.

He was a defender of course—an ardent defender of Aboriginal rights in our country, but I also believe it's important to point out that he was also a great defender of all Canadians. He was a person who was tireless in his pursuit of equality for all Canadians and a real equality of opportunity for Canadians as well.

Of course, many of the stances that he took over the years were based on his private and personal experience in growing up and his natural knowledge and affinity for issues that pertain particularly to indigenous Canadians was beneficial in him being a very influential person, whether elected or not elected.

But he—and although he's also, of course, often remembered for his stance on the Meech Lake Accord debate, it has to be pointed out that in dedicating himself to the positions that he did, of advancing First Nations people throughout this country, there were many other people who he represented at the same time with the stance that he took in the Chamber on that historic day and with the stances that he took throughout his career.

Our world, our province is a better place because of the work of Elijah Harper. And his death is a loss for all Manitobans, and all of us should remain forever grateful to the contributions—for his contributions as a politician, as a leader, as a human rights activist on behalf of our province.

It is my honour today to reflect on a few of the things that he's done. I know that from a young age he was very interested in politics. Within his community he served as a community development worker, he was a supervisor for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood, he was a program analyst for the Manitoba Department of Northern Affairs, and at 29 years of age—which we didn't use to think was so young, Mr. Speaker, but it was a young age for someone to enter into politics—he ran and he was elected as the chief of Red Sucker Lake First Nation, his home community.

After four years as the chief, he realized that he wanted to make a contribution not only to his home community but to our province, and that he realized also, quite rightly, that he was able to represent many people whose voices had not always been heard. He decided to enter provincial politics. He ran and won the northern Manitoban riding of then—of Rupertsland, making him the first treaty Indian ever to be elected as a provincial—to this provincial Legislature.

His passion for improving the lives of the Aboriginal people in our province and across the country led to his appointment as minister of Northern Affairs and minister in charge of The Communities Economic Development Fund Act in 1987.

Now, as I said, he is mentioned and remembered by many solely for the principled stand that he took against the Meech Lake Accord in 1990. The symbolic raising of that eagle feather in this Legislature was an effort to stand up against the exclusion of Aboriginal voices in Canada and bring that part of the Meech Lake Accord that he strongly disagreed with to the forefront. And I think that, in effect, what he did with that action was to move forward the positions that many Canadians believe have to be more strongly advocated in advance of Aboriginal people; that Aboriginal people have suffered too much, that they have been excluded too often, that they have too often have their concerns left out of decisions and been shortchanged through the processes that we had put in place over the years, as I think clear from history, but Elijah made that eminently clear that day and thereafter.

He resigned from the Manitoba Legislature on November 30th, 1992, to run as a Member of Parliament for Churchill. And he was elected and he was later appointed to the parliamentary standing committee of Aboriginal affairs, a role that he proudly fulfilled until 1997.

He was committed in his career in Ottawa to raising awareness and as our—a number of other members and who formerly represented provincial jurisdictions have gone to Ottawa and have served to advance issues of importance to Manitobans while there. Certainly in this case, Elijah was committed to raising awareness of Aboriginal issues that concerned not only the people of Manitoba, but the people of Canada.

And he travelled all over the globe. He attended the international—one example, the International Court of Justice at The Hague. He went to meetings in numerous places in the United States and around Europe and Asia. He attended the launching of the international decade for indigenous peoples at the United Nations in New York, where the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and a group of Manitobans, I understand, just had a very successful venture. And, as well, he was also a part of the declaration of international indigenous day in the same city, in New York, in 1997.

Mr. Speaker, in December of 1995, Elijah called for a Sacred Assembly for promoting Aboriginal justice through spiritual reconciliation and healing between non-Aboriginal people and Aboriginal people. The Sacred Assembly brought together people from all across Canada. It represented the

elders, the women, the youth, political leaders, the spiritual leaders of all faiths. And that Sacred Assembly brought the tragedy of Indian residential schools to the forefront of Canadian society. And for the first time in Canada's history, national leaders of the Presbyterian, Catholic, Anglican and other church groups made formal apologies for the treatment of Aboriginal people in residential schools. That Sacred Assembly also led the Canadian government to declare June 21st as National Aboriginal Day, to recognize Aboriginal people in Canada and to gain more recognition of the role that Aboriginal people have played throughout our history and will in our future. And for his work for his people, Elijah received a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in 1996. He was also appointed later to the—as the commissioner to the Indian Claims Commission, in January of 1999, and he remained on a continuous basis in demand as a speaker, as a mentor, as a leader for the remainder of his life.

At each stage of his life, Mr. Speaker, Elijah Harper demonstrated his commitment to making life better for all of us, and, in particular, raising the profile of what was important to Aboriginal people in this province and in this country and advancing that to the national stage. Elijah's work as a social and community activist, as a politician, as a leader, was nothing short of remarkable. His determination, his principled leadership will never be forgotten. There have been many people touched by his life.

I had the privilege, of course, of working with him for a brief time here before he ran for a federal seat and was elected to Ottawa, and I—our paths crossed on numerous occasions when I served in Ottawa in later years. I always found the man to be humble, informed, with a good sense of humour and a balance that was reflected in the way he conducted himself around others. He's a person who was willing to listen and to do the research, as the Premier noted in his comments—good comments—short on words, but big on thought, a man who understood, when he said what he said, how to make it clear, and deserved the respect of the listeners he spoke to.

Many people have been touched by his life. His footprints will remain on our hearts. And in the minds of many people, Mr. Speaker, he defines what it means to leave a legacy. So on behalf of the entire Progressive Conservative caucus, I offer condolences to Mr. Harper's family, his many friends, to his community as well. And I offer my heartfelt thanks and recognition for all that Elijah Harper contributed

to our province and the inspiration his legacy will continue to contribute to our province.

Miigwech, Elijah.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Well, and I want to thank the members of this Assembly for allowing us to have this condolence motion on a very special day in our province, Manitoba Day. And I recall only a few short years ago that the Treaty Relations Commission stepped forward and we had a Treaty Day for the first time in any Legislature in Canada. And that was largely due with the foundation that was laid by people like Elijah Harper and, of course, the late Oscar Lathlin and others.

We have on the table here a beaded runner and also a cushion with a star design. In the tradition of Aboriginal people, we are told that that star represents each and every one of us in the sky, in the night sky. And up there, the elders say that the—our ancestors, is where they go when they leave us here and keep an eye on us as we carry on with the work that is left to do on Earth.

*(15:00)

The beaded runner that's on there, of course, symbolizes the sun, the water and the grass, which symbolizes the treaties that were made between the first arrivals and the original peoples of our land, and that is what Elijah Harper stood for. He believed in our traditional ways and he believed in the sacredness of the treaties that were made and became a champion of treaty and Aboriginal rights among Aboriginal people and made it his lifetime work.

In addition to acknowledging the members of the family, I want to acknowledge some former members and former colleagues of the late Elijah, including Brian Corrin, Jean Friesen, Marty Dolin, Maureen Hemphill, Gerard Lecuyer, Jerry Storie and Clif Evans. Now, these people served with Elijah and probably could tell stories about Elijah and the things that he used to do before we came along, and now it's almost time for us to go. But that's the nature of the business we are in and that's the nature in which Elijah decided to seek elected office in this provincial Legislature in order to give voice to Aboriginal people who up until at that time never elected a treaty Indian in any legislature in Manitoba or in any provincial legislature in Canada. So Elijah made history right from the time he was elected in November 1981, becoming the first treaty Indian.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course, before that we had status Indians elected in legislatures, including the late Frank Calder in British Columbia, the late Len Marchand, Member of Parliament for Kamloops-Shuswap. I'm giving away my age a little bit too, but I remember these people because these people meant a lot to me, and it didn't really matter what party they were, it was just a symbol of what Aboriginal people had the ability to do.

Elijah, when he became elected, obviously was able to capture the interest of the people that lived in the great constituency of Rupertsland which is now called Kewatinook, which is a more appropriate name because Kewatinook in a Cree, Oji-Cree and the Anishinabe languages means the North. I was very happy to follow Mr. Harper in this Assembly, very happy to win the seat that he vacated.

And, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to also mention the tremendous sacrifices that his family had to make in order to serve the people that he represented in this Legislature. People like Elizabeth—I believe Elizabeth is here today—his first wife, and, of course, his second wife—only a redskin understands these things. Of course, his dear friends Darcy and Jennifer who stood with him from day one to see that he did a good job on behalf of the people, and his family members, his brothers and sisters—many of them. A good friend, Marius up there who's here to listen to this condolence motion.

His late father, Allan B. Harper, became a good friend of mine over the years and I was very happy to become his friend. I did not know his mother well, but I was very happy to know these people that raised him. And his mother was a—his father Allan B. was a pastor and he believed in our spiritual ways very—from his heart, and he regarded me as a nephew and I respected that a great deal.

But I know that these are the kind of people that Elijah had in his life, people that stood by him and offered him advice and gave him the necessary support: his wife, Anita Olsen Harper; his children, Marcel, Bruce—as I pointed out, Holly is not here; Holly lives in Kenora. I stay in touch with her every now and again through the—this new smoke signal we have called Facebook, and we have an opportunity to communicate in that respect. Of course, he was predeceased by his lovely daughter Tanya, and from that it took him a long time to recover as well. His stepchildren meant a lot to him: Karen Lawford, Dylan, Gaylen, and Grant. He left behind some grandchildren as well: Anna-Lise and

Kieran, Wastehya and Anna Khesic-Kway Harper, Elijah, Kaleigh, Juliette, Dayna and Blake and Edward, Christopher, Nicholas, and Madison.

I felt it important to mention these names, Mr. Speaker, because quite often we forget that sometimes we only see each other as people, as persons, but we forget who is behind us, who is a part of our lives, who shares our lives with us. And some of these people that I mentioned were the people that shared Elijah with the remainder of the world, that shared Elijah with Manitobans, with other Aboriginal people and with other Canadians generally.

He, like many of us, was a survivor of the residential school system. Started there, I believe, he was eight years of age, and then he was there 'til he was 16. He attended schools that were operated by the United and Presbyterian churches, and he met, at the University of Manitoba where he attended in 1971, became friends with people like Ovide Mercredi and Phil Fontaine and they became lifelong friends of his. And I was an acquaintance of all these guys. They were a little older than me, but I didn't much care for them because they were too intellectual for me at that time in my life and they were much too intelligent for what I was interested in at that time.

And, of course, as the Leader of the Opposition said, Elijah became elected in 1981 as the MLA for Rupertsland and he held provincial office for 11 years before moving on to federal politics.

I just want to quote his former biographer, Pauline Comeau, when she described Elijah as being very intelligent, his quiet sense of humour, his resilience, his thoughtfulness, his care to always thank those who helped him, and his sensitive, humble nature.

Of course, in only five days from now will be the first anniversary of Elijah's passing. The Minister of Conservation, the Minister of Transportation, the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) and the First Minister and I had the opportunity of attending his funeral, which was attended by many people in his home community of Red Sucker Lake. And we heard a lot of people that spoke at his funeral service that he had a direct impact on, the teachings and the knowledge that he passed on to many, many people across this country. And his teachings went beyond Canada; they went beyond Manitoba; they went globally.

And it takes a lot of strength for a guy, a regular guy like Elijah, to stand up in a place that is quite foreign to Aboriginal people generally, and at that time in 1990—and I remember being sometimes outside, and if I could, in the gallery during the debate of Meech Lake when he rose and—with the feather that was given to him by his brother, Saul Harper—say no because of the exclusion of Aboriginal people into the Meech Lake Accord, and I felt proud as an Aboriginal person. And he single-handedly, I believe, in my view, awoke Canada, made them realize that Aboriginal people are a very important role—very important factor in the polity of Canada and in the reality of Canada. So for that we're forever indebted to Elijah Harper.

* (15:10)

And I thank all members for taking this time, Manitoba Day, to acknowledge a great Manitoban and a great Canadian, but first and foremost a great person from the First Nations community. And I forever will remember 'til my time is done the great legacy left by Chief Elijah Harper, our friend.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I, too, am honoured to stand in my place today in this Manitoba Legislature along with all members of the House, but those that sat in this Legislature with Elijah Harper over the years. And I want to acknowledge and say to you, thank you for being here to share this time with us and to hear others share their comments on a great Manitoban and a great individual. And also to Elijah's family and friends that are here in the gallery today, thank you also for being here on this very special day, Manitoba Day, when we are honouring such a great Manitoban for the contributions that he has made not only in this Legislature, but as an elected official in many different aspects of his life.

And he started off as a—being elected in Red Sucker Lake as the chief there where he represented and spoke on behalf of his community, his Aboriginal community, to try to make their lives better. And he moved on to the Legislature here in 1981 and I had the honour of sitting in this Legislature from 1986-1992 with him when—it were a very momentous time here, as we all know, and will go down in history as a time in Manitoba where Manitoba was forefront right across Canada in 1990 when we debated the Meech Lake Accord. And I remember Elijah sitting in his place with his feather in the Chamber, and over several days we saw the debate in Manitoba come to a halt as the result of his

principled stand on behalf of what he thought was right and what many thought, obviously, was right for Aboriginal people who hadn't had a voice around the table. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, we were in Manitoba responsible for the failure of the Meech Lake Accord.

And Elijah didn't stop with his support for Aboriginal people as he moved from—in 1992—from the Manitoba Legislature into the Parliament of Canada where he had the opportunity to further speak and advocate on behalf of Aboriginal Canadians. And we know of the many things that he did at the federal level also.

So, if I can just go back to some of my recollections of those days—and it was quite a few years ago. So I don't—and I was a novice in the Legislature, too, but I want to say that things were quite different in many respects. And although there was very heated debate and there was a lot of partisanship at the time, very much, there were also times when we did things together as legislators that we probably don't do today.

And one of those times I can remember was those infamous hotel association banquets that we had where we would—invited as members of the Legislature to—I guess we would call be wined and dined, and we were probably wined and dined a little more than we are now in the Legislature. But I remember that the—I guess all political parties that were involved at the time had spokespeople that would speak and thank the hotel association for honouring us and getting together with us. We had the time to share, break bread and wine, I guess. And Elijah Harper was one of those who always spoke on behalf of the NDP caucus, and he spoke it with a very lighthearted, fun event where we set aside partisan politics. And I probably couldn't repeat some of the jokes that Elijah Harper told at that event, and I want you to know that what was said at the hotel association remained at the hotel association. And we could come back after those events and get right back into the partisanship and not the camaraderie that we had experienced maybe the night before. So that was one thing that I remember about Elijah, and he was always very entertaining. He was a man of few words and there wasn't a lot of laughter, but his point was always well taken and we laughed a lot, along with Elijah at some of the things that he had to say.

Mr. Speaker, that was the lighter side of things. We do know the contributions that Elijah Harper

made to his community, to the Aboriginal community as a whole in Manitoba, to the Manitoba Legislature who helped inform—and he helped inform all of us about how important it was for Aboriginal people to be included. We also found at the national level that he was a leader. He was a true leader in many, many aspects and he will—down in history and he has left a legacy and a legacy that we should be proud of in Manitoba for his contributions.

And, Mr. Speaker, to his family I want to say our condolences, but we also do want to celebrate his life and the contributions that he made, not only to our province but to our country and on an international level. So to you, be proud of who he was and what he accomplished, and we should be proud here, too, in Manitoba for having the ability and the opportunity to serve and to have Elijah Harper, Chief Elijah Harper, be a part of our history and our legacy.

So I want to say with those few words, Mr. Speaker, that I am proud to have been a part of such a momentous time in this Manitoba Legislature when he was here, and to thank him for the contributions that he made and for the teaching that he did for me. As a person, and as an individual, I learned very much from the experience and the exposure to a man of the calibre of Elijah Harper. So I want to remember him and say—and honour him as we speak today, here in the Legislature.

Miigwech, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, as we gathered just around a year ago to say farewell to Elijah in Red Sucker Lake, I was struck how Elijah, come as he did from one of the 'remost'—most remote First Nations communities in our province, certainly in Canada, was seen as a national loss for people across Manitoba, across Canada and around the world, that saw this great loss and that incredible journey that Elijah went through in his life.

And as I watched and thought about saying goodbye to Elijah, it brought back memories. Being newly elected in 1981, he was part of the class of '81—are some here today that predate—postdate that. And there's a unique element, by the way. Members in the Legislature today will experience that but there's a unique element when you get to know someone on a personal basis. Of course, in those days, we had three night sittings. You probably got to know people in some cases better than you got to know your own family members. We've civilized

that somewhat. I'm not sure it's necessarily reduced the hours that MLAs put in and the families sacrifice.

* (15:20)

But there was a particularly unique bonding that took place with Elijah. We had five northern MLAs and we not only hung out together here in the capital, we did a lot of travelling around northern Manitoba. You really get to know someone. You get to know them on, you know, on a personal basis. I remember one trip in particular. We were, as is the case now, as history repeats itself, there was a hydro dam, Limestone. We had a working group. Elijah was the chair of it, and I'll never forget a trip going into War Lake where I think both Elijah and I—and I know my colleague, member for Kewatinook, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) will know that sometimes you misjudge distances. And, actually, the airport is a little bit further away than it appears when you're walking instead of being in a pickup truck. And I still remember that trip in. History might have been different, because as we were walking—and it was actually Elijah who insisted on walking, we were not going to, you know, hold up the meeting that people had been waiting for us about half an hour—and I still remember the wolves howling. I was actually quite relieved when a pickup truck did arrive to carry us on. Mind you, I probably had some greater fear of the wolves than Elijah did, growing up as he had in Red Sucker Lake.

You know, I remember other aspects of what it was like for Elijah. It was a very different era politically in some ways. Some people had a tough time with a First Nations minister. I still remember a certain contractor at Limestone actually said—one of their senior officials said, well, who in the—well, this is the Legislature, I'll say heck—is Elijah Harper, when we started to actually insist, as we did, on that hydro dam, that there be significant First Nations, significant Metis, significant northern hiring. Well, they found out pretty quickly that he was the minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. And, you know, really it showed the degree to which he was a groundbreaker, you know, in terms of his involvement in terms of provincial politics.

Now, of course, a lot has been said about the fateful events of 1990, and I had a perspective that came from being the House leader for the New Democratic Party. We were third party at that time. And I don't think people realize, in some cases, just what we were seeing here, the pressures that were brought to bear in this Legislature. We had the

Meech Lake Accord. It had been agreed to; there'd been a debate.

I mean, I won't get into all of the history, but it came down to essentially two provinces. We were one of them. We had a minority government. And what transpired over the weeks that the Meech Lake Accord was before the Manitoba Legislature, I think, was really some of the best and the worst moments that I've seen in my time in politics, but even in terms of our country. There was incredible pressure. People were told that if Meech Lake didn't pass, that was the end of Canada. People were told that. The amount of pressure on MLAs, certainly the Speaker, was immense. But what we saw was an incredible story that unfolded, where Elijah Harper, speaking for First Nations people, speaking for all Aboriginal people, said that you cannot have a constitution in Canada that does not fully reflect the founding peoples of this country.

And probably the proudest moment I've ever had in politics was when there was a point of order, actually, in the House. And what essentially had happened, Mr. Speaker, there was some question about whether the appropriate notice had been given for the Meech Lake motions. And you have to remember there was a deadline; if it didn't pass, there would be difficulties. I had, as House leader, been involved in some of the discussions—it had been identified. And some people perhaps thought that, well, it'll be dealt with; you know, don't worry about it, it's going to be dealt with.

Elijah Harper stood in this House and, to my mind, bringing the moral authority that he did as a First Nations MLA, argued, probably, to my mind, one of the most powerful presentations I've seen in this House about the degree to which our parliamentary system had to reflect its own values and, by doing so, had to reject the notice provisions that were put on—in place.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll be upfront, there was a lot of controversy, including in our caucus. There were people that agreed or disagreed with Meech Lake. And I'll never forget, speaking right afterwards, one of the most powerful moments, to my mind, that I've ever had, is where I put forward on behalf, certainly, of our caucus—and I think time will show that it's probably the view of many—that Elijah Harper's fundamental point was a point we all had to take for granted, that in this institution, based as it is on the history of parliaments, that we had to do the right thing.

By the way, I would note—talk about the pressure—the Speaker deliberated for a considerable period of time. And I will always have undying respect for Denis Rocan, because with all the pressures—and I had the opportunity to talk to Denis Rocan after about just how severe those pressures were—to ignore the point that put—you know, the procedural arguments put forward by—allegedly—the moral arguments—he did the right thing. Well, it's Manitoba Day in 2014. Manitoba's still here, Canada's still here. I think there's a lesson in that. But what I want to, you know, remark on is the degree to which out of that incredible series of events, I saw what it did in the way of giving hope to so many people.

Elijah, of course, left provincial politics, ran federally, was an MP for a period of time. I had the opportunity, by the way, to meet with him many times after he was no longer in politics. People don't realize, by the way, the degree to which he travelled the world. I think he went to Taiwan 11 times. He was an inspiration to indigenous people in Taiwan. And what came out of that, what was particularly striking was that Elijah became a role model, a symbol of hope and particularly for a whole generation of Aboriginal people.

You know, we talk about the difference in Manitoba. When Elijah was first elected in 1981, I don't think anyone could've imagined that we would have a Riel Day—a Riel Day, recognizing Louis Riel, Metis leader, founder of the province. Took us a century plus, but we did. I don't think when Elijah was first elected in 1981 anyone would've seen, for example, where we're at today. And I'm very proud to be in a government where our Deputy Premier is a proud First Nations person, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson). And in that transformation that we have seen in our province, Elijah Harper played a key role. When I see everything from self-government, which was talked about as a concept in the '80s, I mean, First Nations people always knew that this predated any of the political discussions. Much of this is the inherent right of Aboriginal people, Mr. Speaker, that predates much of our government in Manitoba and our government in Canada. But what I—when I see that evolution, I see that Elijah gave significant hope to a generation, a generation of leaders, a generation of activists, a generation of young people that saw that you could make a difference.

Now, one thing I know, by the way, from my discussions with Elijah on a personal basis for the

last number of years, he really hadn't changed at all despite all that fame. And when I say fame, he would—you'd walk into the airport, you'd walk into a hotel with Elijah and he'd be instantly recognized—instantly recognized. He was that well-known. His basic character, his basic humility was always the same. But the one thing I do know is that Elijah continued—he continued to stay active. He'd stayed active in terms of connecting with his home community. He stayed active in issues on the east side. He still talked about the pain of so many families, and, of course, Elijah knew it first-hand, you know, with the loss of so many young people from suicide. So what I took from many of my discussions with Elijah was very much historic transformation that perhaps has only just begun.

I remember, on a personal basis—I want to add, by the way, certainly my daughter now, as MP for Churchill actually met with Elijah on many occasions, kept in close contact with him in Ottawa. And, you know, when you grow up—well, she was born after I was elected, that gives you some sense of her connection in politics. Elijah was perhaps like an uncle in a sense, and it was ironic in the end, former MP and current MP.

* (15:30)

But I think what we need to remind ourselves is not just how far we've come, but how far we have to go. You know, there's so many social issues, so many challenges facing First Nations communities. It shows itself in terms of movements like the Idle No More movement, which, to my mind, had echoes of what I saw in 1990.

And, as we stand here today celebrating Manitoba Day and, I believe, celebrating Elijah's life, what we can do as Manitobans—with that significant connection we have with Elijah because he was a great Manitoban—we can remind ourselves, really, of two things. One is that someone like Elijah Harper can become part of history and yet could never, and would never forget his roots where he came from. He was proud of the Oji-Cree from Red Sucker Lake. And it's also important for us, Mr. Speaker, to remind ourselves that Elijah Harper may be written in our history as a significant chapter, but there are many chapters left.

And, if we're to pay true tribute to Elijah Harper, it would be to rededicate ourselves to ensuring that we have social justice and social equality for everyone in this province, including every single Manitoban and from whatever community, the most

remote communities, the most northern communities included. First Nations and Metis people, that was Elijah's vision. It drove him as a MLA in this House. It drove him as a Member of Parliament. It drove him as chief of his community. It's what made him a part of history.

Let's not forget, when we write that next pass—that next chapter, what Elijah's real message was, and that is the need to keep the fight for social justice and equality for all Canadians, including the First Peoples of this country.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I join others in this Assembly today, on Manitoba Day, in recognizing the contributions of Elijah Harper to Manitoba and to Canada and, indeed, to the world.

I personally knew Elijah best during the period when we were both Liberal members of Parliament from 1993 to 1997. Elijah became a good friend. His quiet humour and his ability to tell stories drew people to him. He talked of his passion for running as he was growing up. He also talked of his years at Red Sucker Lake, his years in the Legislative Assembly and, of course, of his participation in the effort on behalf of many Canadians to end the Meech Lake Accord. He was also very effective in moving forward the agenda for a better understanding of Aboriginal people in Canada and for the co-existence of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in our country.

In December 1995, Elijah was instrumental in convening a Sacred Assembly. Elijah's father, Pastor Allan B. Harper, gave the opening prayer. At the front of the Assembly on the stage Elijah Harper and his father stood together with Grand Chief Ovide Mercredi, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and the Minister of Indian Affairs, Ron Irwin. Elijah chaired the Assembly and he provided the keynote address.

I'm going to quote from Elijah Harper's speech because it tells much about Elijah and his vision. Elijah Harper said, and I quote: I have a vision for this country we call Canada. This is a vision that is inherent in the treaties that were made with the newcomers that came to this land and with their governments. We agreed to respect and honour each other, to co-exist, to live side by side in harmony, to share what we have, the knowledge, the land and the resources. This vision is not very complicated, but it is strong. It embraces unity, caring, loving and sharing. But it has not been appreciated and understood by many ordinary Canadians.

Elijah then went on to talk of the responsibilities of Aboriginal people to maintain their language and culture and to maintain their stewardship of the land and the environment. He continued in his speech, and again, I quote: We understand the need to use the land for the benefit of everybody, not for greed. It is important that all Canadians understand and appreciate this, that our relationship with this land is the responsibility that is not within our power to extinguish. I believe there is something missing, which is the spiritual element. Thus came the idea of the Sacred Assembly to bring spiritual leaders together, to bring understanding among our communities and the whole country of Canada. There needs to be a healing in the land and in the people. There needs to be reconciliation, restoration and restitution. Because of our relationship with the Creator and this land, this is a spiritual process, a sacred process, and this is the reason why we have called a Sacred Assembly. A nation without a vision has no hope. A nation without a vision has no future. We now embark on this journey together for the benefit of all people here in Canada.

And that was how he ended it with his vision of Canada, and one can see in the speech how his words then foreshadowed what was to become the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It foreshadowed many things that have passed since then.

Now, one of the recommendations which came from the Sacred Assembly was for a national day to recognize Aboriginal people and their contribution to Canada. And thus it was that Elijah played an important role in the establishment of the National Aboriginal Day on June 21st. National Aboriginal Day is an important step in creating better awareness and understanding of the history of Aboriginal people in Canada and a better future for all of us. The first National Aboriginal Day occurred in 1996, six months after the Sacred Assembly, and it has, of course, been held every year since then. And I believe it has contributed to a growing sense of pride among Aboriginal people in Canada and a growing improvement in the understanding of all Canadians in the role Aboriginal people have 'played' in our province and our country.

Elijah Harper also played a key role in the discussions which led to the framework agreement on self-government with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. Indeed, I believe Elijah Harper would've been very pleased, were he alive today, to learn of the amount of work-in-progress being made with respect to self-government for the Sioux Valley

Dakota First Nation. Such self-government should be fully achieved by July of this year.

In the years after his time as a Member of Parliament, Elijah Harper continued to be active in working with others for the benefit of Aboriginal people in Canada. He always sought ways to bring development that would strengthen Aboriginal people, and part of his effort was in seeking a way to get benefits to communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, including his own community of Red Sucker Lake. There remains, of course, much left to do and much left to be done as we move forward in the years ahead.

Today, as we honour Elijah Harper in his achievements, we think of what he has done. We think of his contributions. We think of even as toward the end Elijah struggled with diabetes, he continued to contribute. He continued to travel across Canada and to travel around the world. And, of course, that rampant epidemic of type 2 diabetes is a scourge that we must dedicate ourselves to ending.

But I want to conclude by saying, on behalf of Rana Bokhari and the Manitoba Liberal Party, I want to extend condolences to Elizabeth, to Anita, to the extended family and community members and to the many, many friends of Elijah Harper.

Mr. Speaker, I close with those words and thank you for the opportunity for being able to contribute a little bit to this discussion today.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): It's an honour to be here in the Chamber today with the family, and I include Jennifer and Darcy Wood as part of the family, and as well many of the former MLAs, some part of the class of 1981.

* (15:40)

This is a very unique tradition that we have here in the Manitoba Legislature, and I think it's particularly fitting today because Elijah was one of the most known legislators ever to serve in this Chamber. And, in fact, I think to many Manitobans he is the only famous person to have ever served in this Chamber. And I think that is good and I think that speaks to who he spoke to and on behalf of.

I was honoured to be Elijah's adviser on matters, and among other things, to help make the word no work—a little bit of pressure there. But quietly and without me even really noticing at first, he became my adviser; that was the nature of Elijah. He was a

great inspiration to me and I think he was part of the formula that led to me actually being here. So it's a strange turn of events that I would be up on my feet in this Chamber today.

We spoke about Elijah's legacy, as being the first treaty Indian to be elected to this Legislature. I'll just say as a footnote the class of '81 was a whole new, much more inclusive, representative class of MLAs than we had ever seen before—and I will say, including on the basis of gender, it was a big breakthrough that election. But as the first treaty Indian in this Legislature, it wasn't just that and that label. He brought, for the first time, the insights to this Chamber about living on a reserve. In 1981, he brought for the first time to this Legislature first-hand knowledge about residential schools, about moving from extremely remote communities to the city of Winnipeg and getting enrolled in university and how awkward and difficult that was. He was here among us for the first time ever in the history of this province, so that it could only strengthen the power of this great institution to serve and to serve all the people that it was designed for.

So, as deputy clerk, I sat here in 1981, I got to know Elijah in some unique ways. I remember him coming into my office, for example, over here, and he had a bunch of bills and receipts clutched in his hand and, you know, what do I do with these? Uh oh, I better look at this. And he had bills from somebody, a friend that had to come down to the hospital and that—oh, my gosh—you know, so I got to know him. We worked through these issues. I wanted to ensure that he had all the support that he needed from the Clerk's office.

But, of course, it was then at Meech—at the time of the Meech Lake Accord, coming here for decision making that Elijah called on me as an old friend—I was then in private practice—and I know the story's been told—actually, there was a movie that some of you still make fun of the characterization of myself in that. I—actually, I want to just tell you, I really had urged the producers to cast Paul Gross for me, but they wanted that guy, cousin Harold from Red Green to—but, anyway.

But Meech Lake was a process, of course, done behind closed doors and the amendments to the Constitution affected key parts of how this country was to operate. And notably among the key parts, or the key pieces was recognition of Quebec as a distinct society. And Elijah made it clear over and over again that he had no problem with that, but it

was Phil Fontaine that really—in one sentence, I think—characterized what the problem was, as the Meech Lake resolution came to this Chamber. Phil said, Quebec has been here for 350 years, but we have been here for thousands of years. And so Elijah Harper was here at that unique moment and in 1990, as I recall, he sat somewhere right over there. It was, of course, this tremendously unique moment in the course of Canadian political events, and it fell to him then, the chiefs believe, to stand up in this House and stop that resolution.

And we all know, as we work issues through our caucuses and we stand up in this House, we usually are surrounded by people that have similar approaches—we vote in groups in here. It is often hard for all of us in this Chamber, in these days, to be reminded how difficult it is to stand apart from everyone else on an issue.

Now there were some others in the NDP caucus of the day—and Maureen is here for one, I know—and there were others that had very serious concerns about Meech Lake on other—with other analysis. But not only was he standing apart from his general caucus, but he was standing apart from what most Canadians probably thought was necessary to keep Quebec within Canada. The intense pressure was profound on this man, and he demonstrated a strength of character that I will never forget.

I remember one day we were working through an issue, what to—how to respond to an offer to make a deal from the Prime Minister. And he—Elijah had received a death threat that morning, that he would be dead at—I believe it was 1 o'clock. And I sat next to Elijah in this meeting, and he had the biggest milkshake I've ever seen from McDonalds. And the clock was working towards 1 o'clock, and I don't think Elijah was looking at the clock but when the time came and it was about two minutes after, I said, the time's passed. And I heard the biggest slurp I've ever heard, the sigh of relief next to me.

But I can tell you other stories about the threats that went with it, but the fortitude that was required of him and that he took forth with such grace is a remarkable Canadian story. We didn't know how this would all turn out, all of us involved, but it was Elijah. He wasn't giving advice, he wasn't just thinking about it. He was the one who was taking the action and could threaten the future of the country.

So that leads me to some reflections, and I want to talk about Elijah's sense of humour because that really made it all so much more, you know,

engaging, if you will. The day that we introduced—Elijah went up and introduced a notice of motion to get rid of the resolutions on the Order Paper because they had not been provided with the right notice, and we went back to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and he was sitting there quite solemn and very quiet with his head down. And I went up to him and I said, what, you know, come on, we did it. Well, he says, I don't know about this. About what, I said? About this politics of being an MLA, he says, I just don't know. I said, oh, come on. Well, then, what would you do? He said, procedural adviser.

I remember I said to him once—this is after—I said, you know, Judy Wasylycia-Leis is resigning in her seat and is going to run federally, and there's some people in the neighbourhood asking if I seek a nomination, if I'd be interested in politics. And I said, I just can't make my mind up. I'm in this law career thing, it's going pretty well, I just don't know. Elijah, what do you think?

He says, go to the bush. I knew what that meant because, you know, I'm from there. But then it was a little bit later one fall and Elijah said, you know, I'm getting real pressure to run federally, to make some changes there, and I just don't know what to do. And I said, well, like you said, go to the bush. He says, too cold. So, always practical.

But, when it comes to humour, I want to share this one. Elijah didn't feel well for many years, and he couldn't get a diagnosis that really explained his illness. So I was quite concerned about this, and we had coffee one day and I was exploring what—you know, where has he gone for advice, and he said, I've been to every kind of doctor; I've been to every kind of professional. He says, but it was actually last week I went to a different kind of doctor. I went into the office and the guy, he got a little kennel, he took out a black cat and he rubbed it on my chest. And then the doctor said, would you turn around? And he rubbed the black cat on my back. And Elijah said, and then I said to the doctor, what do you call that procedure? And the doctor said, cat scan. So even in his difficult times—and this was really weighing on him—he rallied with great, great humour.

I want to just say, Mr. Speaker, that this is a modest, giving man. He had such a wonderful calm, assuring demeanour. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talks about the word humble. Elijah was the epitome of humble, and the eagerness to rally faith to help in public affairs, I think, is just so commendable, and I think we should spend more

time thinking about that path that he was on. But Elijah always had to recognize someone else for what were workings of his own, and that is a great lesson to us all. And our family instead decided to honour him.

*(15:50)

I think—I just can conclude with some thoughts on the significance of Elijah in the grand scheme of things. You know, for two weeks, the entire national focus was here on Manitoba, this Chamber, but Aboriginal hopes and aspirations—I mean—there was live national television here. This gallery was packed every day. He raised awareness about how we have to work with Aboriginal people—it—when it was the first national voice that was heard loud and clear. And I have come to firmly believe that the future, the success of this province, depends on exactly that, that we cannot prosper in the years ahead without heeding what he stood for. We have to work with Aboriginal Canadians, and not just include them in the result, but include them in the process. And I'm still learning that in my portfolios each and every day, Mr. Speaker. Elijah increasingly urged the sharing of the economic wealth of this country with those on First Nation lands.

As well, Elijah inspired Aboriginal leadership. He showed that Aboriginal people, even one person, can make a difference. And I think that is what I hear out and around amongst First Nation—among First Nations communities and leaders; they say that was a watershed in Aboriginal political life in Canada. It showed that Aboriginal leadership has efficacy, and efficacy in a European-inspired institution, of all places.

In the election immediately after Meech Lake, we even had a word for all of the Aboriginal candidates that were successful in that election. It was called the Elijah factor. Candidates ran because they thought they can make a difference, and they won. And I think, too, as well, during Meech Lake, those two weeks, I'll—a great deal—there—negative stereotypes were shattered of Aboriginal people. There was this coming together of this tremendous coterie of leadership, whether it was Phil or Ovide or Oscar and, most notably, Elijah, but so many others, too, around the table, and in other jurisdictions in Canada.

So Elijah is remembered, I think, for saying no. But his real legacy, I think, is his work to secure a resounding yes to hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal peoples of this country. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me today to rise in this House today to honour the legacy of Elijah Harper and the contributions he made to this community, this province, this country, and after I'm hearing more from members about the story of Elijah Harper, it sounds like his legacy is far beyond just the reaches of Canada. It is an honour, and very humbling, actually, to also stand here today to speak to this condolence motion.

And whenever I've over the years heard about or thought about or read about Elijah Harper, I mean, he was such a significant persona in anything that I have ever heard. And I have to say that on Monday, I was in Gimli, and I was at a funeral, and I walked out, and in the parking lot where we were walking to our car there was a huge feather. And I looked at it and I thought, I wonder if this is an eagle feather, and I wondered then and thought about Elijah Harper.

So I may not have known him. All I know about Elijah Harper is what I read or saw on television or read in books. But there is such history to what he represented here. And my first thought, when I saw this feather, was of Elijah Harper. That feather spoke louder than any words ever have could've in a House where we use a lot of words a lot of the time. A silent feather said more than many words did, and, you know, certainly it has become very symbolic, you know, of a lot of things.

And the one thing in learning more about what he did in this House—and it's been very interesting to hear from people that knew him closely, and I did watch the movie, and the Minister of Conservation is right. When I saw him in the movie I was trying to relate, you know, the movie actor to the Minister of Conservation now, and it was interesting, and then to see this Chamber in a movie.

I think we come in here a lot and don't really realize the kind of impact we may be able to make, and Elijah Harper wasn't doing it because of wanting to be famous or wanting to be in a movie. He did what he did out of conviction and he did what he did out of principle. And sometimes in this kind of an environment that's very hard to do, and it really did show the strength of the man, although there must have been incredible pressure around him at that time. And it wasn't just pressure from within here, it was provincial, it was national and I suppose it was international too.

And I can't imagine that—what that might have been like for the man, but certainly the strength of

his beliefs really came through, and I think that legacy is going to be a very enduring, lasting legacy, to know that you can be in this place where sometimes there's many things said and you can stand for integrity and stand for principle and fight for what you really believe in, and make a difference.

So I really, you know, felt he did make an enormous difference, you know, and, you know, his legacy will be, you know, revisited many times over the years because Canada still seems to be going through some of these, you know, turmoils that we saw with the Meech Lake Accord.

And so I think the significance of the man, Elijah Harper, is going to remain something very tangible for a very long time, and I know that while many of us didn't know him, I think there's a lot of lessons that can be learned from what he stood for. And certainly, you know, as an Aboriginal person standing and fighting every day for improving the lives of Aboriginal people, and, you know, for me having the chance to read through some of that as I was reading through some of the notes that we had, he really was a very, very remarkable person and he really had a lot of passion. And it is people like that that we need in this House to take issues that are important to us and then to move forward with them in the best way that we know how, and to stand up for what we believe in and try to make a difference. And he did that. He tried to make a difference in the lives of many people, and so we are very grateful for that.

And, you know, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, you know, having our voice be able to be heard here today, I think is very remarkable that we can stand here and honour somebody even though we, you know, may be on different sides of a fence. But you always admire the integrity and the tenacity of somebody who fights for what they really believe in and is willing to take a stand to make a difference.

So, you know, on behalf of my colleagues, I'd just like to say our deepest condolences to the family that are here today and, you know, to say that we certainly respect the initiatives that he brought forward here and the principles on which he did them, and he indeed did leave a significant legacy in this province.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, Elijah Harper inspired people. He inspired First

Nations peoples. He inspired Canadians. He inspired all who ever met him. Elijah Harper inspired me, and I'm grateful to those who nurtured his life. We are all grateful to his family, his friends and his community. Their support of Elijah Harper nurtured him, and their loss is shared by all of us here today in the Manitoba Legislature.

* (16:00)

Mr. Speaker, Elijah Harper was a man of few words, and I will follow his example in honouring him this afternoon.

With one feather in this Chamber, Elijah Harper altered the course of Canada. With one feather, Elijah Harper transcended this room and became part of our shared spiritual realm of—as Canadians. With one feather, Elijah Harper gave awesome voice to First Nations people and became immortal. His voice was one of hope, of courage, of truth, of idealism, of justice, of human equality and strength.

Elijah Harper, Mr. Speaker, embodies the truth that one person can change the course of history—there's no greater lesson to be taught in a democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Legislature was blessed to have Elijah Harper as a member. The New Democratic Party of Manitoba was honoured by his presence in our caucus and Canada was strengthened by his courage.

With one feather, Mr. Speaker, Elijah Harper made us all better people.

Thank you.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I rise today really to thank the family members that are here. Thank you for sharing Elijah Harper with us.

Unlike many that spoke earlier, I did not have the privilege of meeting him. But I can tell you that he was a huge influence on my life and on the lives of so many of my students and that's what I would like to take the opportunity to share with members of this Chamber and most especially to his family, so that you have an understanding of just how profound his impact has been on so many of us that never had the opportunity to meet or work with him.

I began my university career here at the U of M, and at the time that he stood in this Chamber and said no, I was an undergrad student. And this was something that I read about in the newspaper and I—and it seemed a little surreal, that there was one

Aboriginal gentleman standing in this Chamber and effectively bringing the Canadian political process to a halt, to make sure that indigenous people were heard, heard respectfully and heard appropriately.

It was also a time when I, as an academic, was going down a journey where my own work would lead me to become a non-Aboriginal ally in the process towards decolonization. I would go on to do other work and I would ultimately end up back in this province, hired under the Aboriginal—the AJI—Aboriginal Child Welfare Initiative. And, ironically, my very first class teaching in the Native Studies department had me in the rather interesting position of being a non-Aboriginal suburban academic teaching Native Studies to a group of Aboriginal child—social workers under the Child Welfare Initiative. And it was a wonderful opportunity to talk about so much.

And one of the things that always gave me the greatest pleasure, was as I would work through these courses—and oftentimes with my Aboriginal students wondering again, what is this suburban academic doing, how can she teach us without recolonizing the classroom, it was an active part of the discussion as to how things unfolded—but we would always get—once we'd worked our way through the variety of colonization history, we would get to the Meech Lake Accord. And we would get to the Meech Lake Accord, and that allowed me the opportunity to go off on a little bit of a tangent, to go off in a direction where I could—again, without having known the man, but known academic and historical details—be able to provide to my students a biography of this wonderful man.

Because I sat there in a classroom, most of my students came up through the ACCESS program, which meant that they were students who would not, by most people's expectations, ever make it into a university classroom. They faced many hurdles, many challenges and they did so both before and during their academic careers.

And so in many cases, Mr. Speaker, they hadn't had a very well-rounded academic experience in their elementary and secondary years and you were doing a lot of catch-up work, but you were also doing a lot of work which I, frankly, considered to be deprogramming, regarding the mainstream understanding of Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal relations in Canada. And there would be different hurdles we would face, but the one thing that always happened was when we got to discussing the Meech

Lake Accord, and when I was able to explain to my students what had happened when I'd been sitting in a U of M classroom years before, the parallel events that were occurring right in this Chamber, it was always a moment of profound inspiration, regardless of whether students were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. If they were non-Aboriginal students, his story, basically, if there had been any lingering dredges of misunderstandings or belief in the myths and the negative stereotypes around Aboriginal people and what role they could have, they were dispelled in an instant. They saw the power of this man. Again, as we've heard, very humble, but just doing what needed to be done, and they saw a wonderful influence.

For my Aboriginal students, I can't even—there are no words to describe the kind of impact that that particular event and his particular role had on so many of them, because in their own experiences, having faced so much marginalization, so many difficulties, wondered—first of all they wondered how they, in some cases, even managed to get into this classroom—what they could do to effect change on a path to decolonization for all Canadians. And this story, the story of Elijah Harper, encapsulated for them the hope, the aspirations, the inspirations, knowing that they, too, could in some way effect change just by doing what they knew to be the right thing.

And so the idea of that one lecture which sort of the shorthand became—for that lecture became known as one man, one feather, one word. That was one of the most important classes that I taught every year, the one that it didn't matter how tired I was—actually, I was still teaching when I was in the '07 election, and I know when that lecture came up it was because of the way the election worked. I won the election, I was exhausted, and guess who had to get up on three hours sleep and had no problem having that discussion because I went—a light went on, oh, my goodness, I'm going to actually be in the same Chamber as so many other people that have done that, the work comes with being a legislature—legislator. But, more importantly, I get to come into the same Chamber where he did what he did, and that he did it for his community, he did it for his family, he did it for First Peoples all across this country, but he did it for all Canadians.

So I express my debt of gratitude to you for the role that you played in his life in shaping him to be the man that he was so that he could help shape Canada in the direction—the way he did, and I thank

you for everything that you did and for sharing him with us because he was obviously a very amazing man. And I want you to know that there are so many of us that never had the opportunity to meet with him or work with him but hold him in the highest regard, the highest esteem and the utmost gratitude for what he did to shape this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:10)

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): I was afraid even to get up and speak about Elijah Harper, but I have to bring the voice of immigrants and—into this Chamber and say thank you for giving us hope.

When the Meech Lake Accord was being discussed in this Chamber, we were all eyes and ears because of the fear—the fear that it could be the end of Canada, and we just moved here. And it was amazing that with a simple no—no to a consent to the Meech Lake Accord, it was the beginning of the awakening of the First Nations. And, as an immigrant, it gave us hope, hope that this country will be what it was always and had always been: inclusive, freedom-loving, very generous and very charitable.

When I arrived here in 1980, the first person who greeted me was somebody who was asking for a quarter. And I said, oh, my God, I thought there will be nobody who'll be asking for any quarter in this country, because this country is very rich. And it was a white guy.

The stereotype that we got before was that the natives—the Indians were supposed to be somebody that you should stay away from; it's not true. Some of them have become the best of friends.

Mr. Speaker, when I joined the picket line on Notre Dame because that company—employees of that establishment went on strike. And we were all walking, and I met Andy, and Andy spoke of Elijah Harper. And I said, who? He said, that guy with a feather. Oh, that guy. He stopped the Meech Lake Accord with just one word: No.

And my interest in the life of Mr. Harper started at that time, and I found that he sat right here—my seat. As the MLA for Tyndall Park, I could feel that he's still alive. In spirit, he's still here with the Idle No More movement, who are always in the forefront of promoting the nation's—the First Nations' interests.

And even those who have been around a little by—longer than me, there's a lot of contact that we

have with First Nations, especially when you live downtown, and among the best friends that I've found that I can trust are members of the First Nations.

So what would an immigrant like me say to Elijah Harper if he were here today? I'll say thank you and to your people for allowing us and sharing with us the wealth and bounty of our province.

More work has to be done. That's what the Minister for Northern Affairs said before. The work that has to be done is still pending. The reconstruction of the lives of most of the First Nations are in progress, and I'm very proud that I'm part of a government that does things—not just talk about it but does things. And I'll say to Elijah that, thank you for giving us a semblance of hope and the framework of a dream, that when we come and settle in Canada as immigrants, we will be treated with respect and dignity.

And I'll tell him, that his life is—not was—is a beacon of hope and a star that will guide us in the journey that we start when we came here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Municipal Government): Just in a few words, I want to join with others who have celebrated the life of Mr. Elijah Harper—Chief Harper.

I want to start by saying, from my family to Elijah's family, our condolences on his passing. I also want to say, on behalf of my constituents, very much a thank-you to Elijah and the work that he has done for our province and for our country.

I want to—I know that people will always remember Elijah for that very poignant moment here in the Manitoba Legislature, when, with the feather and the word no—you know, he—it wasn't as negative as just stopping the Meech Lake Accord. I think it was a positive expression of support that Elijah had for Aboriginal people, an opportunity to talk about and illustrate the plight of Aboriginal Canadians right across this country. And for that moment in history—and we've had some—over the course of our 144 years here in the Manitoba Legislature—I believe, we've had some very poignant moments. None, I would suggest, as riveting as that moment here in this beautiful building in our capital city.

So I think it has been well documented in what Elijah did, but I'm here to talk about a—I'm here to talk as a former constituent of Elijah Harper. I lived

in Norway House from 1982 to 1986. Part of that time, Elijah was my MLA. I don't want this to sound as if I'm detracting at all from the national prominence of Elijah Harper, but I do want to talk about the practical side of Elijah as an MLA, and how we knew him as constituents of his back in the '80s when we had some very pressing local demands that Elijah dealt with.

Perennially, many of us can—many of us here can associate with this—but, perennially, we had complaints about the road into Norway House. I'm from rural Manitoba. I know we—many of us from parts far away often complain about the condition of our roads. You may have heard some of it on the news recently. It was—when I went to Norway House in 1982, you turned off the Thompson highway onto a road that was pretty much pounded out by logging trucks and trucks going in and out of the Jenpeg generating station, and it wasn't in really good shape. As a matter of fact, on the provincial road map, when you got to the Nelson River and the ferry at the Nelson River, there wasn't even a line on the map from the Nelson River into Norway House.

We had talked about Elijah. Chief Walter Apetagon, he was the chief at Norway House when I lived there. Chief Apetagon and I, and a group of others, talked to Elijah about the condition of our road. And we were at a grad ceremony at the Norway House high school, and Elijah took a couple of us over to the side and he said—and this was a big deal because Premier Howard Pawley had gone up to Norway House and he had spoke at the Norway House grad. And Elijah took us over to the side and he said—he says, you know—very quietly, like Elijah would do—Elijah would—said very quietly to us, I think we're finally going to get some attention played to our road. We looked at him and we thought, well, why? And he said, the premier lost his muffler on the road. And to—and he grinned and he kind of twinkled in his eye, and he thought this was going to be our advantage now, to get some attention to our road, finally.

* (16:20)

Elijah—when I first moved up to the area, I met Elijah, and I wanted to impress my new MLA in my new community that I had moved into. And I thought the best way to do that was to talk to them about my grandfather's trapline. My grandfather had a trapline in the Swan River area—on the Swan River and on Tamarack Creek and the Roaring River, and I thought I knew a thing or two about trapping because

I had followed my grandfather a lot. I'd gone out with him many, many times. I learned how to do it from my grandfather.

It wasn't a registered trapline. It was a decent trapline in the Swan River Valley. So I thought I could impress Elijah with this. You know, little did I know I was—I went to Norway House. I was entering the real world of traplines, and some people who knew a lot more about trapping than I had ever known and ever would come to know. But, when I was talking to Elijah at our school, we were in Norway House. He came to visit and I wanted to talk to him about this. He was very, very quiet. He was very respectful. He listened to me, and he nodded a lot and smiled. And we were talking trapping, and I was telling him all the things I learned from my grandfather. And instead of saying to me something like, oh, you 'mistigoso,' you think you know a lot about trapping, but let me tell you a thing or two, you know, Elijah didn't take that route.

He hooked me up with a fellow north and east of Norway House, and I went out to chat with this guy and spend a little time on a registered trapline. And—I loved my grandfather's trapline, but it was not his primary source of revenue. My grandfather worked for the rural municipality and he trapped on the side. That was a pretty fundamental difference between that and this registered trapper northeast of Norway House, whose whole life was based on the trapline, not just his source of revenue but his lifestyle. The way he lived was dictated by his involvement in this trapline since he was a kid, and had worked with his father and his grandfather on the trapline. It was a way of life. It wasn't just an adjunct to a rural municipality job. So spending some time with this trapper taught me a lot about the value of oral history and the value of sitting and talking to somebody who comes from a different background. Elijah hooked me up with that, and I learned a lot, not just from Elijah but from the people in that area.

The last conversation I had with Elijah was several years ago, and it revolved around, you know, issues of the day, and an issue that Elijah and I actually hadn't agreed on. But we understood that we could each have our opinions on things and move forward, and I reminded Elijah of a day in—I think it was in the '86 election where he was under a lot of pressure, and there were people coming at him from all sides. And there was a town hall meeting that was called, and a whole group of people were there, I think, specifically to get after Elijah about a certain

issue. And Elijah came along and the place was full. I was standing at the back watching this.

Elijah comes in very quietly, and stands at the back for a while. And I think people are already starting to wonder, well, where's Elijah? And, little did they know, he's standing right there. And, when the meeting got going, I've never been so amazed at how quietly and steadily Elijah spoke to the crowd. And at—even at the beginning, there was some catcalls and there was some people hassling about certain issues. And Elijah just very calmly kept speaking quietly and humbly. It wasn't long before he had kind of taken that crowd from being a group that were there to give him heck about something to a group that understood his point. I don't know if they all agreed or not. It seemed to me they voted for him, because he was successful in the '86 election. But he very calmly and with much wisdom spoke to his own constituents in a very blunt, very persuasive manner.

And that's what I admired about Elijah. He was able to talk with his folks back home. He was able to connect with people in our constituency, and it didn't matter if you were a rural kid like me from Swan River, Manitoba, or whether you were born and raised on the trapline northeast of Norway House, Manitoba. Elijah could connect with you. He understood your lifestyle. He understood and was willing to hear you out and then represent you here at the Legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that Elijah will be known, I think, always as the guy from this Legislature who said no to Meech Lake and said yes

to Aboriginal awareness and Aboriginal rights. But he will also be known, I think, as somebody who listened to his people in his constituency and then reflected those views here in the Legislature and did some very practical things on behalf of the people who voted for him and sent him to this capital city.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate having the opportunity to speak about a fellow of Elijah Harper's stature here on Manitoba Day in the Manitoba Legislature. So thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this condolence motion?

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

Will members please rise for a moment of silence, please.

A moment of silence was observed.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable members for the debate here this afternoon.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might canvass the House and see if there's agreement to call it 5 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 12, 2014

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