

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
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<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 20, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom 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 morning, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 200—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists)

Mr Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), that Bill 200, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safer Traffic Conditions for Cyclists); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité accrue pour les cyclistes), now be read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gaudreau: It's my pleasure to present this bill today to protect cyclists, to give them a little extra room on the road. We all have family members who ride and kids who cycle on the road, and I just want to make sure that—and our government wants to make sure that they're protected on the road. And I look forward to debating this bill further, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports. Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ryan Blair

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Augusta National may be the most famous golf course in the world. Since 1934, it has

played host to every Masters Tournament, one of the four major championships of professional golf. To become a member at Augusta or play in the Masters, you have to be invited.

It is my pleasure today to rise and recognize a young Manitoba golfer who was invited there this year to play. Although he is only 11 years old, Oakbank native Ryan Blair can tell you first-hand what it is like to golf at Augusta National.

Last year Ryan won the regional finals of the boys' 10-to-11 age bracket, qualifying for the Drive, Chip and Putt Championship in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This gave him the opportunity to go to Augusta National last month to compete against the best junior golfers in the world. This was only the second year Augusta has held the Drive, Chip and Putt Championship. Around 40,000 junior golfers age seven to 15 tried out this year, and only 100 made it. Ryan was one of only three Canadians to make it all the way to Augusta.

Ryan couldn't have gotten there without the support of his family. When he was one, he started hitting a ball around with his sister's magic wand, and you could say he has been hooked on golf since. He practises at his pet Pine Ridge Golf Club where head pro Shane Dick has commented that Ryan resembles a miniature professional player in his practice and playing habits. Ryan apparently also has a habit of making shots that have a tendency to make the other members of Pine Ridge jealous.

Ryan has already fulfilled the dream of many a golfer to play at Augusta National. He is hoping that in the future he will be able to see him competing on Sunday for a green jacket at the Masters against past champions Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson and Canada's own Mike Weir.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, this morning our government raised the transgender flag in Memorial Park in honour of the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Every year on the 20th of November people around the world honour the memory of trans people who have lost their lives to violence. It is a day to

share stories about the discrimination, harassment and violence faced by people who don't live according to the gender assigned to them, and it's a day to learn about the changes needed so that trans people can live in safety and dignity.

Our government is working to do its part. We passed legislation to protect students from bullying at school. The member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) led our efforts to make it easier for trans people to change their birth certificates to reflect their true gender.

We increased funding for the Transgender Health Program at Klinik Community Health Centre and have expanded the coverage for the surgeries and assessments that transgender people may need to live authentic lives.

In his time as Attorney General, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) led our efforts to make it a human right in Manitoba to be free from discrimination based on gender identity, and we continue to work for a Manitoba that leaves no one behind and will continue to work with all organizations to provide excellent services for trans people.

We do this work to honour people like Divas Boulanger, who was murdered near Portage la Prairie in 2004, and for so many nameless others whose voices will never be heard.

I know it's customary to call for a moment of silence on a day like today, but I'm going to call for a moment of action. Instead of silence, I'm going to ask each of us to do what we can to make sure that every transgendered person can live a life in safety and dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Braden Pettinger

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, many of you have heard of the unfortunate accident that occurred to Braden Pettinger during his first game with the Portage Terriers on November 12th of this year.

Braden had been very excited to join the reigning national championship team in a second run for a championship, but Braden was seriously injured when he went headfirst into the boards and suffered a fracture to his C5 vertebrae. Currently, Braden is paralyzed from the neck down.

Prior to playing in the MJHL, Braden played his midget hockey with Brandon and the Southwest Cougars and originally hails from Elgin, Manitoba.

As a hockey parent, this is the kind of accident we all fear. Our hearts go out to this young man and his family. Braden is young and strong and we all wish him well in the future.

I ask for leave to enter into the record the GoFundMe donation site on his behalf.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the entry of the information that the honourable member referenced in his statement? *[Agreed]*

It will be entered into the Hansard record of today's proceedings.

Gofundme.com/77ag2dq4

New QuickCare Clinic

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, this past Wednesday was Nurse Practitioner Day, and what a better way to celebrate than with the announcement of a new QuickCare clinic in the west end of the city.

The new clinic will be built at the corner of Portage and Westwood, just outside Assiniboia, and like all QuickCare clinics, it will be opening on evenings, weekends and holidays to ensure families' health-care needs are being met.

Nurse practitioners help make that possible.

* (10:10)

They oversee QuickCare clinics together with registered nurses. The advanced education and training nurse practitioners bring to the table means they can diagnose and treat specific health issues as well as prescribe medication. This will provide people with options on where to receive treatment, and it will decrease the congestion at the Grace Hospital emergency.

Mr. Speaker, since we started opening QuickCare clinics in January in 2012 in places like Selkirk and Steinbach, over 150,000 patients have visited QuickCare clinics. This is a fabulous innovation. Creating more convenient health-care options for families closer to home is the better way to do things. Instead of bringing in two-tier health care, we're addressing wait times, a way that's fair and efficient. We're also protecting Manitoba's families from fees and exorbitant health-care costs. We won't allow the wealthy to cut to the front of the

line. We couldn't do this without nurse practitioners. And we now have 149 nurse practitioners, whereas, under the former government, there were none.

Thank you very much, the nurse practitioners. The work you do is invaluable to Manitoba families. That raises the bar for health and healthy living for all Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further members' statements? No.

Seeing none, we'll move on.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have no guests to introduce, so we'll move on to oral questions.

Mining Industry Concerns Work Permit Wait Times

Mrs Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the last few days members of the mining industry have gathered to discuss issues of concern within their sector of our economy. My colleague the critic for mining and I had the chance to discuss some of these issues with members of the industry, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the people who participated in the convention over the last few days.

I noted in the Manitoba Mining Review a message from the president of the Manitoba Prospectors and Developers Association, Ruth Bezys. She expressed concern about the length of time it takes to get work permits to conduct mining exploration in our province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, she said, and I quote, "the time it takes to acquire our work permits is out of control." End quote.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Selinger government taking so long to issue these permits, and what is the plan to change this?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): It was a pleasure to speak to the mining industry yesterday, the geoscientists, the prospectors, First Nations leaders. We saw a tremendous spirit of partnership there in how we can move forward on mining.

We've had two new mines open in the last few years, Mr. Speaker. That has generated thousands of jobs, and at the same time, we're doing it in a more environmentally sustainable way and in greater partnership with our First Nations and indigenous communities in Manitoba, which is the best way to move forward.

The minister has convened a mining advisory group of indigenous leaders. They're working well together. They're making very significant progress in how they can do land use planning jointly. When you do good forward-looking land use planning, you identify areas of opportunity for resource development, you identify areas where you want to protect the land, and that is a very progressive way to move forward in Manitoba with due respect to the treaty rights, with due respect to section 35 requirements for consultation.

All of these things are going on in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and I think we will set an example for other jurisdictions in Canada in how we can partner and do forward-looking approaches to resource development and environmental protection in Manitoba.

Regulatory Barriers

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, Ms. Bezys went on to say, and I quote, "we are being significantly hampered by increased regulations accompanied by higher fees and unrealistic timelines for work permits and community engagement or consultation." End quote.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, these allegations suggest that there are significant issues within this government's control that are hindering the ability of this industry to reach its true potential.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to remove these barriers and allow our mining industry to reach its true potential and once again be a leader on the world stage?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the very conservative Fraser Institute ranked Manitoba as No. 2 in Canada for mining friendliness and fourth in the world—No. 2 in Canada, fourth in the world.

We are pursuing an approach of having full partnerships with First Nations and indigenous communities. It allows them to work with the mining sector, allows them to work with the folks that want to preserve the boreal forest, for example. When all the players come together around the table and they engage in a true partnership in the areas where the resources are being looked at, where the boreal exists, they can then find a forward way of going forward based on the planning they do together. That is a good model for the future. It respects the constitutional obligations for accommodation and for duty to consult, it respects the treaty rights, and at the same time it creates opportunities.

And I saw this yesterday. I saw and talked to First Nations leaders that said, of course they want to have jobs for their people. Of course they want to do responsible development of resources. They want to be part of the story, Mr. Speaker. They want to be partners. They don't want to be excluded. They don't want to be left out. They don't want to be ignored, such as the opposition—

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

Northern Manitoba Jobs

Mrs. Stefanson: Actually, Mr. Speaker, this government is jeopardizing those jobs for those, in particular, northern Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, in an article written by Tim Friesen, executive vice-president of the Mining Association of Manitoba, he said, and I quote: By almost any measure, Manitoba's mining industry is at risk. End quote.

This industry has the potential, Mr. Speaker, to create a significant number of jobs in our province, in particular in northern Manitoba.

Why is the Selinger government standing in the way of allowing this industry to once again be recognized as a leader on the world stage, Mr. Speaker? Why are they putting this industry and many jobs, in particular in northern Manitoba, at risk?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, No. 2 in Canada, No. 4 in the world, certainly better than anything that existed when members opposite took their narrow, exclusionary approach.

We believe in forging the appropriate partnership with indigenous communities that allows for proper land use planning. A land use planning approach is one that looks forward to see where the opportunities are, to map out where resources can be developed, to identify if they can be developed in a sustainable way. And then when we do that together with partnerships with the mining companies, with the prospectors, with the people that are interested in the environment, with the local communities, that is the best way to move forward on these matters.

The members of the opposition want to take an exclusionary approach. They want to take a narrow approach. They want to take approach that leaves indigenous peoples out of the story. That approach creates greater levels of unemployment. That approach creates greater levels of resentment.

We are pursuing a policy of reconciliation and partnership which will be good for resource development in Manitoba and resource development which is sustainable in terms of the environment.

Mining Industry Concerns

Future of Industry

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, clearly, this government is not listening to the mining industry here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a pleasure to spend some time at the mining conference over the last two days. I certainly hope that the minister took time to listen to those in attendance. I also hope he takes the opportunity to read the articles from the mining review from the association and certainly from the prospectors and developers.

And I'd like to ask the minister if he actually agrees with the quote from the industry association that by, and I quote, by almost any measure, Manitoba's mining industry is at risk.

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister of Mineral Resources): Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) just indicated to the members across the floor, Manitoba's record when it comes to mining is really second to none across the country.

Just recently we've announced that there will be two new mines opening in Manitoba. That will employ another 900 Manitobans. And those—of those 900 Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, will obviously be northern indigenous people who are excited by the prospect of being involved in the mining industry, getting good jobs and, of course, continuing to build northern Manitoba that—and provide, frankly, I would say, anyways, a really—an economic stimulus to northern Manitoba.

Our government has put incredible efforts in working with northern Manitobans and indigenous Manitobans. That side of the House hasn't spent a second thinking about it.

Investments in Exploration

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, is this government also going to take credit for the nine operations that were shut down under their watch?

Mr. Speaker, exploration is certainly the lifeblood of the mining sector. If we do not have investments in the exploration sector, new mines will not be developed. The mining association reports

that only 1.4 per cent of Canadian exploration dollars were spent in Manitoba in 2014.

I recognize the NDP do not want comparisons to Saskatchewan, but I will say that Saskatchewan is expecting to attract \$300 million in exploration this year. This, Mr. Speaker, is 10 times the amount anticipated for Manitoba.

* (10:20)

Now, in talking with prospectors and developers at the conference, they say there's still two- and three-year delays in obtaining permits.

Why has the minister allowed this to continue to happen?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member gets up and quotes a lot of things, but he doesn't need to take our word for it. He can take the word of Max Porterfield from Callinex president and CEO, and this is from CNNMoney in September 2015, and he says, and I quote: Manitoba has excellent infrastructure and an experienced workforce.

The provincial government is very supportive of mining through its Mineral Exploration Assistance Program that issues rebates of up to 40 per cent on exploration expenders—expenditures and up to \$200,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, we work with the mining industry every day to ensure that that sector is strong and growing on behalf of Manitoba. We're developing new mines. We're creating new jobs. We're working with First Nations, Metis, indigenous people up in the North to ensure that all Manitobans prosper from Manitoba's mining sector.

Duty-to-Consult Policy

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not the first time this government's trying to put lipstick on a pig.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that the association and First Nations have raised as a concern is the lack of a framework around the duty to consult. The industry reports that the current NDP policy, and I quote: This policy is effectively grinding exploration to a halt. The industry goes on to say, and I quote again: Simply put, the status quo is not an option if we want to keep experiencing the economic and social benefits of responsible mining in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, after 16 years the NDP have failed to deliver. Why is that?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, only in the member's wildest imagination don't we deliver, because we deliver on behalf of the people of Manitoba every single day.

The Conference Board of Canada tells us that the mining industry will be growing our economy and creating new jobs in the coming year. The Fraser Institute, as the Premier (Mr. Selinger) just said, in its annual survey of mining companies, ranked Manitoba second in Canada and fourth in the world for an open-for-business platform.

Mr. Speaker, exploration expenditures are forecast to increase by 24 per cent or up to \$36 million in 2015. Compare that to the rest of Canada where exploration expenditures are forecast to decline in five of 12 Canadian jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we stand with northern Manitobans, indigenous Manitobans, Metis, First Nations. We're working for all Manitobans because we want to—

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

Health-Care System Government Performance Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, a report was released earlier this year by CIHI comparing health care across Canada. Manitoba was rated as doing poorly and given an overall D grade on health, putting this province on par with the United States. Once again, Manitoba is rated dead last in health-care performance, and patients are suffering because of it.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to explain to Manitobans: Why is it that they have to keep paying more and getting so much less?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Our government agrees with families when they tell us they expect our health-care system to be of the best quality and the highest patient safety and care, and that's what we're working on and that's what we do.

We're the side of government, we are the folks that invested in hiring and training more doctors and more nurses. We've invested in nurse practitioners in a way that, again, did not exist under members opposite.

So we work every day to make sure that this health-care system, on this side, it's always been growing, not the cuts that were made by folks on the other side.

Infant Mortality Rates Government Performance Record

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, of major concern in this report, Manitoba was given a D- on infant mortality. Manitoba was rated as the worst performing province in Canada on infant mortality. That is a devastating statistic.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Health to explain to Manitoba families why her NDP government has failed on such a critical issue.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

As I said, every family deserves the best quality of care, and we know that one of the key indicators for infant mortality are actually the social determinants of health, and the social determinants of health take on a variety of things, and especially in a population of Manitoba, which has a high percentage of indigenous people, we know that the social determinants of health have a serious impact.

And I was very pleased to speak with the federal Minister of Health and her colleague the Minister of Indigenous Affairs about returning to the table, about the federal government investing in First People, because the social determinants of health start with access to housing, to clean water. That's where it starts.

And so we're going to continue to work with this new federal government. After a decade of Conservative cuts, we're looking forward to a new relationship where the social determinants of health can be worked on together.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to have missed the boat, that after 16 years we have the worst infant mortality rate in Canada. It is the highest in all of Canada, and she does not seem to get that part of it.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago there was a maternity report put out, and this government sat on that report 'til it was brought to our attention. Then they decided to put forward another report. They have had a number of years to address this issue and they have obviously failed.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health: Why do they keep making promises and then breaking promises, and why should anybody believe them anymore because they keep failing?

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Again, the social determinants of health are about long-term, strategic and forward-thinking investments, which is why we have invested in innovative programs like Healthy Baby, ChildrenFirst, Families First and InSight. We've also built up things like the Prenatal Benefit and the Healthy Baby community support program. Those are the things that we've done.

The opposition, on the other hand, declared war against low-income Manitobans by setting up a welfare snitch line, cutting benefits and clawing back the National Child Benefit from the hands of parents.

We have nothing to learn from members opposite.

Gillam Mall Records Disclosure

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): On September 24th, 19 FIPPA requests were sent to Manitoba Hydro regarding the Gillam mall. Six days later, all requests for information were refused. Manitoba Hydro said, quote: There is no FIPPA duty that Manitoba Hydro shall answer questions. Access must request identifiable and existing records.

Can the minister responsible inform the House why a building built and owned by Manitoba Hydro has no existing records?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Mr. Speaker, you know, the member has gotten up on a number of successive days to talk about a routine order, a discrete matter, and you see the members opposite clapping for that, but it appears that the seat-belt light is off when there's a different captain in the chair on the other side.

But with respect to the building that he's referring to, it's a mixed-use building comprising retail on the lower level and offices and living quarters on the other floors. This building is owned by Hydro. It houses essential services like banking and a post office for the community. These institutions pay rent for their space.

Mr. Speaker, we invest in Gillam. Hydro invests in Gillam because it's indispensable to the generation of hydro in this province. We believe in hydro development; he certainly does not.

Mr. Schuler: Under The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, there is a duty to assist. According to the act, Manitoba Hydro must, and I quote, "make every reasonable effort to assist . . . and to respond without delay, openly, accurately and completely." Unquote.

Why is it that the Gillam mall, owned by Manitoba Hydro, built by Manitoba Hydro, has no existing records? With a build cost of \$16 million, an appraised value of only \$2.6 million, why doesn't this minister show accountability and provide transparent answers?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is nothing if not transparent and accountable, unlike the other side of the House that hide behind activities and a hidden agenda that very few of us can really properly understand.

But let it be said that the building and Hydro provide services to the community and working population in order to attract and retain staff in Gillam. Hydroelectric facilities near Gillam provide approximately 70 to 75 per cent of all electricity consumed by Manitobans. Ensuring that these services are present in the community is important to people who live and work there.

We want to support the workforce there. We want to continue to develop hydro resources in the North. We want to make sure that there's a partnership with indigenous peoples. On all those counts, Mr. Speaker, the opposition fails.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a document for the minister.

* (10:30)

Under FIPPA, there is a duty for Manitoba Hydro to assist. I quote directly from a Manitoba Ombudsman's note: "The first element of the duty to assist is to make 'every reasonable effort' to assist a requester."

Can the minister tell the House why his FIPPA response says there are no existing records for a building owned and built by Manitoba Hydro?

Sixteen million dollars was spent building the Gillam mall, yet a year later it's appraised at

\$2.6 million. And yet according to Manitoba Hydro, no records exist. Mr. Speaker, how is that possible?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, this is an invention out of the member's own imagination about whether there are records and not records, whether this exists or that exists.

What we know for sure is that the building in Gillam, as I said to you—or said earlier, is a mixed-use building comprising retail on lower level and offices and living quarters on the other floors. Those services are essential to provide support for those people living and working in Gillam.

We're happy to invest with—in partnership with Hydro in those services in those kinds of buildings because our objective is to keep Manitoba Hydro rates low for all Manitobans.

Let's remember, when they were in government, there was one rate for the north and one rate for the south. Now, as a result of our government's activities, all Manitobans are on an equitable, even playing field.

Fisheries Monitoring Cuts to Fisheries Branch

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, sea watch's scathing assessment of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis as, quote, comparable to some of the most poorly managed fisheries in the world, end quote, is just another day in the office for the Selinger government.

One of the sea watch's recommendations was, quote, more resources be given towards the Fisheries Branch to undertake rudimentary stock assessments would be important, end quote. And apparently the director of fish and wildlife agrees, saying in the media, quote: They've made some accurate assessments. End quote.

This spring the minister again cut funding to fish monitoring by almost \$300,000, on top of the \$20 million worth of cuts he's overseen since 2011.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister: How can he find \$670,000 for political severance packaging but nothing to save our lake monitoring of fish resources?

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I'm a little surprised at the member opposite, who, in his career in the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, encouraged government to try and function as

efficiently as possible, and that's precisely what we're doing in the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship. But that does not mean that we are not focusing on important issues such as the fisheries on lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba and Winnipegosis.

In fact, working with fishers, which is an important part of the equation, we've achieved eco-certification on Waterhen Lake. This is the first lake in the western hemisphere, Mr. Speaker, to achieve eco-certification and only the second lake in the world.

So for the member opposite—

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

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the thing about SeaChoice's recommendation that the NDP reverse their policy of cuts to fish monitoring is that this is not a new recommendation. Five years ago, on January 11th, 2011, the minister's own task force rang the alarm bell on the utter lack of fisheries data, recommending, quote, that the department do "an integrated series of monitoring programs and surveys," end quote.

Why, despite these recommendations, did the minister eliminate not only the director of fisheries position but the status of stand-alone branch completely this spring?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, for the member to suggest that we're not paying attention to these lakes is erroneous, to say the least.

There was a intensive study done in 2011, which we've taken to heart. And we've consigned a very noted Manitoban, Mr. Harold Westdal, will be working with us and with the fishers and with scientists, within the department and without, in the days to come as we work toward establishing lake management plans for the three lakes in question, Lake Winnipeg, lakes Manitoba and Winnipegosis.

And we will do our utmost to work toward achieving eco-certification not just on Waterhen Lake, as I said before, the first in the world—or second in the world, but on all the lakes in Manitoba. That's our objective—

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

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, the declaration of these three lakes as, quote, comparable to some of the most poorly managed fisheries in the world, end quote,

should come as no surprise to the Selinger government. There have been multiple email warnings sent to this minister's office over the last number of years on this matter, emails the NDP chose to ignore.

Can the minister confirm that his office received an email dated February 26th, 2015, from the Fisheries Branch warning that, quote: The proposed elimination of the director of fisheries position and branch merger will only exasperate the already tenuous situation we find ourselves in; we can no longer sustain these cuts to our programs and still provide any fish monitoring, data or analysis of substance or value?

Why does the minister continue to ignore the advice of his own front-line services?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Speaker, this born-again environmentalist across the way here, it's really staggering, you know. Six and a half hours in Estimates, no question on the fisheries. Suddenly, all of a sudden, it's of great interest to them.

If they were so interested in the health of our lakes, why won't they support the improvement of the waste-water treatment plant in the north end of Lake Winnipeg? Their leader referred to that as a waste of money. If they really cared about the quality of our lakes, they would start with managing the manure coming out of the city of Winnipeg here to ensure that these great lakes, Lake Winnipeg first and foremost, remains healthful going into the future.

So for them to raise questions on the environment is—I'll use the word ironic, to say the least, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Bethesda Regional Health Centre Accessibility Concerns

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Yesterday as I was driving through Steinbach, I saw an elderly couple walking arm in arm as the snow gently came down from the sky. It would have been lovely, Mr. Speaker, if they weren't actually hanging on to each other for dear life as they were trying to leave the hospital at the Bethesda place down the ramp.

And, in fact, what the government did yesterday is they put out a sign, a warning sign. It says attention on the sign and there's a picture of somebody falling, Mr. Speaker, if they were going up the ramp or up the stairs, and I'll table for the House, for the minister, a picture of the warning sign.

Why is it that elderly individuals have to cling on for their lives if they try to get out of a hospital, Mr. Speaker, when it's snowing, when it's icy, and all this government can do is put out a sign and says, you might fall because all we have for you is stairs or a ramp?

Mr. Speaker, why should the elderly be put at risk when they're just trying to go into or out of a hospital?

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. As we all know, yesterday was a rather interesting day in terms of weather across the lower part of the province, and, again, I think that we all know that ramps at any facility, an advisory warning to anyone is important. This is about reminding folks.

The Bethesda ramp is one that I've taken a personal interest in and I have made sure that the building—it was rebuilt correctly. And it was—I should also ask the member opposite if he, again, remembers the fact that the community approved this design. So we worked with the community to ensure that this was done, and the community approved this design once the architects approved it.

So we have worked with the community, with the RHA, to ensure that it met the community needs. It is a very well-built design. It is always working, and I don't think there's—

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

Mr. Goertzen: You'd think with a Ph.D. you would have known that winter was coming in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

But let's talk about the community response, because yesterday I was contacted by Sharon, who emailed me, and she said that: I have had two knee replacements in the last six months, the most recent one five weeks ago. My pain is excruciating, and then I have to walk the length of that incline. It's almost unbearable. Oh, yes, we do have the option of buzzing for assistance, and someone is to pop out with a wheelchair. Well, I buzzed several times—*[interjection]* This might be your constituent, sir. I've buzzed several times in my three weeks of physio. If I hadn't decided to make the trek on my own, I'd still be waiting, as no one ever showed up.

Now, I know the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) and others don't care, but why won't they fix this problem so people who are sick and disabled don't have to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Steinbach's time on this question has elapsed.

* (10:40)

Ms. Blady: I thank the member for the question.

As I said, we have worked with the community, we have worked with the RHA, and that ramp—we are the ones that built that ramp.

I would also remind the member and the members of that community that we are working on plans to put an elevator in there. We are going to be putting that in there and that's part of it. So we are in a transitional period with that construction. So we're working with the community to meet their needs, because we know how important it is.

I would like to remind the members opposite of the amount of infrastructure investment they made in Steinbach in their time in office: zero.

Mr. Goertzen: I think the minister needs another Ph.D., Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and I would say this to the member for Dawson Trail as well, because many of his constituents show up at that hospital and have the same issues and maybe he doesn't care about their pain, but I got an email from Ken, who said that the ramp modifications do nothing about the length and the incline that make it so difficult to use. Ringing the bell at the bottom of the stairs for assistance gives you a 30-minute wait.

One of the clearest warnings for elderly in our society when they get to that age is the danger of falling. They have to put a sign out there because the danger of falling on those stairs or the ramp going into or out of a hospital is significant.

The member for Dawson Trail doesn't care. The minister says it's top priority. Maybe we should call it a Tiger Dam entrance and then it would get done quicker, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Blady: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Again, I will continue to work with that community. We will continue to work with the RHA so that not just the ramp but the elevator is in place.

We know there is more to do, and that's why we're focused on moving health care forward, that's why we make investments.

Members opposite fail to recall all the cuts that they made when they fired over 1,000 nurses and drove over 117 doctors away. I'm proud to be a part of a government that invests; they just cut. Again, investment by his colleagues, by his team, in Bethesda: zero. Investment on this side. We'll keep working with the community.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights. *[interjection]* Order, please.

Clock on question period is ticking, folks. I'm sure we all want to hear as many questions as possible and answers for them, so I'm asking for your co-operation to keep the volume down a little bit so that I might be able to hear both the questions and the answers. If there was a breach of a rule, you'd want me to hear that and to rule on it. So I'm asking for your co-operation.

The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Fisheries Management Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, concerns over poor management by this NDP government have been rampant for years.

As an example, over many years and many times I've repeatedly raised concerns about the poor provincial management of the Lake Winnipegosis fishery.

Indeed, why has this government spent 16 years ignoring its own fishery management responsibility to the point where the government has been called recently one of the worst fisheries management people in the world?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member from River Heights for the question. It is important to have a fisheries management program in all of Manitoba, indeed, across the entire country.

And that's why we're very proud of the fact that the people around Waterhen Lake have been so involved in getting eco-certification for that lake, and that is one of the very few lakes in Canada and, indeed, in the world that has received that eco-certification. It's a good example of what you can do when First Nations and fishers and

government works together to improve their ability to manage the fishery in a sustainable way.

And the minister has moved very quickly with members of First Nations communities to forge a partnership to look at how they can move forward on making the fishery more sustainable. We will work with fishers to do that. We will work with Indian—with First Nations, Metis and Inuit people to do that in areas where they reside. We will look at the way that we can move forward on that because we do want to have a sustainable fishery.

Fish is a very good quality, high-protein product for the benefit of not only Manitobans but exports around the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, last week the Vancouver eco-certification agency SeaChoice declared fisheries on Manitoba's largest lakes among the worst managed in the world. Scott Forbes, a well-known Manitoba scientist, validated their criticisms.

Manitoba fishers do an excellent job providing high-quality fish, but the NDP have wasted 16 years, letting our fishers down by not ensuring a strong, modern and sustainable management approach.

Why was this NDP—what was this NDP government doing in the last 16 years instead of addressing this issue to prevent the problem that we have today?

Mr. Selinger: Some of the things that we've been doing is we brought in a Lake Friendly Accord, Mr. Speaker. Another thing we did, and Manitoba was the first jurisdiction to do it, was to require that all products used in Manitoba be water-friendly, lake-friendly products; no phosphates in Manitoba. Even the federal Conservative government supported that and rolled it out across the whole country, but it was started in Manitoba.

We brought in the safe lake—Save Lake Winnipeg Act, Mr. Speaker, to reduce nutrient loading on the lake. The opposition, the Conservatives, voted against it. Every chance they could, they tried to stop that project. And we are continuing to reduce nutrients in Lake Winnipeg.

And we are now, with the experience in Waterhen, which is the, as I understand it, the—one of the first lakes in the western hemisphere to receive eco-certification, sets a good model for how we can move forward on that, Mr. Speaker. And we look forward to doing that.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the 'plemier' is playing dodge ball.

There have already been many reviews of our great lakes fisheries. I table the title page of one of these from four years ago, and it provides a step-by-step action plan to improve fisheries management. Instead of implementing this plan, the Premier and his government have drastically cut staff in the Fisheries Branch.

Why did the Premier cut people and then call a review instead of just implementing the plan he already has?

Mr. Selinger: Waterhen Lake is the first freshwater lake in the western hemisphere and the second in the world to receive eco-certification. That is a way forward. It was done in partnership with the fishers and the people that live and draw sustenance from the lake, Mr. Speaker. That is a model we believe in when it comes to resource management and resource development: Do proper land use planning; do proper lake planning; do it in partnership with indigenous peoples, Inuit, Metis, First Nations peoples; do all of those things together.

What's the approach of the opposition? A narrow approach: Leave people out; don't protect them from bullying; leave them out when it comes to the apology for the '60s scoop. The Leader of the Opposition didn't even have the decency to stand up and offer an apology, Mr. Speaker. We see that every single day. They look for ways to exclude people from economic opportunities. They look for ways to exclude people from participating in the life of Manitoba, whether it be cultural or otherwise.

When it comes to fisheries, when it comes to resource development, we will do it in a pull-full partnership with the mining sector, the fishing sector, land use planning. That will be the way forward, and it'll be a way—

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

National Geographic Traveler Winnipeg Top Travel Destination

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I have never been so proud to be a Manitoban.

And now we see National Geographic declaring Winnipeg a little spark on the prairie and one of the best places to travel, actually, the only Canadian province and city to get that designation. And they cite things like the human rights museum, the

Investors Group Field and all of our wonderful festivals that we support on our side of the House, every which one of those the PCs across the floor have voted against.

Can the Minister of Tourism please tell us about the wonderful announcement that makes me even prouder to be a Manitoban, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Well, thank you very much for the question from the MLA from St. Norbert.

Mr. Speaker, you know, yesterday, National Geographic, as was mentioned, named one city in Canada only, and that city is Winnipeg, as a place to go to, along with Botswana, New York, the vineyards in France.

* (10:50)

But Winnipeg, why? All the investments that we've made in culture, heritage, sport, all the investments we made in infrastructure add to this opportunity to travel to this great province.

But if it were to the—up to the opposition: no to MTS Centre, no to the stadium, no to investments in the Museum for Human Rights and no, no, no to improvements to Winnipeg. Dr. No and his friends opposite—we would have none of the above, and if it were up to the Leader of the Opposition, he would be advising that we take trips to Saskatchewan.

So here, Mr. Speaker, where Canada's heart beats—where Canada's heart beats—

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

Manitoba Hydro Transmission Line Minnesota Line Route Concerns

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, this Selinger government is tired and out of touch with everyday Manitobans.

This is especially true when it comes to the preferred route for the Minnesota-Manitoba hydro transmission line. I have read several petitions with hundreds of signatures. I've asked the question of the minister during question period before. I'm sure the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) has received concerns on the preferred routing.

The RM of Reynolds has offered to have the line run through their RM. Manitobans are tired of this Selinger government mismanaging Manitoba Hydro.

Will this minister tell Manitobans the reasons for selecting the preferred route over a less intrusive one, or is NDP politics deciding where the line will go?

Hon. James Allum (Acting Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, Mr. Speaker, we invest in Manitoba Hydro in order to ensure that we have the lowest rates possible in the country, and then when you add that to home heating and car insurance, it turns out we also have the lowest bundle of utility rates in the country.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is the opposition's plan? Their plan is to cancel hydro projects necessary for our power supply. Their plan is to cancel hydro and build gas plants because they don't care about climate change. Their plan is to cancel hydro and kill export deals to Saskatchewan and to the States. Their plan is to cancel hydro and kill 10,000 jobs. Their plan is to privatize Manitoba Hydro, and we'll never, ever going to let that happen.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: It is now time for petitions.

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 the 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 W. Klann, J. Martens, D. Martens and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Provincial Trunk Highway 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank—Pedestrian Safety

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Every day, hundreds of Manitoba children walk to school in Oakbank and must cross PTH 206 at the intersection with Cedar Avenue.

(2) There have been many dangerous incidents where drivers use the right shoulder to pass vehicles that have stopped at the traffic light waiting to turn left at this intersection.

(3) Law enforcement officials have identified this intersection as a hot spot of concern for the safety of schoolchildren, drivers and emergency responders.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government improve the safety at the pedestrian corridor at the intersection of PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue in Oakbank by considering such steps as highlighting pavement markings to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure.

This is signed by T. Dokken, H. Clarke, J. Derksen and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
THRONE SPEECH
(Fourth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business, and to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Vital?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I feel very honoured to have this position as the MLA for Charleswood, and I'm very, very pleased to be able to stand here every year. And I feel very honoured that they have chosen me to be their representative. There are thousands of constituents in Charleswood, and I value very much the comments and opinions they bring to me and the concerns they bring to me about the future of this province. So it is an opportunity here to stand and speak for them and bring their voices forward.

Before I bring my comments forward, I would like to welcome everybody back to the House, and I do hope that we have fruitful debate on issues that are very important to Manitoba. And that's what this Chamber is all about. This is about ensuring that we have good debate, that we can talk about issues that are important to Manitobans. And that is something that is very important for government improving on their positions and on their policies. And that is what opposition's job is to do, to ensure that we bring the gaps and the problems forward, so that, together with debate, we can ensure that we can have stronger government, stronger policies, and that's what this debate is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to wish the best to colleagues that are not running again on both sides of the House, but I want to especially recognize my colleague and mentor from River East. I have learned a lot from her. And I will say that Manitobans are really going to be losing a real champion when she retires after this next election. I was very fortunate to be her legislative assistant when I first got into government, and I have to say, she gave me a lot of opportunities to learn and be part of the activities in

Family Services. And I think we are going to feel a real loss when she is no longer part of this caucus because she has been an invaluable voice in bringing some real common sense and some real passion on behalf of people to the job that she does here. And I personally want to wish her the very best.

I would also acknowledge the retiring member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat). We've had many great experiences together, and she too has had a very passionate voice for the members of her constituency, but also for some of the issues that have really mattered in this province.

And I would like to acknowledge as well the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald). We've gone a few rounds together with her as the Health critic—or as the Health Minister and me as the Health critic, and we didn't always agree but we did certainly have, you know, a lot of good discussion, I think. And I always did wonder how she managed such a tough portfolio over such a long period of time. That probably is the toughest job in government, and she certainly rose to the occasion.

* (11:00)

We didn't always agree on things, but I think we grew to understand our roles and grew to respect the differences in our roles, and I have great respect for the efforts that she has put in and how she, in fact, did work very hard to do the best she could in a very tough portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, I will be speaking today about the amendments that we brought forward, and there were three of them, and I would like to indicate that I'm standing in support of the amendments that have brought forward.

The first one was that the provincial government has refused to listen to Manitobans who are tired of broken promises such as the commitment to balancing the budget by 2014 without raising taxes, failing to respect the right to vote on tax increases and not recognizing that Manitobans want a change for the better.

The second amendment is that the provincial government has failed to recognize Manitobans are paying more and getting less, due to an average family in Winnipeg having to pay more than \$3,200 in additional provincial taxes than a comparable family living in Regina, yet front-line services like health care and education being ranked last in the nation.

And the third one is that the provincial government has failed to acknowledge that self-promotion and wasteful government spending has caused the provincial debt to double since 2008, requiring Manitobans to pay more than \$800 million in debt interest charges which threatens Manitoba's future, as that money cannot be invested to protect essential front-line services, reduce health-care wait times or improve education results for children.

Mr. Speaker, in all of those amendments, they have raised some very, very serious issues, and I do have to—you know, when I heard the Throne Speech, I did wonder, and I know a lot of my colleagues have commented since then that it looked like the NDP was trying to wake up from a long snooze and they started to bring forward a number of ideas that, really, they should've been working on long before their—end of their 16th year in government, and I don't think there were a lot of people that were fooled by this Throne Speech. This Throne Speech threw just about everything they could probably think of out there, but never have they indicated how they are actually going to pay for it or how they're even going to make it happen.

We have seen over the last number of years, many years, a lot of promises that were made and a lot of promises that were broken, and I think that is what we're going to see in the next election is that I don't think Manitobans are going to be ready for more broken promises, because they have reached a point where they do not trust this government. This government has not kept its word. This government has misled Manitobans. This government has said one thing and then they've done another, and Manitobans are all talking about that. They all are feeling that this government is really past its date where they need to move on, and people want a government that is going to come in and actually have a real vision for Manitobans and not just throw money at everything, hope something sticks and buy votes in an election. Manitobans, I think, aren't going to be fooled anymore. I think they've had it with this government.

And this Throne Speech was really, you know, a good example of a government that is, again, ready to say anything, but they are certainly not going to be able to follow through on it, and after a decade and a half, actually, in power, they say now that they're going to take action on the economy. Well, you know, if they'd been listening to what is going on in Manitoba, if they even follow the questions that are

asked here in the Legislature, they will know that they are failing in many of those areas.

And I think we're doing a good job in bringing those failures forward. We are bringing the voice of Manitobans forward because they're the ones that are coming to us and telling us about all of these failures.

And this Throne Speech really isn't going to do what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is promising to do because there's no way they can actually make many of those things happen because they have taken this government and this province down a really treacherous road, where they have spent beyond their means, where they have created unbelievable debt. And there is no way that they can follow through on what they are saying because they have no idea how really to improve that economy so that we do have more jobs and that Manitoba doesn't have to keep going to the lenders who are now putting out warnings that this government is in way over its head. And this government just does not seem to have a sense of how bad things are.

When we hear ministers stand in the House with such ridiculous rhetoric on just about every question, they have really, I think, lost touch with what is really happening on the ground out there. And that rhetoric and that spin isn't going to improve things in this province. They really need to take a deep breath and stand here and answer questions like they are speaking on behalf of Manitobans. Instead, we get this partisan, shrill spin; we get this gotcha politics. And it really is becoming, you know, very obvious that they have nothing else that they can say because they can't defend their record and instead we get this shrill nonsense here in the House.

I remember after the last election and the NDP had brought in all this negative advertising during the election, and I ran into Michael Balagus in the hallway and I said to him, well, thank you, Michael, you've just brought an American-style politics to Manitoba. I said that's the worst negative advertising and negative politics I've ever seen. And he said to me, he says, Myrna, we have—we're running for a fourth time. He says, we can't defend our record; this is what you have to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, coming up now onto another election, I imagine it's even going to be worse than that, and we see it here now. The fear mongering from this government will be ratcheted up beyond what we saw in the last election. And I believe what Michael Balagus said to me. He said, you know, we

couldn't run on our record; we're running for another mandate; we had no choice.

And that is certainly what we're seeing right now from this government. We're seeing that they choose to go down that road of fear mongering because they do have a hard time defending their record.

There are so many broken promises along the way that—and they've piled up so much. People are really aware of them. You know, it started out, when they first got into government, by promising they were going to end hallway medicine in six months with \$50 million. Well, we know that didn't happen.

I can't believe they didn't know, at the time, that they couldn't do that. If they had done their homework, they would have known that that was not possible. Instead, now we go from—we still have hallway medicine. In fact, there's a new back-hallway medicine that is happening with all of the ambulances that can't off-load on time. I've got pictures of people stacked up in the back halls of the ERs, if they're not even stacked up in the ambulances outside, because they can't get through the doors of the ER in order to be seen by a doctor. CIHI has pointed out that we have the longest ER waits in Canada. What kind of a record is that?

They've had 16 years. They were going to fix all these ER problems, and now we see it is much worse. People can't even get into the ERs to be in the hallways, Mr. Speaker. We've got people leaving the ERs; thousands of people every year leave the ERs in frustration because they can't get in. A nine-hour wait the other night at a—the St. Boniface hospital for an ambulance to off-load is totally, totally unacceptable.

* (11:10)

Another big promise this government made in the 2010 Throne Speech was to have a doctor for all by 2015. When I first heard that promise, I was really actually surprised that this government was so focused just on doctors because we are moving into more collaborative practices. That is the direction of health care, and yet in their promise, which I think was extremely short-sighted and it is proving that I'm correct on that one, you know, they promise a doctor for all by 2015. Well, when that was starting to fail, they started to wiggle out of the promise just like they did when they promised that we're going to end hallway medicine, and then they went off when they weren't able to achieve that, they went off on just a strange tangent of, well, that wasn't exactly what we

said; this is what we said. So we're seeing it now with this promise, doctors for all by 2015. That was in their news releases; that was in their Throne Speech. Then we've got the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) standing in here and saying, well, no, that's not what we meant; we meant that in 2015. Well, no, it was by 2015.

So, when they started to fail, they started to try to find some wiggle room. They started to try to change the channel, and then they said, well, it's going to be a doctor or a nurse practitioner for all by 2015. Then they're not accomplishing anything so now it becomes to the end of 2015, and the minister the other day stood in the House and says they're on track. Mr. Speaker, I have never heard anything as absurd as a minister standing in this House so caught up in her rhetoric that she's tripping on it. She does not get it that there is no way they can achieve that.

I brought to this House some examples the other day where we have—I think it's something like in three regions of the province only—168,000 people that do not have a doctor. In Winnipeg alone in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority they said 11 per cent do not have a family doctor. Well, that's about 78,000 people. Just this week, we had a group—an advocacy group from western Manitoba—that came in and said they're short 37 doctors.

The Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority in a very short period of time went into a physician shortage crisis. We've got two areas in Manitoba now, the south west and Interlake-Eastern that have a doctor shortage crisis. And, when we look at those areas, there's about 168,000 people that don't have a doctor. We're about—what?—43 days away from the end of the year, and we've got a Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) who's so caught up in rhetoric that she's trying to say, yes, but we are going to fix it; we're on track. No, they're not on track. There's no way people are going to have a doctor or a nurse practitioner by the end of this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, under this government, over 2,300 doctors have fled this province in the last 16 years under this NDP government. For some reason, doctors—they come here; we can recruit them—but for some reason they don't want to stay. We've got a revolving door here and that is not very good for health care.

In fact, CIHI, who has been pointing out a lot of problems this government has in health care, has said that we have the worst doctor-retention rate in Canada. They have also found that we have the third

worst rate of doctors to population in Canada. This is not good news for patients, and that just shows the horrible track record this government, who said they were going to come in and fix health care—things have really just gone from bad to worse, and CIHI is pointing that out over and over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, you know, having the worst infant mortality rate in Canada, as they also pointed out, is very alarming considering this government has had reports from front-line professionals in a task force that they even put together and then forgot about, and then called again where maternal child outcomes in Manitoba have been a problem for many years and, you know, after they've had years to address it, they have failed to address it.

Mr. Speaker, probably one of the biggest concerns I have coming up and it's already happening, and it is the gross failure of this government to put in place the number of PCH beds that are needed in this province. Instead, when the government is asked to explain their failure, all we're getting from this Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) and this NDP government is ridiculous rhetoric. They're putting misleading information on the record about what their numbers are. We have FIPAs that actually show what is really happening, and yet we have a government putting out news releases, standing in this House putting misinformation on the record.

Mr. Speaker, the people they're failing by thinking they're too cute by half with their misleading information are seniors, and this problem has been going on for a long time. This government was warned in 2002 by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy that we need PCH beds, and they said by 2020 we'd need probably around 1,100 beds. We are not even close to that having happened under their watch.

And then what the NDP decided to do in the last number of years is cut beds, and for about three years we saw PCH beds cut in Manitoba. And then, you know, I think, somehow, they woke up a little bit that we have an aging demographic, although this auditor recently slammed this government for not having a good enough sense of what was happening, what's coming in terms of the aging demographic. And the auditor pointed out that this government has not prepared for that silver tsunami that is coming our way.

And it's not that seniors are sicker; it's that there's so many of them that are going to hit the

health-care system at once. What they are hitting right now, Mr. Speaker, is a system that is failing them. Right now we have over 1,200 people stuck in hospital beds or in the community that need a personal-care-home bed. They've all been panelled. That means they need a personal-care head—a personal-care-home bed, not supportive housing or not anything else. They are frail and vulnerable and that is how many people are waiting for a PCH bed.

That's been happening for a number of years now, and this government, instead, has absolutely dropped the ball on putting PCH beds in place. But the rhetoric is out there, the spin is out there, they're manipulating the information and trying to make it sound like they're actually doing something. They're not. They are years away from any shovels in the ground, and some of the personal-care homes they're talking about, like the Transcona personal-care home or Lac du Bonnet have not even been through the government approval process. I have a freedom of information that shows those homes have not even been approved by the government.

Well, if they haven't been approved, and we know capital projects take five to 10 years, when are the shovels going to be in the ground and when are those beds going to be available to people? They're not.

Holy Family, while it's a good thing the government finally moved on, you know, doing the renovations there will only yield 44 new beds. That isn't—that project isn't even going to have shovels in the ground 'til 2016. If we're lucky those 44 beds will be available in 2018.

In the meantime, what is going to happen to all these frail, senior, vulnerable people that are stuck in the community? And there's hundreds of them—there's hundreds of them all through Manitoba. I happen to know two of them really well, and I know what they have gone through. You know, to have a 99-year-old woman at home in a seniors block falling on the floor, unable to get to the bathroom—99 years old, and she—it took four months for her to get a PCH bed. Home Care didn't always show up, and the auditor has just been highly critical of this government for its inefficiencies and mismanagement of the Home Care system.

So, in the next two decades, we have got a catastrophe that has started under this government, created by this government, and there is going to be no place for all of these people.

A week ago there were about 81 panelled patients in Winnipeg hospitals. No wonder our ERs can't move. They're stuffed full of people that can't move out of there because those that need to get admitted can't get admitted because there's no beds; 81 panelled patients in an acute-care hospital bed. There's where we have to start to fix the ER problem.

* (11:20)

There's about 30 other things that need to be done because it is a complicated issue, but that is one of the biggest. The Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians has said that over and over and over again. And this government doesn't listen.

Manitoba Centre for Health Policy says we need between 5,100 and 6,200 beds by 2036. Well, that means we need to build about 250 beds every year for the next 21 years. We aren't even close to that happening, and where are these beds going to be? Where are these frail, vulnerable seniors going to be? This government has created such a mess with this issue that it's a crisis now. It has been—this issue's been raised numerous times, and it's going to go from a crisis to a catastrophe. And it is going to be the most vulnerable seniors that are going to be falling through the cracks on this one. No doubt about that in my mind. And it worries the heck out of me, Mr. Speaker, because I don't know how that problem is ever going to get resolved. And it is an abject failure of this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, going into the next election, there is no reason Manitobans should believe anything this government says. Not only are they breaking their promises, they can't even manage a lot of the portfolios they're in. There's poor co-ordination, poor planning. There is actually no planning in a lot of instances, and these broken promises are going to hurt the people of Manitoba. And I don't think anybody should be trusting anything this government has to say because this government is not following through with what they say they're going to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not a Throne Speech that anybody can support because this government, we know, is not going to be able to follow through on their commitments because that's just not what they do. And they don't deserve trust. And they don't deserve the—any faith by the public in what they're putting forward.

So I will stand and I will support these amendments. And I would hope that, in the

remaining months before the election, that this government does get their act together in some of these things because there are so many people that need these services. And I really would urge the government to do a far better job and not continue to ignore this, as Thomas Mulcair called it, a demographic bomb that is waiting.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment in the House.

Hon. Thomas Nevakshonoff (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship):

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today in support of this Throne Speech, but I would just like to begin my remarks by acknowledging you, Sir, for the good job that you and your staff do in keeping us in line here and keeping us informed and running a very tight ship, so kudos to you. And I had the opportunity to serve as your deputy for a number of years, which was a great pleasure to me, and get to know the table staff really well. So I miss that a little bit but—and also, I'd like to congratulate our pages as well for being here and wish them well in the days to come and in the years to come as well.

So I'd like to just do a little bit of—well, before I get into the speech, I should acknowledge my staff, as well, within the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship. Being a new minister now, it's very enlightening to see how professional these people are, and I would begin with Grant Doak, the deputy minister of the department, has been a real inspiration to me and just a pillar of support as I work my way through all the various different files in this department.

And I'd like to also thank the people of the Interlake for giving me the opportunity to serve them for so many years, which I plan to continue to do so in the years to come, as well.

So just to compare and contrast a little bit after the doom and gloom from the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), you know, I think maybe a little comparison as to what we could experience, should it ever come to pass, that they come to power here, and it doesn't take very—don't have to go very far into the Throne Speech to start seeing examples of this.

We begin the speech speaking about children and youth, and, you know, I look to, for example, don't have to go far from home, to the community of Arborg, where we just cut the ribbon on a brand new child daycare centre that this government helped to

put in place next to the new and renovated Arborg Early/Middle Years School, which has a new gymnasium now and new Tyndall stone wrap around the exterior, not to mention new portables, lots of new things.

But it's not news to any one of us what would happen should members opposite ever come to power. And just on the topic of child care alone, I was stunned when their critic let it slip, I guess, that—what their strategy would be should they attain power, which was to actually privatize—hard to believe—the delivery of child care in this province. Unbelievable they would have so little regard for our youth that they would turn it over to the business community, but it reminds me of how they were going to deal with our seniors. I think, in the last days of the Filmon government, there was a strong push to privatize the delivery of home care in this province, so, you know, nothing new. If you're going to abandon the elderly, why not abandon the youth as well? So, you know, the public should be aware that that is their agenda, and they like to keep—or tried to keep these things secret, but once in a while things slip out.

Their disregard for First Nations people in this province, well, that's certainly not news to any of us, and, you know, we've seen many examples of that. I know that following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, our government has made a commitment to actually pass legislation so that going into the future in our schools, there will actually be courses taught about the history and the culture of First Nations people so that future generations will have a greater understanding of the challenges that these people have faced.

You know, members opposite, their leader, well, first of all, just one example, refuses to support an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women. In fact, one of his staff members who suggested that might not be a bad idea was fired by the Leader of the Opposition for even thinking that, so talk about an extreme position, to say the least.

And I think back to—just a short time ago, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) got up on a minister's statement, made an apology to Aboriginal people for the '60s scoop. And did the Leader of the Opposition get up, as is customary, to respond to the Premier's statement? No, he did not. He got one of his lackeys instead to get up and speak. I don't think he wanted to have his words on the record on this particular topic because it really doesn't cater to his extreme

base. So he had his critic respond instead, and, you know, I was watching the chiefs that were sitting in the Speaker's Gallery, and they were so disgusted with that particular action that they actually removed their headdresses to, in essence, turn their back on the Leader of the Opposition for the disrespect that he showed them. And, you know, the next day he was off in Peguis trying to do some damage control, but I don't think First Nations people are going to be fooled by members opposite. They know which party best represents their interest.

A whole range of topics, I'd mentioned their desire to privatize home care in times past. That was a legacy of our first New Democratic premier here in Manitoba, the Right Honourable Ed Schreyer, something that we continue to invest in, contrary to members opposite who—going down the two-tier, privatization health-care path would lead to a vastly different world, to say the least.

* (11:30)

On the environment front, I'm still waiting with bated breath for members opposite to join us in supporting the Blue Dot declaration of David Suzuki, one of the world's foremost environmentalists. I am waiting but I'm not holding my breath because, well, we know that will never happen.

You know, and we're going to take it a step further. In fact, our Premier announced that we would be tabling legislation in here to enshrine in law the rights of our people here in Manitoba to live in a healthy environment. So once that's up and running, I guess we'll be waiting to see how members opposite will respond to that; you know, born-again environmentalists that they are.

You know, but we've had these discussions, my critic and I, back and forth, you know, just on the health of Lake Winnipeg, a classic example of the hypocrisy from the two different perspectives in this House here. You know, we're concerned about water quality levels in Lake Winnipeg, for example. You know, we've been urging the City of Winnipeg for years and years and years to get moving on improving some of these waste water treatment plants. Movement's been very slow, I have to say. And it hasn't really improved with change in leadership there. But, you know, and over the years, with price increases and so forth, the money that we'd committed to early on, we were facing, you know, rising costs. So this Throne Speech made specific reference to that, committed more money so that—I think \$100 million more money toward this to

guarantee that we will fully fund our one-third share of these waste water treatment plant improvements.

And what did the Leader of the Opposition say to that? He actually said that spending money on that particular plant was a waste of money. A waste of money, imagine that. A plant that dumps raw sewage on average 17 times a year into the Red River and going directly into Lake Winnipeg. I guess that's fine; you know, that's good enough for members opposite. So, you know, a waste of money on their side; on our side, a commitment to make these improvements.

You know, the topic of the environment—well, let's look at Pimachiowin Aki, for example, something started years ago by this government, Gary Doer, our former premier, and, you know, this project is well under way. We had the international evaluators in Winnipeg not long ago, and they've strongly indicated that this will come to pass very soon.

Contrast that to members opposite, who have very little regard for the east side, other than their desire, of course, to run a power line down there, if it even came to that, which it wouldn't, because they have no interest in developing hydroelectric infrastructure whatsoever. They criticize every dam that comes up. And so, should it come to pass they come to power, well, not only would they not invest in the corporation, but, you know, it's no secret to any of us in Manitoba that they would sell it, along with so many other Crown corporations, the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. I think the individual who ran against me in the last election let that slip, that that was one thing that they were going to privatize. No coincidence he's actually an employee of the corporation. So, you know, what is their strategy for hydroelectric—or electric generation, not hydroelectric? Their strategy would be to build natural gas plants instead. You know, so talk about living in the past. That, you know, is typified by the approach of members opposite.

You know, I look to wetlands, something that's important to me personally and to our department, Conservation and Water Stewardship. Think back to '99, when I was first elected, we were literally in a state of anarchy here in Manitoba when we were elected based on a legal case, the Hildebrandt case, The Water Rights Act that had been thrown out the window. There was no law when we came to power in 1999. Talk about a bizarre situation.

So, you know, we've made great strides forward in this regard. And we'll continue to do so. Stay tuned. The Surface Water Management Strategy will be morphing into legislation which will be brought forward into this House very shortly, and it has wide-ranging support across all sectors. So, as I said, that is the state of affairs under our administration compared to what was, in essence, anarchy when we came to government in '99.

You know, infrastructure was mentioned in the Throne Speech. We're ramping up our investment to \$10 billion, which is a sizable investment, no doubt, a lot of it in highways. I think we've set records in that regard, I think this year more than \$700 million invested in roads and bridges. Again, compared to members opposite, it was in the range of \$90 million and the study, Vision 2020, that we did shortly after that informed us that we were facing systemic collapse of our provincial highways network if we continued to fund as members opposite had been. You know, incremental increases weren't going to do it. We had to make exponential increases and that has now been done. We've staved off that collapse and we'll continue to take it to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, another thing this department has done, we're now have domain over the stewardship of peatlands in Manitoba. Roughly 40 per cent of our land mass is peat, and we're going to pay close attention to this. We passed the peat stewardship act not long ago. Peatlands are the ideal areas for carbon sequestration. Part of the act is identifying provincially significant peatlands. This is something that we'll be taking forward as something unique here in Manitoba when we go to the COP 21 conference in Paris in a couple of weeks to, you know, address the issue of climate change.

And, you know, doing that compare and contrast that I'd made reference to earlier, well, we're committed to addressing the challenges of climate change, and we just hope that members opposite will acknowledge the existence of climate change. I think they're really living in the 18th century in that they pay very little attention to this whatsoever. It is the greatest challenge that we face as a people and we're stepping up in this department in government in general to see that this is addressed fully. Our approach will be sectoral. We're going to deal with the transportation sector, with the agricultural sector, with the sector that has domain over cooling and heating of our buildings. This, again, is rather a unique approach taken here in Manitoba.

We're going to be working with Manitoba Hydro on demand-side management because this is where a lot of the efficiencies can truly be gained. Whereas members opposite would, frankly, sell the company off, we're not going to do that; we're going to make it better. We're going to work on trying to get these efficiencies. Green jobs is really the very essence of our climate change strategy where, you know, this will be a positive force.

As we address the challenges of climate change, we're going to improve our economy as we steer it in that direction, and we're working very closely with the Liberal governments in Quebec and Ontario, as well as the new Liberal government in Ottawa as well. You know, saying sayonara to Mr. Harper, I think, is the single most positive step Canadians could have done collectively in addressing climate change, so that will be a good work in progress going forward.

*(11:40)

I'd like to speak briefly about mitigation because climate change manifests in the form of floods or drought. You know, this government stepped up historically, I would say, in 2011; \$1.2 billion and more invested in addressing the damage that was done and our commitment of probably close to half a billion dollars to put in place the secondary outlet out of Lake Manitoba, the—making permanent the emergency outlet of Lake St. Martin, et cetera, et cetera, as well as spending the money to relocate the evacuated communities back to this area. This is the most important task of the government of Manitoba, I feel, going forward, and I'm really proud to be on this side of the House because our Premier (Mr. Selinger) and our government have indeed stepped up on this front.

Members opposite, who knows what they would do? And I have to say I was quite surprised and very disappointed when the Liberals came out with their platform, their lack of commitment to stepping up in this regard. You know, they're going to focus on the economy. They'll have to balance their budget sometime off in the distant future before they'll even consider entering into this. I think Manitobans have to be aware of this and, in particular, Aboriginal people, First Nations, Metis who live around Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, as well as all the ranchers, and not to mention the people up the Assiniboine River. They have to know that Liberals could care less in this regard.

I think it's no doubt their urban focus and probably their lack of experience, frankly, in rural and northern Manitoba. I guess the fact that they only have one seat here inside the Perimeter might contribute to that, but, you know, I just wanted to make sure that I got that on the record that the Liberals will not commit to putting that infrastructure in place.

An Honourable Member: Liberal, singular.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Liberal, sorry. I'm corrected by my colleagues in that regard.

So, you know, eco-certification of Waterhen Lake and our commitment to take that further into the many other lakes here in Manitoba is something that I just announced a few weeks ago, and bringing Mr. Harold Westdal in, a very knowledgeable, highly respected Manitoban, to assist in that regard as we formulate the lake management plans, again, taking that to a higher level. As well, I do sincerely want to thank Mr. Westdal. He's been working on relocating those evacuated communities that I just made reference to a few moments ago, and he's done other things for us as well in terms of studies of our great lakes here in Manitoba as well. So his participation in that regard is very much appreciated.

So I know other members want to speak, Mr. Speaker. I've used up 20 minutes already. Just in closing, I want to say that, again, climate change, our trip to Paris in the days to come, this will be one of the driving forces—the driving force within my department as we work toward addressing this global challenge.

So thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to words from other members of the Legislature.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record regarding our—my—our leader's amendments to the Throne Speech, certainly, which I will be supporting.

But I did want to start off by thanking some of my colleagues who I know will not be running again. In particular, a colleague from River East, who I work sort of in the same area that she has considerable experience in, who has been invaluable in providing advice and direction, and certainly I appreciated her advice, and the colleague from Agassiz. When he gets up to speak in a room, particularly whether municipal people are involved, he is treated with considerable respect for the great

base of knowledge that he has, and also for my colleague from Riding Mountain, who has provided a great deal of insight in the area of family services, in particular, and on some of the specific things that are related to that for those with disabilities. She has certainly always been a strong support for those with disabilities, and very useful in that regard.

I did also and—oh, and before I forget, I should mention, those on the other side of the House who are not running again, I certainly respect what they have done. Stepping up to represent any—an area, any area, is a commitment, and they should be thanked for the service that they have provided. I know we don't always agree on everything, but I do still maintain a very high level of respect for you. So certainly hope you appreciate, or hope you enjoy, whatever the future holds for you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I get into my response, really, on the Throne Speech, I did want to make a few comments from the previous speaker from the Interlake who seems to have a great deal of memory problems; I'm quite concerned. I remember very well the process that was involved in developing with Water Stewardship, the first Water Stewardship minister, the member from Thompson, the regulations around nutrient management. And I remember the uproar and, in fact, I attended a meeting in his own constituency where farmers were literally banging on the door, upset with the proposal that had come forward from the Department of Water Stewardship. And they should have been.

At that time I was vice-president with Keystone Ag Producers, and we were certainly working very hard in this area along with the commodity groups that were mostly livestock-related, but it certainly spilled over into many of the grain and special crops commodity groups as well. But they should have been upset because this government was basing its plan for the future in nutrient management on 60-year-old aerial photos, completely inaccurate data, making lots of wild extrapolations on what would happen if they did this. And, in fact, had they moved ahead with the original proposal, there would have been literally hundreds of farmers, particularly cow-calf producers on the wetlands, marshes around Lake Manitoba, that would have been put out of business by that government at that time, simply because of their complete lack of knowledge and understanding of the situation.

And we finally, the uproar was so bad that we finally actually went to the minister and said, what is

it did he—that he needed? And this was on behalf of Keystone Ag Producers, and he was able to say, well, we need this and we need something in this area. It was actually very vague. And we went back, and working with the commodity groups and producers individually, we were able to help design something that actually is currently the program. So I don't think they deserve to take a great deal of credit for that. I think they actually finally were forced to listen that they simply couldn't do what they first thought they were going to do. And it was a proposal from the producers themselves that actually gave the solution.

And I would argue to this day that the agriculture sector is the one that has done the most to deal with the problem on Lake Winnipeg. Things like the ban on fertilizer spreading on lawns were really just paper, Mr. Speaker. They did not have any impact, particularly as the problem in Lake Winnipeg is mostly around the issue of phosphorus loads. And very few, very little phosphorus was actually used on lawns anyway, in fact shouldn't be; it creates some problems. And so it was more something that you could announce and look like you were doing something, but it really had no impact whatsoever.

And they still have not managed to get most of the urban issues behind them in terms of nutrient removal. They are slowly working on that. The City of Winnipeg is finally making some progress with the south facility, south Winnipeg facility. And that's a good thing. But there are a number of other facilities across the province that have not even begun to deal with nutrient-loading issues.

So, and I did want to also mention, I know the minister's looking forward to a trip to Paris. Hopefully, he doesn't run into any problems there because there's certainly been lots of problems there lately, and we feel for those people.

But it is—with their record on climate change and the goals that they have set for themselves and the fact that they have failed to meet them time after time after time, I'm not sure he's going to be treated with very much respect at that event, simply because he has not performed. And the government, the Selinger government, has not performed on this issue. Talk is cheap. And when it comes to greenhouse gases, we've had far too much talk and too little action, not only here in Manitoba, but across the country and, frankly, around the world. So we're certainly very concerned that we'll—we won't

see very much from this government at the climate change discussion.

* (11:50)

Now, I did want to refer to the amendments brought forward by my leader, and that this provincial government has refused to listen to Manitobans who are tired of broken promises such as commitments to balanced budget by 2014 without raising taxes, which this government clearly has failed to do. Frankly, I think this government has long ago quit listening to Manitobans and simply are telling them what they want to hear, failing to respect the right to vote on tax increases and not recognize that Manitobans really do want a change; and (b) that this provincial government has failed to recognize Manitobans are paying more and getting less, due to the average family in Winnipeg having to pay more than \$3,200 in additional provincial taxes as compared to a comparable family in Regina.

And, in particular, I would like to mention at this point that this heavy tax, particularly the increases in broadening of the PST and the increase of the PST particularly difficult for those on limited and fixed incomes. Seniors are always saying: Where am I supposed to get the money? Things like the broadening for the—to cover insurance were particularly hard on them. Many of them are in older homes and the insurance rates on those older homes is creeping up, based on experience, and they're finding it difficult to keep the insurance in place that they had, and I think for many of them, the solution has been basically to let insurance slide and hope that nothing goes wrong, and that's certainly not a great solution.

And even the day-to-day living costs, I mean, any time you go to the grocery store. I know that food itself is not subject to PST, but so much of the packaging and the way it is now, many items actually are covered by PST and have—you have to pay on it. So it's very common when you go to the grocery store, you look at the bill afterwards and a fair portion of it actually comes under—is subject to PST, and that is a burden for anyone, and particularly those on low incomes, and we do have so many people in this province that are living on the edge of poverty, whether they're on EIA or whatever other source it is, and it is certainly a burden for them to have any increase in tax, and that has certainly been the case.

Finishing up on the amendments: that the provincial government has failed to acknowledge

that self-promotion and wasteful government spending has caused the provincial debt to double since 2008 requiring Manitobans to pay more than \$800 million in debt interest charges, which threatens Manitoba's future, as money cannot be invested to protect front-line services, reduce health-care wait times, or improve education results for children.

Well, these are all significant issues, and I know my colleague from Tuxedo covered quite a bit of the health-care issues in terms of wait times, and the list for those are endless, and, you know, certainly the lineups are endless. We talk to people all the time that are waiting for knee and hip operations, and the wait times are ridiculous, especially when you look at what occurs in other jurisdictions.

But even the duplication and the poor planning and poor co-ordination—I had a case this summer of a constituent whose child had an accident in Alberta and was dealt with very well in Alberta through their ER. And they come back here to Manitoba with all of the data on a disk from MRIs and from X-rays, and they went to see their doctor and were referred to some doctors in Winnipeg. They insisted on doing it all over again, and they kept that young man basically bed-ridden for several months and so, while they could get times to redo some of these things, and the new ones didn't show anything that the old ones didn't; in fact, the old ones were less than a week old when they were looked at the first time. It's not that they had aged significantly. It just seemed like unnecessary duplication and, frankly, it was quite a burden to that family because the young man, as I said, had to sit around doing almost nothing for a long period of time simply because he couldn't be sure that everything was in good shape and he had to wait to get appointments; he had to wait for—to get tests done; and it was—it seemed like very much unnecessary duplication.

I did want to touch a little bit on what's been happening in terms of wait times, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the high number of children in Child and Family Services. We lead the nation; there's absolutely no question. In fact, when you look around the world, we may very well be the jurisdiction in the world that has the highest number of kids in care under Child and Family Services or under child welfare in any form, because it's deemed different things in different places, but there's no doubt that at 11,000 and percentage of our population, we are completely out of line with any other jurisdiction.

And the Health Minister made reference to, you know, our percentage of our population that is of a First Nations or Metis, and, of course, Child and Family Services, with 87 per cent, currently 87 per cent of the kids are either in Child and Family Services are either First Nations or Metis, like it was, you know, only our problem? If you look at the demographics in a comparable province like Saskatchewan that has within 1 per cent the same number of, you know, same percentage populations and demographics, settled about the same time, basically it's very similar history; you will find that, other than the French issue—which I think is a moot point in this; we have a higher percentage of French-speaking people than they do by far—you will find that we are virtually identical in demographics. They have 4,600 children in care in Saskatchewan. And, of that, only 60 per cent are First Nations. Now, that's still out of line based on their population, but it is a far more realistic number than we are seeing here. And I just—I fails—I'm at a loss sometimes to explain to anyone why this problem continues on and on and on. I mean, it—the problem has developed from around 3,200 in 2003, when we kind of put in place the structure that we're working with now, children in care, it has just risen and risen and risen. And no solutions have been offered.

And so this time in the Throne Speech I was looking for something; you know, are they actually going to try and deal with the problem? They talked about the problem from a 30,000-foot level. They didn't really talk about any particular programs, made a couple of references to things that First Nations have done, and perhaps the intention is to try and copy that. And some of these things that the First Nations themselves have done have been reasonably successful and provide perhaps some insights into where we would go. But there was no commitment there to do anything in a significant way.

And there was no commitment to help those that are aging out of care. You know, got two problems: you've got the intake and you've got the people that are aging out of care. And you look at the number of children that are aging out of care, and it's, I mean, they have extensions of care, but there's no terms and conditions around that. So when you're getting close to aging out of care in CFS, you really don't know what your future holds. You're very much at risk.

And you can talk to a number of agencies, Resource Assistance for Youth or even the Siloam Mission, and they are quite open about talking about what they both term, actually, to be dump jobs,

which are kids that age out of care, now are no longer able to stay, often, in the group homes that they were at or with the foster parents and are picked up by their social worker with their belongings in garbage bags, of all things, and dumped at the door of the mission or dumped off on the Resource Assistance for Youth with really no resources offered to them, absolutely nothing. And it's a battle for both those agencies to try and get them into income assistance under EIA if they qualify, and most do, or to find some future for them.

Is it any wonder that many kids actually disappear? They run away before they reach that 18th birthday. So that there's really very few that actually graduate, in the formal sense. I know the minister has, a few times a year, has a nice event where she has a cake for them and they come and visit with her and she graduates them out of CFS. Not really doing them a favour, I can tell you. She certainly has no plan for their future. And I'm very concerned for those people who come out because they have—they don't have the footing to get back, to get going on their own. They have no resources other than very limited ones that they have to fight to access.

And I think anyone who's worked with any individual who's tried to qualify for income assistance when they had very little background information available to them knows how long that process can be. It can take, you know, three to six months is good; it can be much longer than that. What are they supposed to do in the interim? They do high-risk things like couch surfing. They become homeless, frankly, Mr. Speaker, and that is a very difficult life.

Certainly, we've all met people that—and talked to people that have spent a period of time on the leaf—on the street, rather, and who have, through good luck and good management, or a little bit of help from an agency, managed to get back and get their lives together and move forward. But it is a very difficult task to do. And to expect someone who's turned 18 basically that day to accomplish that is expecting a great deal. So we certainly need to look at doing something in that area. And, of course, there was no mention of that whatsoever in the Throne Speech, so we certainly know that they haven't yet figured out how to deal with problems on CFS.

*(12:00)

While I'm talking about wait-lists, it would be inappropriate to not mention the 12,000 children or families that are waiting for child care. And I know this government likes to promise a lot on child care, but you look backwards and see what they've done. They've never even kept up with the increase in the waiting lists. So I, frankly, find it very difficult to believe that they're going to suddenly be able to find the people, the resources and the dollars to actually deal with the child-care problem, and certainly it is a problem that needs to be dealt with.

There are many people that are impacted in a major way when it comes to child care. I can't help but think of one young lady I talked to who had two children. She was a single parent. She had her life together reasonably well. She was in Manitoba Housing. She was getting training; she was getting an education. She had two kids in a daycare. Unfortunately, the Manitoba Housing unit developed a bedbug problem, and that's pretty common these days. In fact, I think that's my most common phone call lately has been the infestation of bed bugs. It seems to be a real problem year for Manitoba. But, because there's such a waiting list at the child-care—with child-care facilities when the child care became aware that the children had bed bugs, they basically showed them the door and said, sorry, we can't take you.

Now I know there's supposed to be a protocol in place that gets around that, but, with waiting lists like we have, nobody seems to want to deal with that. So, suddenly, here she is with two kids and no child care and a school to go to, and she basically had to give up that year until she could find more child care. And, credit to her, she managed to get her life back on track, and—but she was still dealing with bed bugs the last time I talked to her, you know, in the Manitoba Housing unit but at least managing to keep her kids in a daycare because she was taking special steps to make sure that the kids did not go to daycare with any potential infestation on them.

But that waiting list is huge, and while we're talking about Manitoba Housing, as I did briefly, the waiting list for Manitoba Housing units, a few years ago it was only a few hundred; now it's over 4,000. And the number of Manitoba Housing units falling into disrepair, and I know there was a program to actually sell some of these back to private people, and though we've asked for numbers around that, we have not received any update as to how successful this program has been. Certainly, at the time of Estimates, it had not shown much for results, and I

guess the Province is looking to get rid of some of these facilities that they're having trouble doing the maintenance on, having trouble keeping free from bed bugs and, in some cases, they're having trouble filling them because they have so many rules and restrictions on who can go there and under what set of circumstances they don't get filled as quickly as they should.

And, in fact, one of the more interesting things in Manitoba Housing is the turnaround time. When a unit goes vacant, how long does it take them to renovate it and get it back? In private industry this tends to run about three months on the average, and most—and some businesses actually are—managers are very quick about getting these things back in the marketplace and do even better than that. In Manitoba Housing, near as we can tell, it tends to run to a year and a half. That's a considerable amount of their capacity, given the turnover that they have. It's a considerable amount of their capacity sitting idle, and I hear all the time from people that are looking for housing and say, well, you know, I know that there's an empty spot in Manitoba Housing down here, but we can't get them in there and, certainly, not on any kind of quick basis. It takes so long to get in even if you know the site and you have an appropriate person, the process just seems to take forever. And sometimes it's because they haven't got—you know, no one's bothered to go in and get the inspections done and make sure that the facility is ready for reuse.

So those kinds of things certainly leave you wondering whether this government can actually manage the resources that they've got.

An Honourable Member: They can't. No.

Mr. Wishart: And, yes, as my colleague says, we wonder very seriously whether they can manage the resources that they've got.

Now, I can certainly move on to a number of other things, but I did want to talk a little bit about issue of priorities with this government, and trustworthiness. You know, we had—all the time we were at events, and I hear so often from people, well, you know, they promise this, but they don't deliver; or they deliver a little piece of it, but it's not generally available. And, if it's available, it's generally in the city of Winnipeg. And, certainly, representing a rural constituency, that's cause for concern in particular. But I thought this was a government for all of Manitobans; I'm not sure about that anymore, Mr. Speaker, because they certainly

seem to pick and choose who they want to help and where they want to spend their money, and certainly they don't make much attempt to provide some of the services that are available in limited areas inside the city to any other areas even inside the city.

So it's certainly a very targeted government, and spend the money where, I guess, they feel they'll get the biggest bang for their buck. But that's not the only area that has a need, Mr. Speaker. And, certainly, you have a responsibility, as government of the Province, to try and meet the need not just in the area that you choose to but in the other areas as well. So they certainly fail in that regard, and we hear about that more and more.

This time we saw in the Throne Speech that they've actually discovered that there is a mental health problem in the province. Manitoba, and Canada as a whole, I would concede, hasn't done nearly enough in the area of mental health issues, but Manitoba is probably one of the worst.

And I remember in the last Throne Speech, they made the promise about a emergency room for mental health, and we actually have—working with our local RCMP, we've actually sent people from our constituency in there because we have no particular facilities in regard to that, and sent them in there. And we had to give that up, and the RCMP were the first ones to tell us: Well, we get there; there's really no one there that seems to know what they're supposed to do. They stay with the individual, as they should, until they find a psychiatrist or psychologist or a mental health worker that is available to do them—to meet with them, and then they try and diagnose or come up with a short-term solution to help stabilize the individual so they don't do—either do harm to someone else or harm to themselves. And they might get admitted, though that rarely happens. Usually, the RCMP is asked to bring them back after meeting, and this—they'll be there for five or six hours, and then they'll be asked to bring them back to Portage and put them back where they were. Have they really stabilized them? Well, it seems pretty doubtful, because we get many repeat problems in that regard.

But admissions there—they have 30 spots—I'm told, they're basically always full. So that's why they're reluctant to try and admit anyone new. And when you do find someone that—and I did meet one individual that came from our constituency, lives in the city here now—that went through that month-long process and was one of the 30, and when they came

out of that program, they were back on track a little bit and more stable; they were put back in exactly the same environment that they came out of, and no mental health worker was assigned to them. They were basically abandoned, put back in where—the situation that developed the problem in the first place, put back in that same situation, and said, okay, yes, we think you're better, but we're just going to leave you here, and we're not even going to check to make sure that things are going well. And I have tried to stay in touch with this individual, and there's certainly been some issues.

It's funny. I mean, we actually do better than that in a rural constituency with—working with Canadian Mental Health; they stay in touch. They keep in touch with people and monitor the people on a pretty regular basis. They don't have the resources available to them that they do in the city of Winnipeg, but at least they stay in touch. And, if someone seems to be getting into a problem, they're pretty quick at making sure that other people are notified to that, though they have limited ability to move them on so.

You know, suddenly they discovered there's a problem. I certainly agree with you—they, there is a problem. I'm not sure that they figured out what the solution is, and we'll certainly be prepared to work with them if they come up with some concrete proposals in that area that we think can help.

But, you know, you talk to people at events and people in the constituency and people on the street that want to stop and talk about what's going on in this province. They're not being fooled by this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. There are many promises made, and we know that this government likes to over promise and under deliver. It's, frankly, their policy, if you want to put it that way. They make promises that—beyond the world, and then fail to deliver on them and hope that people's memory is poor or that they can promise them again and, well, maybe they'll believe this time. And I can't help but think of the old adage, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Basically, the message there is we need to learn, as Manitobans, from past examples of what this government has done and where they failed to deliver in a major way, repeatedly.

Now, they love ribbon cuttings, and they love announcements, and they love parades, as our leader has said, raid, raid, raid on—and then parade the fourth year. And, certainly, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has been jumping up at

every opportunity, and the other day I asked some serious questions about a serious safety issue in our constituency that falls in his jurisdiction.

* (12:10)

And he basically went on about new announcements and didn't even try and touch the issue of—he has existing facilities that he's not looking after. The maintenance is not being done. There's a safety issue there that eventually someone is going to come astray of, and we've had several close calls and I get—I hear from not only the people involved in cases, but I actually hear from the RCMP, when's this going to be fixed, because it's a nightmare for them, because they get called to almost every one of the incidents that occurs out there, whether or not people are injured, but, as I mentioned, the vehicles have to back down into the No. 1 traffic to get out of the bottleneck that has been created by this reduced travel space on the overpass.

And so, basically, the RCMP often have to go out and stop traffic on No. 1 Highway so that these people can get their equipment back onto the road, and then they have to find another alternative route and there aren't very many good alternative routes, I can tell you. They end up coming often right through the city itself, which is not a great solution. However, we've got to do what we've got to do when someone else isn't doing their job.

And so they talk about front line and how they want to protect front line, but they don't do it, Mr. Speaker, and if you talk to the highways people that are responsible for maintenance they don't have the budgets they used to have. They don't even have the direction to look after snow on No. 1 that they used to have and, of course, I benefited from the highway being shut down last night and didn't get back until this morning. I had gone back to my constituency and couldn't get back because the highway was shut down.

I suppose it was good for the coffee shops in Portage, and we shouldn't complain because we had semis and vehicles everywhere, but certainly everyone's travel was interfered with, and there were no snow plows out during the night. They finally got it going about two in the morning. That was from the evening work that they had done. But from about 2 o'clock on in the afternoon, No. 1 Highway was closed down, and this morning we still see some east of Steinbach.

The budget for snow removal has been cut and cut and cut. The money available for spreading sand and—well, they don't use salt now; they use mostly urea to help melt the ice—that amount continues to be cut and cut. You can't keep up existing infrastructure without having the budget to do it or the manpower to do it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I didn't get to touch on a whole lot of things regarding this Throne Speech, but I want to make it really clear that I support our leader's amendments to this Throne Speech. I think, frankly, Manitobans are embarrassed by this Throne Speech. In many ways they're kind of used to the overpromise and under-deliver that we have seen. They're certainly going to get that. They're set up—for failure this time.

And, you know, it's fine if the government wants to do that for themselves, Selinger government wants to make an example of themselves by failing yet again, but it's bad news for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to the amendments and I certainly want to wish my colleagues who are retiring all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to get up today and convey my complete and utter support for the Throne Speech. I want to say that I'm very proud to be the MLA for Fort Garry-Riverview. I'm very proud to be a member of a brilliant caucus composed of great friends who work every day on behalf of the people of Manitoba and very pleased to be a member of a government that continues to be the most progressive, most activist, the most altruistic government in Canada who constantly puts people first in everything that we do.

Before I go—say too much just on my support for the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank members of the House for their kind condolences on behalf of the passing of my dad just a few weeks back, and I thank you for your kind words as well. My dad was 93 years old. He suffered at the end of his life with profound dementia, so I have no doubt that he has gone to a greater place and a better place, but I have to say it's no less sad for me and my sisters Nancy and Mary and my brothers John and Peter, who have lost an iconic figure in our family life, as any dad is. He was a Presbyterian minister for over 60 years in many places across southern Ontario and,

in fact, spent six months out in Winnipeg at First Presbyterian Church in Wolseley. So his ministry extended to many, many others. He was, of course, guided by a profound faith, but he was also dedicated to social justice, to education and lifelong learning and to make sure that he was always prepared to speak on behalf of those who couldn't or wouldn't speak for themselves.

But, when I think about my dad, ultimately, I think about the thousands of lives that he would have touched over the course of his ministry, from all those folks who came for—not only who came to church every Sunday but for the many, many people who came for counselling at our house when I was a kid, on visitations and pastoral work that he would have made around the many communities and churches that he served. So he literally touched the lives of thousands and thousands of people, and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that if I touch only a fraction of the lives that he touched, I will consider myself to have done very, very well. I loved him very much. I'll miss him very much, but he will remain with me always.

I certainly want to take a moment to and thank the people from Fort Garry-Riverview for their continued support for me as an MLA. Of course, I thanked them for electing me in the first place, but I really want to thank them for working with me over the course of the past four years, to continue to build a strong, safe and sustainable community in Fort Garry-Riverview.

I have the great advantage of having a very progressive community. I represent a very progressive community; they're very caring people. They don't just think about themselves; they're constantly thinking about others because they know, Mr. Speaker, that when their community suffers, their family suffers. When their neighbourhood suffers, their kids suffer, and so my constituents are very caring people who put others before themselves. I'm proud to say that I live in a very 'inclusive' community as well. Everyone is—plays a big part in our community. Everyone belongs, everyone counts, and for that I am very grateful to be a member of such a responsible and responsive community.

I also live in a very activist community. Our folks don't just sit on their hands and wait for others to do something for them. In fact, they're incredibly active. Whether it's the sustainability organizations that exist, whether it's the recreation and athletic organizations that exist in my community, whether

it's the great business community that we have in Fort Garry-Riverview, all of us continually work together every single day to build a better neighbourhood, a better community, a better city and a better province. And, for that, I'm very grateful and feel very humbled and very privileged to be a part of such a progressive, inclusive, caring and activist community.

I think my constituents also, and they've told me as much, but would also be very, very happy with the Throne Speech. And there are many ways of articulating why that would be, but, as I've indicated, I live in a very progressive community and so they would be very knowledgeable and very 'awell' about the social determinants of health. And they will know that by reading the Throne Speech they will see that we have touched on practically all of the elements that constitute the social determinants of health, whether it's housing, whether it's mental health, whether it's education, whether it's child care, whether it's minimum wage or whether it's for folks who are on EIA. In each case, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech directs its attention to the social determinants of health, not as a theoretical circumstances—circumstance, but a really practical application of the social determinants of health in order that we can build, as I said earlier, stronger, safer and more sustainable communities not only in my own neighbourhood, but all across this beautiful and wonderful province.

*(12:20)

As the Minister of Education, I can tell you that I am incredibly proud of the Throne Speech and its contribution to continuing to develop our education system. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, unlike virtually every other government across Canada, we continue to invest in our public school system. We continue to invest in our colleges, in our universities, but, more than that, we continue to invest in early childhood education. We continue to invest in programs and services before and after school, as well as nutritional services for children and students while they're at school every single day.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the simple proposition of to invest or not to invest in public education, we are rare among governments in Canada because we continue to put the well-being and welfare of children at the front of our priorities, because we know that when children are successful learners, they grow up into be very productive adults with stable families and strong values, all designed

not only to care for their fellow Manitobans but, in fact, to become global citizens who care for people all across the world.

The Throne Speech, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is inclusive. It ensures indigenous people and newcomers and children, seniors and families, all have the opportunity to contribute and belong.

The Throne Speech is strategic. It promotes steady growth. It creates good jobs, builds the critical infrastructure we need. It's designed to make life better for every single Manitoban. It improves our quality of life, invests in our thriving cultural scene to attract new tourism dollars, recommits to protecting our water quality, lakes and parks. As my friend said recently in his speech just a few minutes ago, we have proudly, as a government, signed on to David Suzuki's Blue Dot campaign to ensure clean water, clean air, clean land for generations to come, and I think that's a sign of the kind of government that we are. We're progressive; we're responsible; and our primary concern is to ensure that every Manitoban has a place in our society, every Manitoban feels included in our society, and every Manitoban has an opportunity to live out their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud, incredibly proud, as Minister of Education to stand on the shoulders of those who came before me: my friend from Brandon East, of course; my friend from Dawson Trail; my friend from St. Vital, of course, who has played a monumental mentoring role for me in this position. I want to also acknowledge the former MLA for Gimli who played such an important role of—as minister of Education for many, many years. No person that I know has devoted himself more to public education in this province than the former member from Gimli. I'm sorry that he's no longer a member of our caucus. And I certainly want to wish him well in the future, but I would want him to know that we miss him very, very much.

I have the great luxury of standing on the shoulders of those who came before me, and what we have, Mr. Speaker, is a very strong public education system where everyone counts. I'm fond of reading Michael Connelly books—perhaps you have too—Harry Bosch mysteries, and Harry Bosch is known to say, and I quote him in Michael Connelly books, that everyone counts or nobody counts. And, on this side of the House, everybody counts.

And nothing could be more true than in education. We have invested to create smaller classes

from kindergarten to grade 3, so teachers have that more one-on-one time in their—those crucial early years. We're building child-care centres at our schools so that learning can start earlier and parents can get access to the affordable child-care spaces that they need.

We're working every day to ensure that students and parents have the supports they need. We've launched a new online homework support program and tutoring pilot program so that students can get help with their take-home assignments after school. And, Mr. Speaker, and my friend from St. Vital was instrumental in this, in two key aspects. We brought in parent-friendly plain language report cards to make it easier for parents to help their children but also comes with that—a huge amount of data that will help us to plan the education system for years to come. And my friend from St. Vital also brought in the strongest antibullying legislation in the country where—which ensured that every child had a place and felt included and knew they belong in our schools.

And it is always, Mr. Speaker, to my great and continuing regret that when that very profound legislation was tabled in this House, members opposite chose to vote against it and actually to exclude children. I think there's a pattern of thinking there that I'm going to talk a little bit more about, the exclusive nature of the opposition who are only concerned with the mere few and not the many and—but I think there's no better example of that when they voted against our antibullying legislation and chose to exclude children from a sense of belonging in their schools.

And, Mr. Speaker, those are just a few examples of our fantastic record when it comes to K to 12, but I think it's also true, and I have the benefit of being the Minister of Education from kindergarten all the way through to career, and we have done tremendous work in the post-secondary side as well. I think members know that we have among the lowest tuition rates in Canada for both college and university students. We have among the highest investment—record investments in post-secondary institutions across the country that distinguishes, quite frankly, from virtually every other province.

We have tremendous supports for students when it comes to the tuition rebate program, with a broad menu of grants and bursaries. We have worked every day to ensure that we have a quality, accessible, affordable public education system from

kindergarten through to career, and, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech ensures that we continue to work in that regard.

Members know that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) announced that we'll be tabling legislation on First Nations, Metis and Inuit education policy in the next few weeks. We're very proud of that, our—of that framework. It's done in consultations with our friends in the indigenous community. We partner with them; we work with our friends in order to ensure that we can improve outcomes for indigenous students so that they have multiple opportunities to grow, to prosper and to feel part of a community. What we want for ourselves, we want for every child and especially for our indigenous kids who need our support, a tap on the shoulder, a hug, an arm around the shoulder, so that they will know that someone cares for them. And, on this side of the House, we give every single possible effort that we can do to do that very thing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another element of what we have done during our term in office and what we'll continue to do is around capital infrastructure at our schools as well. As I said many times in the House, we build new schools; in fact, we've built 35 new schools or replaced them during the course of our term in office and we'll continue to do so. I was

proud to see in the Speech from the Throne that we'll be announcing a brand new school in Brandon East just next year to respond to the needs of that—growing needs of that community, and I know that there are other communities that are also growing that need new schools. And we're going to work to continue to address their needs at every single opportunity.

We build new gyms across the province. We've invested in new science labs across the province. We've built new child-care centres across the province in our schools. We're building new shops, Mr. Speaker, at schools all across the province, and what we're intending to do, what we're trying to do, what we continue to do is to make sure that there's a focus on fundamentals in their early years, that we develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills in the middle years, and then, as they get on to high school, they—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Education will have 13 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, November 20, 2015

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