

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

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
BRIESE, Stuart	Agassiz	PC
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
CHIEF, Kevin, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	NDP
CROTHERS, Deanne, Hon.	St. James	NDP
CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
DEWAR, Greg, Hon.	Selkirk	NDP
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FRIESEN, Cameron	Morden-Winkler	PC
GAUDREAU, Dave	St. Norbert	NDP
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Liberal
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	NDP
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Richmond	NDP
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	NDP
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Swan River	NDP
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
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OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
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PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
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PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
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STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Gimli	—
<i>Vacant</i>	Southdale	—

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 4—The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act (Constructing Freedom Road)

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, that Bill 4, The Manitoba East Side Road Authority Amendment Act (Constructing Freedom Road), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I'm indeed pleased to rise today to introduce Bill 4, the east-side road amendment act. Today truly marks a new beginning for the families living on Shoal Lake No. 40 First Nation. Our government is committing our share of funding for the all-season road for this community. We are encouraged and excited to work with our new federal partner, along with the City of Winnipeg, to complete this important project. And we believe if funding is in place, we can put the shovel in the ground by this winter.

We have seen the success of the Manitoba East Side Road Authority and the success that they've had in building the Red River Floodway and now building the all-season road network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. So this was just a natural fit.

The construction of the Freedom Road will be similar to that of other projects managed by the East Side Road Authority. Community benefits agreements and open tendering will be part of this

project to ensure that Shoal Lake 40 residents benefit from training and jobs from start to finish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 8—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave)

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross), that Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave); Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi (congé pour les victimes de violence familiale, congé en cas de blessure ou de maladie grave et prolongation du congé de soignant).

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable Minister of Labour, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services, that Bill 8, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence, Leave for Serious Injury or Illness and Extension of Compassionate Care Leave), be now read for a first time.

Ms. Braun: I'm pleased to rise today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to introduce Bill 8. This bill includes a new leave, which will be the first of its kind in Canada, providing victims of domestic violence with the right to time off work without fear of job loss.

Under the bill, employees experiencing domestic violence will be entitled up to 10 days of leave to use as needed and up to 17 weeks of continuous leave so they can attend medical or counselling appointments, find a new place to live or get legal help. Up to five days of this leave will be paid by the employer.

This bill also establishes a new unpaid leave of up to 17 weeks for workers experiencing a serious illness or injury and extends the existing amount of

compassionate-care leave available for workers to care for a critically ill family member from eight weeks to 28 weeks.

Thank you, 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

Laura Unruh

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am honoured to rise in the House today to recognize a young Manitoban who brought a Canadian championship home to our province last year—or this year, sorry.

Miss Laura Unruh is a Scottish Highland dancer who began her dance career at the age of four at the McGregor Studio of Dance. In the eight years since stepping onto stage, Laura has managed to accumulate quite the collection of awards. Beyond the numerous local competitions she has walked away victorious from, she has held the Manitoba and mid-Canada championship title since 2012 and was the eastern Canadian champion in 2014.

This past July, Laura's list of achievements culminated in winning the Canadian championship title in her age category of 10 and under 12 years. The last person, Mr. Speaker, to receive this title in Manitoba was 27 years ago by Jillian Currie, who is also in the gallery with us today.

Following this amazing victory, Laura travelled to Scotland to compete internationally at the world championships, where she received second runner-up in her age category.

Laura's accomplishments are obviously a result of her dedication to and love of dance. This passion has been encouraged and mentored by her incredible dance instructor, Ms. Gaelyn McGregor of McGregor Studio of Dance, the largest competitive Highland dance studio in Manitoba.

This year, Gaelyn not only celebrated Laura's triumph at the Canadians but her own milestone of 40 years of teaching. She is an examiner, fellow and life member of the Scottish Dance Teachers' Alliance and an adjudicator with the Scottish official board of Highland dance. Gaelyn was the first recipient of the Lord Strathcona Award sponsored by the

St. Andrew's Society for her tireless contributions that help preserve Scottish heritage and culture in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to have Laura and her family, as well as her teacher, Gaelyn, as my guests in the gallery today. I would like to ask that all members of this House join me in congratulating both Laura and Gaelyn for their many accomplishments, to encourage them to continue to contribute to our proud Scottish heritage and to wish them all the best in what I am sure will be many more achievements in the years to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): On November 25th, 1960, three Mirabal sisters were assassinated for fighting to free the Dominican Republic from dictatorial rule. Thirty-nine years later, the United Nations made November 25th the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. We wear orange ribbons to mark this day.

Another date we remember is December 6th, 1989, when a gunman went to École Polytechnique in Montreal and murdered 14 women for being women and injured 14 others before turning a gun on himself. Two years later, the Parliament of Canada marked December 6th as our National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. These are days to remember the women who died from gender-based violence and those who face ongoing violence and misogyny. They are part of the 16 days of activism to end violence against women.

Through the Throne Speech, our government has put forward a vision for a province where we are all safe from violence and a plan to put us farther along that path. As we heard moments ago, we will be the first province in Canada to introduce legislation to provide paid leave to Manitobans who are victims of domestic violence. And I want to welcome Kevin Rebeck, the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, who was a driving force behind this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we will strengthen protection orders. We will partner with post-secondary institutions to make our campuses safer for all

students, with policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We are launching the #WhoWillYouHelp campaign to encourage Manitobans to help stop sexual violence and harassment. And we have always supported the call for a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Our government will use these days of remembrance and action to inspire our efforts to build a future where every woman can live free from gender-based violence. And we will also pay tribute to the work of so many service providers and advocates who help women every day heal from the violence in their lives and become survivors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Line Route

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve a government that is honest and transparent. This present NDP government seems to be lacking these qualities. This is especially true when it comes to the preferred route for the Minnesota-Manitoba hydro transmission line.

There have been three rounds of public engagement in several communities in southeastern Manitoba. Hundreds have expressed concerns on the current route selection. It is an AC line running through some densely populated areas. Parents are concerned it comes too close to the schools in La Broquerie.

There are other options for this line. The RM of Reynolds has offered to have the line run through that RM, where it won't be as intrusive.

I have read several petitions with hundreds of names of residents that are concerned about the current route selection. Manitobans want to know why the preferred route was chosen over a less intrusive one.

Earlier this week, during question period, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro stated the selection of the route and the submission was made a long time ago, way before any of us.

If this is the case, why were all those public meetings held if a decision was already made? Why were stakeholders asked for their input if a decision was already made?

Manitobans feel disrespectful and tired of this NDP government mismanaging Manitoba Hydro. On

April 19th, 2016, Manitobans will choose a new government that is honest and transparent.

Caleb Bremner

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize a young man at Clifton School in Winnipeg's West End. He's helped start a farmers' market to teach his classmates about agriculture.

Caleb Bremner divides his time between the city and his father Graham's land just outside of Argyle. Graham tells us that Caleb learned how to garden before he could walk.

Five years ago, when Caleb was in grade 1, he and his dad grew pumpkins for the students in Caleb's class. Caleb's classmates were curious as to why there was dirt on all the pumpkins. Caleb was shocked to learn that his classmates had little or no idea where food came from.

The next year, Caleb and his dad organized a farmers' market as a fundraiser for the school and received such an enthusiastic response that it has become an annual community event.

The market continues to raise money for the school, as all profits support student activities and field trips. Caleb and his family offer potatoes, onions, beets and other produce, as well as homemade salsa, relish, jam and honey. Caleb tells me their most popular product is carrot marmalade.

The market has grown to include other vendors selling homemade crafts, jewellery and other local products. The students of Clifton help out with packaging, weighing and selling the produce.

Caleb is now in his last year at Clifton school. He's trying to decide whether he will stay in the city next year and attend Sargent Park or go to school in Argyle. He's keenly interested in a career in agriculture.

Caleb Bremner is a hard-working and generous young man. He's even learning to play the bagpipes, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank him for his work at Clifton School and for being an all-around great guy.

Caleb, all the best, and thank you for raising agricultural awareness in the West End.

Residents of River Heights Community

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'm once again honoured to speak about the caring and generous residents of the River Heights community.

I congratulate Jim Carr on his recent election as the Member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre and his appointment as the Minister of Natural Resources. I wish Jim Carr all the very best in his new position.

Next, I recognize Kathy Knowles, the founder and director of the Osu Children's Library Fund. Her extraordinary contributions from the humble beginnings of the reading circle for children underneath the tree in her own garden have helped improve literacy in Ghana by establishing many libraries and writing many children's books.

Another great force of generous spirit is Wendy Erlanger. Her grassroots movement, More Than Shoes, has been instrumental in helping needy children in Winnipeg with new proper-fitting shoes and boots, something that is imperative at this time of year.

Finally, I mention Michelle Pennock, who, together with Paula Fillmore, have opened a second-hand clothing store with a unique purpose. The Purple Cactus Community Closet is a boutique-style, not-for-profit retail store that raises money for organizations that support recovering addicts.

It's always very humbling for me to be able to thank the members of our community for their industriousness and their generosity.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And just prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon, from Kildonan-East Collegiate, we have 39 grade 9 students under the direction of Elliot Unger, Kim Guigueno, Justin Brown and Tom Theodorou, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

New West Partnership Agreement Manitoba Business Concerns

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the Selinger government's refusal to join the New

West Partnership has put Manitoba businesses at risk.

Several businesses have come forward expressing their concern about this government's refusal to join the New West Partnership. Businesses like Leech Printing and Minty's Moving and T.L. Penner are just but a few businesses who have been negatively impacted by this government's refusal to join the New West Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell these businesses why his government is refusing to join the New West Partnership?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we're, here in Manitoba, we're in the centre of the country. We're going to take advantage of that geographic location. We do as much trade, in fact, do more trade to the east than we do to the west. In fact, when it comes to interprovincial exports per capita, Manitoba does it better than anybody else in the nation.

Businesses here locally and nationally are asking for a national trade agreement. Premiers agree across the country, including our territories, for a national agreement. We're going to stay committed to that and get a national deal done.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Selinger government's refusal to join the New West Partnership, again, is having a negative impact on businesses in Manitoba. Businesses who have bid on and been awarded Saskatchewan government contracts in the past are no longer able to, and this has a direct—and this is a direct result of this government's refusal to join the New West Partnership.

Mr. Speaker, what does this minister have to say to those businesses who have been negatively impacted as a result of their refusal to join the New West Partnership?

* (13:50)

Mr. Chief: I thank the member for the question.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, just yesterday morning I was—I got to participate with the Canadian manufacturers, exporters trade summit under the leadership of Ron Koslowky. There were over 120 leading manufacturers and exporters as part of this, as part of our province. Their message to me was loud and clear: Get a new trade deal done;

stay committed to that. We are going to do that, Mr. Speaker. They told us to continue, to continue to invest in world-class trade infrastructure. That's what we're going to continue to do.

And I got to tell you the other thing that they highlighted was their incredible support for young people, the Youth in Manufacturing program that takes young people and—from students and puts them in the workplace and takes the workplace and puts it in the classroom.

Mrs. Stefanson: The Selinger government's decision not to join the New West Partnership is having a negative impact on jobs and our economy here in Manitoba. Some businesses are threatening to close shop and move to Saskatchewan just so they can be eligible to continue doing the business that they do with the Saskatchewan government.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government content to see those businesses close up shop and move to Saskatchewan?

Mr. Chief: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to jobs and the economy in Manitoba, we have one of the strongest economies in the nation. We have the best job growth in the country. It's projected to be the best over the next two years. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the whole country.

I ask—I challenge the member from Tuxedo. When the days that her leader sat around the Cabinet table, I challenge her to find me one good headline that he was able—that that government was able to get on jobs and the economy, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I challenge Steinbach, I challenge Tuxedo, I challenge Morden-Winkler: Find me one good headline that talks about jobs and the economy on their leader's current plan.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for Morden-Winkler.

Throne Speech Promises Economic Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler):—recent headline is, Manitoba leads the nation in net out-migration. That's a headline for that minister. Shame on him.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I referred the Finance Minister to a recent newspaper article—or an advertisement for the Manitoba government's Consumer Protection Office, and it says when you're making a purchase, make sure you're asking the right questions. That is good advice. The advertisement

includes questions that consumers should ask. One of those questions is: Is this estimate guaranteed?

Now, in the Throne Speech, the new spending promises would cost over \$1 billion every year for the next five years.

So my question for the Finance Minister is: What guarantees can he provide that Manitobans won't be left holding the bag on his phony-baloney spending spree?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, Mr. Speaker, the member needs to remember, first thing, is that we've had more than 125,000 newcomers come to this province to help us build this economy, help us grow this province and make sure that for future generations Manitobans remain strong and proud.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite stands up and he says he's going to vote against strategic investments in our economy. He's going to vote against those kinds of investments that will ensure that we are protected going into the future. He's going to vote against everything that will provide opportunities for young people into the future.

In fact, the member opposite and his party stand for nothing. We stand with Manitobans, and we're going to grow this province for generations to come.

Mr. Friesen: We're going to vote against the \$6.6-billion go-for-broke spending spree that no one believes anyway.

Mr. Speaker, this same Consumer Protection Office advertised and asks the question: Is the estimate guaranteed? And this government has given phony guarantees to Manitobans before. They guaranteed in the 2012 budget that they would return to balance by 2014. They broke that promise, but they guaranteed Manitobans in 2014 they'd get into balance by 2016. They broke that promise, but the Finance Minister says a year ago the government would get into surplus by reducing expenditures, and they broke that promise too.

So my question to the Finance Minister: Why would Manitobans believe any guarantee he would give them about these unaffordable spending-sprees promises?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Speaker, here's what we believe. We believe our province will provide a future for kids that they can be proud of, a future for stable families, a province that has great infrastructure,

strong health care and education and affordable child care to help parents get ahead.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, and in sad contrast with the members opposite, they have no plan for Manitoba save one. That's to cut a half a billion dollars from the budget. That's for—do flip-flops on government spending.

Their plan is to drive the economy back into the 1990s. We're never going to go back there, Mr. future. We're going to go—Mr. Speaker—we're going to go forward; we're not going to go back with these guys.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the consumer protection ad poses a third question. It asks: Have you explained all the charges? Now, certainly the Finance Minister would agree that when making major purchases, it's important to ask about hidden fees or costs that might otherwise not be disclosed by unscrupulous vendors.

Now, the NDP Throne Speech promises \$6.6 billion in new spending over five years. Their back's against the wall, credit downgrades, ballooning debt, rising deficit.

Will the Finance Minister explain today all the hidden charges? Will he admit that his go-for-broke Throne Speech spending spree for Manitoba families guarantees income tax hikes, PST hikes, other service fee hikes or all of the above?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, we just came off a federal election in which Canadians from coast to coast said they wanted investment in the infrastructure of Canada, and that's exactly what this government has been putting forward to the people of Manitoba over our terms of government.

We've put in place a plan to continue to invest billions of dollars in order to create 60,000 jobs going forward, to create opportunities for the young people that are in the gallery and all across this province.

We invest in health care. We invest in education. We invest in child care, on all those fronts, Mr. Speaker. Those folks across the floor don't invest in anything. They want to send this economy back to the 1990s. We're never going back there ever again.

Mining and Minerals Industry Future Development Concerns

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): I think Manitobans are tired of the NDP math.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister was listening last week to the officials at the mining convention. It was pretty clear to me the industry is waving a big red flag. The mining association says that the mining industry is at risk; the status quo is not an option. The prospectors and developers association says it's time—the time it takes to acquire work permits is way out of control.

And, Mr. Speaker, did the minister get the message, and what is he prepared to do?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to see interest shown by members opposite in helping to build one of the—up to 7 per cent of our GDP in terms of mining and minerals. And it's about time, I think, members got on side with what we're doing with the mining association, with First Nations and with the government.

We've been at a table now for two years, Mr. Speaker, where we've worked out agreements on issues of—*[interjection]*—the member will get the chance to continue his question shortly if he'll allow me to finish mine—where discuss issues of—where we discuss issues of permits, revenue sharing. And we've got agreement. And we are now seen in Canada as a model to go forward with, and the mining companies, First Nations and government, never before done in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Cullen: If the minister was paying attention last week, the industry was clearly laying a lot of the hardships in Manitoba at the feet of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I picked up a copy last week of the Northern Prospector, and I certainly hope the minister will take the time to read the comments in there from the industry. The president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Prospectors and Developers Association says, and I quote: Make no mistake. Our exploration industry is in trouble, especially in Manitoba. The time to act is now.

Mr. Speaker, after 16 years, is this minister prepared to act?

Mr. Chomiak: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we sat down with the prospectors association of Manitoba and exactly implemented the very formula for incentives for mining that they asked for. And, in fact, as a result of those incentives that are the best in the country, we are one of only three provinces in Canada that increased exploration last year.

Mr. Speaker, doom and gloom from the other side. They could not see the glass half empty; they see the glass deep, deep, deep in the ground and seeing no light of day.

* (14:00)

In fact, we're the only jurisdiction in the country that has opened two mines in the last year. I defy members opposite to name a place that has opened two mines in the last year than Manitoba.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, is the minister also going to take credit for the nine operations that closed under their watch?

Mr. Speaker, this is a scathing report from the president of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Prospectors and Developers Association. Mr. Masson says, and I quote: Explorationists in this province feel misled, deceived, betrayed, as we see the livelihoods of future generations squashed. He goes on to say: Investors and exploration companies have voted with their feet and are either not investing or leaving the province to explore elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this is the industry's perspective.

What does the minister have to say after 16 years?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I spent a lot of time with Mr. Masson. Actually, I consider him a personal friend, and he's quite happy with the suggestions that he put forth. He sits on PDAC, which is the national body. He has asked the national body to put in place the structure that we have in Manitoba, firstly.

Secondly, I hate to do it, Mr. Speaker, and I know it's going to hurt members opposite, but their Fraser Institute, their right-wing Fraser Institute, has recognized Manitoba as the second best jurisdiction in the country to do mining. And further, their Fraser Institute that they love to quote all the time has named Manitoba as the fourth best jurisdiction in the entire world to do mining.

Mr. Speaker, their institute says exactly contrary to the misquotes and the out-of-context comments

that members opposite made. He should have spent more time at that convention.

Syrian Refugees Education Challenges

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Steve says that they don't deserve it.

Mr. Speaker, in the light of the new refugees coming to our province, are the members of the Selinger government and this Minister of Education and Advanced Learning, who obviously don't understand the education system here in this great province of ours, being transparent about the challenges that these new immigrants will have when it comes to our education system?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, this government on this side of the House has invested in education every year since we came into government, and we're going to continue to invest in a quality education system for every child that's in our school system.

Mr. Speaker, the Syrian refugee question has been of vital importance to us on this side of the House. We are putting in place resources to ensure the stabilization for families when they come here, to ensure that there are educational opportunities.

Maybe I misunderstood the member, but if he's opposed to Syrian refugees coming to Canada and us providing support for them, then he should stand up and say so.

Education System Government Record

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the minister himself, the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), admitted, and I quote: There is an achievement gap in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, finally the minister is admitting that under the Selinger government's oversight of education we have gone from third in the country to dead last in literacy, science and numeracy.

Will the Education Minister again admit today that he and his government are failing our Manitoba students when it comes to education, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, 86 per cent of our children are meeting or exceeding expectations, and in addition to that, graduation rates in this province have grown to an all-time high of 87 per cent. In

addition to that, enrolment in our universities and colleges is at an all-time high.

The member opposite stands up and pretends to care about education, but the fact of the matter is they're going to cut funding to education. They're going to fire teachers and they're going to unravel an education system that has no wrong doors, no dead ends, but multiple pathways to provide opportunities for young people.

There's a clear choice between investment in a strong, quality education system on this side of the House and no education system at all from that side of the House.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, under this Selinger government Manitobans are paying more and getting less when it comes to essential services, particularly in education.

Many of our new immigrant students come to Manitoba and struggle. It's a proven fact.

The Minister of Education admits that there's an achievement gap here in Manitoba, and in 16 years we've gone from being a leader in this great country of ours to dead last in numeracy, literacy and science. Manitobans are tired of NDP broken promises and want a change for the better.

I agree with the Minister of Education that there is an achievement gap here in Manitoba, and that gap, Mr. Speaker, is this minister and his government's leadership when it comes to education.

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's nice to know that we agree on one thing, because we disagree on a whole range of issues.

When it comes to the opposition, they stand up and talk about education and yet they have no plan for education except that they want to fail children and ensure—according to the Leader of the Opposition, he says that grade 9 boys have no potential, no chance for succeeding.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're never going to adopt that kind of attitude about education. We're going to stand with every single child. We're going to stand with newcomer children. We're going to provide them with supports. We're going to continue to close the education gap that exists in this province.

As I said earlier, when he was in government and when his members were in government, our

graduation rates were 71 per cent. Today they're at an all-time high of 87 per cent.

Paramedic Self-Regulation Timeline for Implementation

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of regulating health professionals is to ensure the public is protected when they receive health services.

Yesterday this government accepted the advisory council recommendation to support self-regulation of massage therapists after sitting on that report for two months.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) to tell us: When will she accept the advisory council recommendation to support self-regulation of paramedics?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, one of the modern phenomena of the modern health-care and the modern government system is the system of self-regulation, the various forms of self-regulation. And what we've seen is an evolution and a development of self-regulation in this province.

For example, Mr. Speaker, years ago, when the member opposite might be more familiar, when she happened to be sitting on this side of the House, most of the ambulance participants were volunteers. It's evolved to where they're a professional organization. There's expanded training.

In fact, we've put in place, again, 52 new ambulances when members opposite did—in fact, Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was in power, they charged fees to transport people from northern Manitoba to southern Manitoba.

So it's an evolving situation as we approach our regulated professions, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Driedger: The minister forgot to mention that Manitoba has the highest ambulance fees in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health refused to accept the first report from the health professional advisory council to regulate paramedics. Instead, she kicked the can down the road by inappropriately asking that council to do more work on this. I understand they have finished that second round of consultation.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us today: When will she move forward with self-regulation of paramedics?

Mr. Chomiak: You know, Mr. Speaker, very clearly now we see a contrast between rhetoric and action. Members opposite know that in the Throne Speech we have promised to decrease and provide more funding for ambulances and for ambulance fees. It's in the Throne Speech.

On one question, they say we're increasing taxes because we're reducing costs of ambulances. On the other side, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, who was in power with a government that charged a fee, a user fee, to fly from the North or to come from the North in the Manitoba, says, your fees are the highest.

Is that not clear that members talk one thing now, Mr. Speaker, when they were in office they did something else? And we know where they want to go: They want to privatize so your wallet matters, not your health care.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, if anybody says one thing and does another, it's that side of this House.

Mr. Speaker, this PC caucus fully supports self-regulation of paramedics. This will ensure the highest standards in paramedicine care for patients. That's what this is all about. We have supported this position for years.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health (Ms. Blady) to tell us: Why is she dragging her heels to do the same thing and support self-regulation of paramedics?

Mr. Chomiak: I welcome that question from the member because it allows me to again show the terrible contrast between words on the other side and reality: fantasy, reality, Mr. Speaker, fantasy, reality.

* (14:10)

When we were at committee recently to combine two organizations, the veterinarians association and the veterinarian technicians, that had been going on for almost a decade, after years and years of negotiation, we brought them together. We went to committee hearings. What did the Conservative members of that committee do? Oh, you need more time. They kiboshed it. They voted against it. They voted against bringing two organizations after a decade of working on it, and now they stand up and say, oh, we're in favour of this organization; bring it forward faster. Fantasy, reality.

Child Poverty Manitoba Rates

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, a new report card is out on child poverty in this country, and Manitoba, once again, is the province with the highest rate of child poverty, with one in every three and a half children living in poverty in this province.

The report goes on to say that this government stops at, quote, declaring intent, and, further quote, does not demonstrate the political will involved in keeping a public promise.

Mr. Speaker, doesn't that sound like a broken promise to the children of Manitoba?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has taken child poverty and poverty in general very seriously. That's why we have worked with our community partners on the ALL Aboard strategy, where we can demonstrate that there has been a reduction using the market basket measurement of less 4,000 children on—that are living in poverty than the year previously. I think that's significant, but we have a lot more work to do.

And we know the best way out of poverty is a good job, which we are supporting with all of our infrastructure, a good strong education, making sure that we are providing quality affordable housing, also quality and affordable child care, not doing what the members opposite are suggesting: privatizing social services, slashing \$500 million from our budget.

ALL Aboard Strategy Effectiveness of Program

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): The minister should remember that there are many measures of poverty for children, and, in fact, the only one that shows a decrease is the one she's quoting. The after-tax LIM, one actually shows an increase in child poverty rates because of the high taxes.

In 2009 the NDP government introduced the ALL Aboard strategy. Ever since then, child poverty rates have risen in Manitoba where—while the rest of Canada has in fact seen a decrease in child poverty rates.

How can this government claim ALL Aboard is a successful strategy when, by every measure but one, it has failed?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Our records are clear in comparison with the members opposite. We have continued to increase minimum wage; they froze it seven years in a row. We also have it—made incredible investments on infrastructure which have created good jobs. We're committed to that.

We are committed to working with all of our partners on the ALL Aboard strategy. We have 22 indicators. I can tell you that there are many indicators that show that we have progress, as well as there's indicators that demonstrate we have more work to do.

We have never, ever strayed away from the matter of having to do more work. We are committed to that work. We're going to do it. We will not be slashing and cutting and threatening Manitobans with the issue of privatization of social services and of Hydro.

Child Poverty Manitoba Rates

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the minister on one thing: they have a lot more work to do.

The bottom line here is that Manitoba is the province with the highest child poverty rate, at 29 per cent and still rising. Canada has a child poverty rate of 19 per cent and falling. Despite 15 years of this NDP government and a special strategy since 2008, we continue to lose ground.

This NDP government is clearly not able to deal with the problem of child poverty in Manitoba. Won't they admit that they're failing Manitoba's children?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): We are continuing to work with all of our community partners. It is all of our responsibility to reduce poverty. It is all levels of government. It is private citizens. It is the not-for-profit organizations. It's us working together to ensure that there are good jobs, that there are education, that we have early childhood development programs, that we are working with our families and supporting to have healthy communities.

The members opposite? Their plan is to scrap the ALL Aboard strategy. That is devastating. What are they going to replace it with? Snitch lines, cutting social welfare, privatizing child care, privatizing Hydro, fewer jobs. I ask them: What is their plan?

Legalization of Marijuana Marketing and Sales Plan

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was unclear whether he would—wanted marijuana to be sold in the same manner as cigarettes, in bland packaging with warning labels and locked up behind counters, or whether he would market marijuana widely with public ads, as his government does now with liquor and their holiday scratch cards.

Mr. Speaker, today I ask the Minister responsible for Liquor and Lotteries and perhaps soon to be marijuana: In setting the rules for the marketing and sale of marijuana, will this NDP government treat it like cigarettes and ban the advertising, or will the government treat it like alcohol, with lots of advertising, including government ads on its sale?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister responsible for Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation): Let's be clear. It's the Prime Minister of the country that made this one of his planks in his platform for the federal election that just passed, and Canadians elected him, and congratulations to the federal government of Canada.

It's the Prime Minister that said he doesn't want children using marijuana. He doesn't want corner stores selling marijuana. And he wants to make sure that it takes all the profits away from organized crime. Clearly, we agree with all of the above.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly concerned about social responsibility, as we have been with liquor in this province. And, as a matter of fact, 2 per cent of net is what's contributed by Liquor & Lotteries towards social responsibility in this province. Last year it was about \$13 million. So we're very, very proud of that record of social responsibility with regard to the sales in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in moving to have the sale of marijuana, it's very important that we know what the government is going to do. You know, it was the Premier who ran to the media to announce that he wants to be the sole pot dealer in Manitoba before any direction had come from the federal government.

Manitobans want to know what this will look like. You know, for example, the amount that this NDP government spends on promoting liquor and

gambling is more than four times what they spend on public awareness responsibility campaigns.

Are Manitobans to expect the same level of promotion from this government when it comes to marijuana? And what events would we expect to see being sponsored by cannabis?

Mr. Lemieux: I'm surprised he'd call his federal leader a pot boss of the country, and I'm surprised by that because it is the federal leader, it is the Prime Minister of our country who brought this forward, and we certainly take their lead. It's the federal minister, the federal Prime Minister, sorry, that will be essentially stating the parameters around such a program about the legalization of marijuana, and we ask that we'd be at the table to have these discussions.

Like changing the liquor laws in the province of Manitoba after 60 years, we consulted with the RCMP, the City of Winnipeg police, law enforcement jurisdictions, health-care workers, social agencies, Mr. Speaker, and we would certainly look at doing the same and bringing those recommendations and that kind of consultation to the federal table and letting the federal government know what we've heard from Manitobans and where they want to go.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, it was the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and this government which jumped forward and said, we want our government and our Crown corporation to market marijuana.

You know, there are a variety of sales models possible that can maintain socially responsible regulation. Some of these models might even treat our age-of-majority citizens more like the adults that they are. Perhaps allowing the adults of Manitoba to make their own decisions is threatening to the NDP because of what they know that it will mean on April the 19th.

Is this NDP government not willing to consider any other sales model for marijuana because they simply don't trust adults in Manitoba to make their own decisions?

* (14:20)

Mr. Lemieux: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'm awfully surprised to hear the Liberal member start talking about privatizing and not saying anything about safety, not saying anything about adhering to the law of the land and listening to where the federal government wants to go.

With their model and the Leader of the Liberal Party's model to privatize liquor stores and having every agency, anyone just selling pot, marijuana, anywhere, Mr. Speaker, we're more interested in consulting with Manitobans, talking to people in the private sector, talking to social agencies, talking to law enforcement.

We're about safety, social responsibility, making sure that the product—when the federal government decides what they're going to do with regard to the sale of marijuana, we want to ensure that we pass on all the consultation that we've heard in Manitoba to the federal government, knowing where Manitobans want to come from.

Victims of Domestic Violence Paid Leave and Job Protection

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Minister Braun announced proposed amendments to The Employment Standards Code which includes—

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

I want to caution the honourable member for The Pas that when she's referencing members of the House it's by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolios. So I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for The Pas during her question.

Ms. Lathlin: Thank you.

The—amendments to The Employment Standards Code which includes a groundbreaking, first-in-Canada paid leave for victims of domestic violence.

We believe all women should feel safe at home and in the workplace, and having the ability to take time from work to ensure that safety and well-being is a priority, is something that all Manitobans should stand for.

Could the minister explain how these amendments will help to make sure that Manitoba workers and families can take the opportunity to attend to their health-care needs when facing a serious illness or injury or to take care for their loved ones during their time of need?

Hon. Erna Braun (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I thank the member for the question.

Today, at A Woman's Place, I had the pleasure of introducing groundbreaking proposed changes to The Employment Standards Code that would give

victims of domestic violence the right to take time off work without the fear of losing their job.

When there is violence in the home, you shouldn't have to worry about holding on to your job as you escape and rebuild your life. This new first-in-Canada legislation will ensure that victims of domestic violence have financial security, job protection and flexibility to take the time that they need to escape and rebuild their life from violence.

The proposed amendments also provide leave for employees to deal with long-term illness or injury and extend compassionate leave to help workers care for a loved one. Both of these proposed changes would allow eligible workers to access corresponding federal insurance benefits.

Thank you.

PTH 206 and Cedar Avenue Intersection Improvement Update

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): After 46 petitions and 690 signatures and counting, all urging the provincial government to 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 parking to better indicate the location of the shoulders and crosswalk, as well as installing a lighted crosswalk structure, can the minister tell the Legislature: Where is the project currently at?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Well, just commenting on what the minister has said previously about the investment in infrastructure in the province of Manitoba and the millions and billions that will be spent on infrastructure throughout Manitoba, a lot of it has to do with safety, Mr. Speaker, and it's not only the esthetics of travelling on a nicely paved road and having that advantage for all the tourists coming from the United States and from the west and from the east, but also it's about safety.

And a lot of the investments that we made as the Province of Manitoba, all newly paved roads, for example, have the shoulders paved. For cyclists that are using the roads, it's truly important. We've listened to the public about safety and in the investments that we're making in infrastructure to include safety as part of that criteria.

Manitoba Hydro Transmission Line Minnesota Line Route Concerns

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro said the selection of the route for the Minnesota-Manitoba transmission line, and I quote, was made a long time ago, way before any of us.

For the information of the House, I'd like to table a press release dated September 23rd of this year titled final preferred route selected for MMTP.

Something doesn't add up here, Mr. Speaker. Was the route selected way before any of us, or was it finalized in September of this year as Hydro says?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro): Well, it's a pleasure to rise again and to respond to the member from La Verendrye on the question.

Let me say this—give this response in the following way. Manitoba Hydro, the province and the city—or, pardon me, the—and—have provided opportunities for the public for their input and also to share concerns about the location and the route that we've talked about.

And, you know, we have gone through this for a long time now and we've asked the members of the opposition to also meet with Hydro representatives to gain more understanding about the route—

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

Mr. Smook: I'll read a line from the press release I've tabled: "Today, Manitoba Hydro announced the Final Preferred Route for the Manitoba Minnesota Transmission Project."

Hundreds of Manitobans came out to these public engagements to voice their concern, and yet the minister says the routing was selected a long time ago, way before any of us.

What is the right answer for that, Mr. Speaker? Was the minister misleading the House, or does he not know what's happening in his department?

Mr. Robinson: You know what, Mr. Speaker, I was not misleading anybody. I was simply pointing out that when these kind of projects occur, they are planned out over a period of time way before we—any of us were ever in this Chamber, and it was probably in that context that I responded to the member.

Let me say this as well, Mr. Speaker. Most of the route of this line has been selected, and a portion of it is now being finalized, the portion that is going to be going through St. Norbert. The selection of the route and the submission of the environmental impact statement are the culmination of several years of planning, environmental studies and engagement with stakeholders.

So it's not a matter of just picking a route over a period of time and then imposing it on—

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

Mr. Smook: The minister doesn't know what's going on in his own department or he's misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker, we've asked him on several occasions to provide us with the information as to the reason the preferred route was chosen and he refuses to do so. And on Monday he said the route was chosen a long time ago.

Mr. Speaker, which is it? Does he not want to release the information to the people of Manitoba, or was the route chosen a long time ago and there's just political interference in this route as what happened in Bipole III?

Mr. Robinson: Well, that, indeed, is a serious allegation, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask the member to say that outside of this Chamber.

Also let me say, Mr. Speaker, that members of the opposition also met with Hydro representatives, so they had the opportunity of asking those questions of them.

Mr. Speaker: 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.

* (14:30)

(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 S. Chura, R. Gervais, G. Terry and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

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.

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 J. Murrell, A. Sanclemente, B. Smith and many, many other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions?

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

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to orders of the day, government business, and we'll now 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 Minister of Housing and Community Development, who has 26 minutes remaining.

Hon. Mohinder Saran (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Mr. Speaker, I'll continue my speech from yesterday.

First of all, I thank the three parties who delivered the statements on the death of MLA Manmeet Singh Bhullar and having a moment of silence. Being born in a Sikh family, I appreciated that. I also, through you, Mr. Speaker, convey my condolences to the family of Mr. Bhullar. He was a role model for Sikhs in Canada and an inspiration for the people who want to dedicate their life to serve the people. He will be missed.

As I was saying, that report by Jim Stenson—oh, no, sorry—report by Jim Stanford, Manitoba was ahead of fiscal policy curve. So we are doing a good job. Our government's strategy is now exactly the sort of policy supported by international agencies as relief for widespread economic stagnation.

Robust capital investment, a diversified and powerful economic base, and growing private and public capital spending has made our province a leader in combatting this global recession. According

to Jim Stanford, nothing is more important than investment in driving an economy forward, creating jobs and incomes and laying a strong framework for future productivity. Our government saw the importance of these things and this has been a crucial ingredient in the Province's success.

Considering Maples constituency, during—since 2007, I got elected, many things have been done to help the families, especially to the immigrant communities. There was some conditions how one can apply for immigration, and those conditions I was able to convince the premier at that time and the Labour minister and her staff, and some conditions were removing and many people were able to come because of the removal of those conditions.

Then I brought a bill about granny suites, and, acting on that at that time, the minister approved \$35,000 for granny suites, maximum 50 per cent. That was another great—other work was done on my advice because many immigrant families need those kind of houses where those joined families can stay together.

So then we have—recently we were able to pave the Pipeline Road, and that was very important for the community in that area, and that work has been done.

There's so many other achievements I can count, but I would like to keep continue on to community development. Housing and Community Development is committed to making it easier for communities to work together with government. We are committed to funding programs that assist community organizations in Manitoba and provide sustainable recreation and wellness benefits to their communities. We know that when we invest in our communities and support the well-being of citizens, we are also investing in a strong province. We are committed to building healthy communities and to improve the social and economic well-being of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, this year we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of our Community Places Program. This program has supported the improvements, renovations and upgrades that have benefited thousands of residents and communities over the years. Last year funding was provided to 227 groups and—around the province for things like kitchen renovations, building upgrades, accessible washrooms and playgrounds, roof repairs, creating a rooftop garden and renewing track and field areas. CPP is part of our government's commitment to non-profit

organizations that provide recreational, wellness and cultural opportunities to Manitobans. Since it was established in 1986, CPP has provided more than \$115 million to support more than 7,500 community-led projects across Manitoba.

We have now confirmed next year's grant recipients. Examples include renovating Steinbach's arena, a new playground for Stony Mountain Community Association, accessibility upgrades for Thompson Boys & Girls Club and the Northwest Metis Council and the first phase of the town hall enhancement project in Minitonas-Bowsman.

Through the Neighbourhoods Alive! program we support and encourage community-driven revitalization efforts in designated neighbourhoods across Manitoba through programs such as Neighbourhood Development Assistance, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Community Initiatives program. These programs provide funding for the operation of democratic neighbourhood renewal corporations, support projects that target inner-city groups as well as assist neighbourhood organizations representing residents and other local interests.

Mr. Speaker, co-ops throughout the province have been recognized for their ability to meet both social and economic goals and contribute to a social economy. Manitoba's co-ops are sustainable, long-term businesses that focus on creating meaningful employment, promoting social inclusion and social responsibility, increasing communities' sustainable economic capacity, developing leadership and a stronger sense of community. Programs like the Shelter Enhancement Program, the Homeowner Renovation Assistance Program and Rental Housing Improvement Program allow us to assist low-income households to repair or rehabilitate their properties to a suitable level of health of safety.

* (14:40)

We also fund other great programs through Housing and Community Development like the facility planning study assistance grant and the community housing and improvement initiative.

Our government believes that every family should have a safe and stable place to live. We are committed to supporting families living in poverty. We want to find a solution that does not create a poverty trap and helps both those on social assistance as well as the working poor.

Last year we announced a \$20-million investment into our Rent Assist benefit program,

which significantly increases housing supports for people on social assistance. Recipients can also take this benefit with them as they move from EIA into training or a good job.

We have invested \$402 million into our existing social housing stock. Last year, we renovated almost 55–5,560 households. Our HOMEWorks! Program was created to increase the supply of affordable housing in Manitoba. We are doing this by supporting new rental housing, housing co-operatives, home-ownership down-payment assistance for homebuyers, and rent supplements and innovation options for northern remote communities.

We have introduced a protection package for renters with strong measures to control excessive rent increases and condo conversions. Our new rules limit how often landlords can apply for an exemption from rent regulations, require landlords to pay a tenant's moving costs and additional expenses if renovations force the tenant from their home, and established a rent guide formula which has capped 2016 rents at 1.1 per cent, making Winnipeg's rent among the lowest in Canada.

We will develop more mixed-use housing for students in partnership with post-secondary institutions, such as the University of Winnipeg.

We have provided significant property tax relief over the past decade which has contributed to our province having the lowest increase in overall property tax in Canada.

Our Seniors' School Tax Rebate, which was doubled to \$470 this year, is part of our plan to eliminate school taxes for seniors by next year.

Nearly 34,000 Manitoba seniors have applied for the rebate. They can save up to \$1,570 on their property taxes, making it more affordable for older Manitobans to stay in their family homes. With the expanded rebate, an additional 6,700 senior households will no longer pay school taxes.

Our government knows that investing in the early years gives our children the strongest possible start. We believe that every family who needs child care should have access to an affordable space. We are announcing an ambitious goal. We will create a universally accessible child-care system with 12,000 additional spaces for families, and expand Manitoba's workforce of early childhood educators with our partners, such as Red River College and Université de Saint-Boniface.

Families in my constituency of The Maples are already seeing this commitment. The new Maples Daycare Centre at Amber Trails school is just one of the examples of our child-care expansions. We will be expanding child-care centres into new housing developments, development in schools, colleges and universities. We will expand programs that provide healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks in school. We will invest more in community schools, early childhood hubs and after-school programs in the inner city and in northern Manitoba.

We keep investing in roads, in schools and in community centres. That's the assets we are creating for the coming generation, and I think we can compare this with either you can rent the house or you can own the house. If you have rented the house, then you don't have any mortgage; you don't have any debt. But, if you own the house, you have mortgage; that's a debt, but you are accumulating equity and that will help the—that will help you and the coming generation.

So this is not a debt. This is actually helping the future generations, and that's the way we are moving forward and I think we are owning the house and opposition's just renting the house. That's the way it's working.

Our Manitoba government takes seriously the role on the world's stage, the responsibility to look out for those who are vulnerable, who seek safety and support within our province. Manitobans are paying close attention to the refugees coming from the Syrian crisis. Our concern is motivating us to act like other communities around the world. We have a strong history of supporting refugees and other newcomers. We have the skills and capacity to fully participate in the federal project to welcome 25,000 refugees to Canada.

Manitobans and Canadians voted for inclusiveness and diversity in this last federal election. Our government is eager to respond to this call for progress. With their willingness—willing federal partner at the table, our government is being presented with a greater opportunity to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I can keep continuing all these other achievements and the good work our government is doing, but I also want to give the stand to other speakers to speak, so therefore I will—I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and put a few words on the

record with respect to the recent Throne Speech that was delivered here in the Legislature recently. And, before I get into responding to the Throne Speech, I do want to just pay my respects to a couple people who have left the Chamber already, the member for Gimli and the member for Southdale, who have decided to move on into different careers, and I just want to pay my respects to them. I wish them well in their future endeavours.

And there also is a number of members, Mr. Speaker, who have decided not to continue on and seek re-election here in the province, and I just want to wish all of them very well as well. I want to mention the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) and thank her for all that she has done and contributed in the Manitoba Legislature and to her constituents in Seine River.

I also want to mention the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), who has decided as well not to run again—wish her well, Mr. Speaker. The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), I wish him well and I know that I've had the opportunity to be the critic opposite him in—on many occasions and we've had a very respectful dialogue over the years, and I just want to thank him as well for his time.

As well, the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) delivered his speech yesterday, and I want to thank him for his contribution to his constituents as well, Mr. Speaker. I think he's—he is—he did very well in his final address yesterday and I just want to wish he and his family well as well.

I also want to take this opportunity to wish the member for Assiniboia well. I know that he's going to be speaking this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing the words that he has to say. I wish him well as well.

I also want to mention a few friends on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. I want to mention the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) who has been a mentor to me over the years, and she—I call her a very close friend and confidante, and I think we've shared a lot over the years. I've really enjoyed the time that I've had to spend with her over the years, and I just want to take this opportunity to wish her well in her future endeavours. We know that she will be missed—greatly missed here in the Legislature, but we know and I know, certainly, that our relationship will continue for many years to come because it is a friendship that we have built over the years, and I have a tremendous amount of

respect for her, so I want to wish her very well and—in her future endeavours.

* (14:50)

I also want to mention the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) as well, who is a great friend as well, Mr. Speaker, We've shared a lot over the years. I know I've watched her with her family and her children grow up over the years here in her time representing the riding of—the constituency of Riding Mountain, and I know that her children, in fact, have—and her daughter, Mackenzie, has been a babysitter for my kids over the years, and that's how we share things with our families here in the Legislature and the tremendous amount of respect that I have for her and all that she has contributed to over the years. She gave a great speech yesterday in the House and very heartfelt, and I just want to wish she and Brad and Mackenzie and Cameron all the very best in their future endeavours, and she will be sadly missed as well.

I also want to mention the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese). He has—I've really enjoyed working with the member for Agassiz over the years. He is always someone that has a joke to tell, Mr. Speaker, and he has always got a smile, a grin on his face. It's—when you're having a down day, all you need to do is go and talk to the member for Agassiz who's just a great person, and I know that he has represented his constituency very well, too, and I want to wish him, he and his family, all the best as well. He will be missed in the Manitoba Legislature.

So I just want to, again, thank all the table officers, yourself, Mr. Speaker, for—and all of those that make this Legislative Assembly, Hansard and so on, make this Assembly work so well, and I just want to thank all of them for all of the hard work that they do in this Chamber and beyond, in committees and so on, and I very much appreciate all the work that they do to make our lives a lot easier in the Chamber and perhaps, you know, making sure that we're following the rules and so on, so, I want to thank them very much.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to thank the great constituents of the Tuxedo constituency. Last Saturday marked an anniversary for me. It marked the 15th year since I was first elected into the Manitoba Legislature. Now I'm dating myself, but I have to say that it was a very special celebration that I had with my family that day, because not only was it my 15th anniversary of being elected to the Manitoba Legislature, but it was

also the 14th birthday of my daughter, who was born a year to the day after I was elected. So—and we know—we all know how much family means to all of us and how much that they support us in all that we do in the Legislature, and I just want to take this opportunity to thank my daughter, Victoria, who has been just a fabulous person and she's just turning into such an incredible young woman, and just say on the record, you know, happy birthday. You know, I love her so much.

And to my son, Tommy, who has just been such an amazing person as well, and growing into just a remarkable young man, he will be turning 12 now in January, and so it's hard to believe that these kids were born into this life of politics, but they've really embraced it. They have brought their friends down to the Manitoba Legislature. We've had birthday parties here at Christmastime, and often I've brought them and their friends to the annual Christmas get-together in early December, and it was a chance for us to see Santa Claus and to enjoy all the crafts and the festivities over the years. And each and every year I've always brought them with me since I was—since I held them in my arms. It's been a tradition where they've come to the Legislature and they've joined me, along with all the other MLAs, in singing on the steps of the Legislature. And I've really enjoyed that. They've really enjoyed that, and it's become sort of a tradition, so I appreciate those MLAs. I know that they're not MLAs yet, but—and maybe they will be some day. I'm not sure. Who knows what the future holds? But they certainly have enjoyed that over the years, and really—have really embraced the—all that they can do here in the Legislature. They walk in like they really know this place and it's—it is remarkable, Mr. Speaker, because I think a lot of people—I had members in the gallery today, people who came and we're—we celebrate people who come here and into the gallery.

And Laura Unruh was someone that I celebrated today for her incredible achievements in Highland dancing. And, you know, I was a Highland dancer at one point in my life, Mr. Speaker. I didn't quite achieve the results that Laura Unruh did but it has become a tradition in our family. My daughter, Victoria, was a Highland dancer and quite an accomplished dancer as well. And it was great to have them in the gallery today.

And, you know, it's interesting because many people who do come down here have never been here before and they walk in and they're just in awe, and it's just such an incredible place to work,

Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and an honour to work in such a beautiful building as this. And I think sometimes we take it for granted because those people who come who have never been here before just find it such a remarkable place to be, and it is really one of, I believe, one of the most beautiful legislatures all across Canada.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the constituents of the great constituency of Tuxedo for allowing me the opportunity to represent them here in the Manitoba Legislature. It is a phenomenal constituency that has one of the most beautiful parks I think in all of Canada, if not North America, right in the centre of it, the Assiniboine Park. And there's some incredible things going on at the Assiniboine Park Conservancy with the polar bear exhibit, the whole revamping of the zoo. It's just phenomenal.

And I remember—I can recall even 10 years ago, 12 years ago, just driving by or biking by the parking lot of the zoo where it would be empty, Mr. Speaker. And really there were not a lot of people who were visiting the zoo back then, but now you go by on a weekend or sometimes even during the week where the parking lot is absolutely full, and it's great to see that. There's schools that come and visit, there's people all across the province, people who come from out of the province to see this great park and this great zoo that we have. And so—and I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to represent—to have it in my riding. It is an incredible place to visit.

And I know that they've got some incredibly exciting things coming up with respect to the conservatory and I know that—you know, I wish them well in their endeavours. It's an exciting thing that's happening in the constituency and indeed for the city and for the province, Mr. Speaker, and so it's great to see those things happening.

And I just want to thank all of those who are involved with the Winnipeg—or the Assiniboine Park Conservancy, including Margaret Redmond, who's a CEO there, who has just done a phenomenal job under the leadership of Hartley Richardson and the board there. And I just want to thank them for all that they've done because it's not just about my constituency, Mr. Speaker; it really is about putting our city on the map and our province on the map with such an incredible place to visit for so many.

So again I want to thank the constituents of Tuxedo for awarding me the opportunity to represent them in the Manitoba Legislature, and I look forward to and I hope and, of course, we never take anything

for granted but there is an election coming up and I look forward to going door to door and continuing to go door to door in my own riding and to visit those people in the riding and to hear—and continue to listen, to hear, some of the concerns that they have with respect to what's going on in the province.

* (15:00)

And I have heard loud and clear from people not only in my own constituency but from constituencies across this great province, Mr. Speaker, and I've heard loud and clear that people are concerned about the direction that this government has taken them in. They remember full well during the last election four years ago when members opposite went door to door and they were promised by this NDP government that they wouldn't raise taxes. They knocked on all of those doors and they promised time and time again that they weren't going to raise the taxes, and then they turned around and did not only that; they expanded those items that are taxable. That's what they did in the first year.

And then in the second year they came in and raised the PST, and it was one of the largest tax increases in 25 years—the largest tax increase in more than 25 years in the province of Manitoba. And so, Mr. Speaker, I think constituents in Tuxedo, but constituents in many of the ridings across this province of ours, they're concerned about the integrity of this government. A government that goes door to door and says one thing and then turns right around and does something else is of grave concern to people in the province of Manitoba.

And I would submit that when members opposite, those who are running again, those who do go door to door and make their promises during the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, I think people are going to start questioning whether or not they're really going to follow through with the promises that they make, because we have seen, time and time again—of course, the PST hike was one broken promise. There's a whole litany of broken promises in the last 16 years since this government came into power, and we know that people are tired of that. They're tired of this pay-more, get-less government.

Members opposite continuously talk—go out and there's ribbon-cutting ceremonies and so on, Mr. Speaker, and at those ceremonies they inevitably announce millions of dollars for some sort of a project. But what we don't see is the results of what those—of those ribbon cuttings. And, in fact, what we do see is negative results, so Manitobans are paying

more—I think we pay almost the largest per capita in the area of education in all the provinces across this country.

And yet our children are failing—failing in the area of reading and writing and math, and science, and that is really alarming to me, especially as a mom with two school-age kids. It really concerns me about the future of our province. If we're failing our kids now, that's tomorrow's workforce. And if we're not educating our children properly, how are we preparing them for the workforce ahead?

So I think it's incredibly alarming when you've got a government that doesn't seem to think that that's a problem, because I know that Manitobans think that it is a problem, and I will say that in the Throne Speech that was delivered last week, I just have to say the delivery, of course, of the Throne Speech, I thought was phenomenal, and I want to welcome Janice Filmon to her new role as the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. I think she is going to be a remarkable person in that job, and I think she's going to do so much—so many incredible things for this province, and I just want to thank her. I think she did an incredible job delivering the Throne Speech, and so I did want to say that.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it was the content of the Throne Speech that I just cannot vote in favour of in good conscience because I did not believe in much of what was in the content of the Throne Speech. In fact, I don't think Manitobans believe in much of it because I don't believe that they—because Manitobans don't believe that this government will actually follow through with many of the promises that they make.

And I think it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that—I know that we are, technically speaking, on the amendments made by the Leader of the Opposition here today, and I think that, in fact, many of the amendments that the Leader of the Opposition brought forward—all of them, in fact, would be—would add tremendously to the Throne Speech, and I would encourage members opposite to vote in favour of those amendments that were brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I want to thank him for introducing those in the Legislature.

But, Mr. Speaker, I cannot in good conscience vote in favour of the Throne Speech. I believe that it does not accurately reflect what is in the best interest of the future of Manitoba. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Tuxedo for cutting short her speech; that was great. Thank you.

I'd also like to welcome my husband, Dennis Tam, Esther Hiebert, Peter Hiebert, Edie Daniels and George Daniels, my guests from Assiniboia.

I agree with the member from River Heights—River East; it's actually tough to make the final speech. Anyhow, I'd like to say thank you to the Speaker; the table officers; the pages; the support workers; the people in Members' Allowances, thank you for cleaning up my reports for years; the office staff that I've had a chance to work with; security; caucus staff interns; and, of course, Hansard. You all make our lives very, very much easier. Thank you.

I'd like to thank and congratulate all members for their service and all members who have announced their retirement from both sides of the House. Countless hours in the community and in this building—people don't get the idea of how many hours we spend serving the community. Thank you very, very much.

It's been a great 16 and a half years. Thanks to the people for Assiniboia; it's been a great honour and pleasure to serve, and I'll tell you a little bit about myself.

First, I never planned to be a politician. I'd like to thank the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) beside me. Most of you don't know this but about 17 and a half years ago I was up in Dauphin to attend an event, and the member for Dauphin and I got into a bottle of a Manitoba product and consumed about half of it. And it wasn't olive oil. Anyhow, when we did do this, he convinced me to run. I decided to run. And I'd—and on the Monday afterwards, he gave me a phone call. We went and met. And we had decided that we would run in politics.

The interesting part about it was, at that time, I—after we had felt much better, after the consumption of the drink, I said, wait, I don't want to go into a safe riding; I want to go into a special riding. I chose Assiniboia over all other constituencies because it had never been an NDP riding. The most it had had was about 12 per cent of NDP. It had been Liberal for two years, and that was it. So I decided to run against a Conservative who had scored about 70 per cent in the previous election.

It was interesting because most of us thought that we didn't have a chance. There was 12 people there. And I have to admit that those 12 people, two

of which who are here, Dennis Tam, my husband, and Edie Daniels, were part of 12 people. We had a budget of about \$4,500. None of us except one, Twilla MacDonald, actually knew anything about politics. And we went off on our campaign. We were not targeted. Everyone knew we had no chance.

The interesting part is, is that we didn't have a chance. And I remember looking at my brother three weeks in, and it was funny because he was exhausted, and I said, well, why are you so exhausted, John? And he said, well, you realize that every morning I get up at 5 o'clock and we move the signs from one side of the road to the other because we only have 24 signs. And we had 30 window signs. And so we had to make it look like we had 50 or 60 signs. And so it was quite funny.

And we had a good time because we had all these little small window signs. We had no huge campaign team. And those 12 people really made a difference. I'd like to say thank you to Edie Daniels, who's now our president of the association. She was our entire phone canvass and she must have phoned 9,000 people that year. So thank you.

*(15:10)

I'll tell you a little bit about our nomination. The nomination—we had a meeting at Orma Sozansky's house. There was a whole total of 80 per cent of the association there: four people. And what was interesting about it was we sat there, and I can remember Tom Paulley saying, who is it we're nominating? And Orma says, I think him, and I said, yes. And there was about four of us there, and it was a unanimous vote. And it was good because it made a difference.

And I'd also like to say thank you to the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), the current member. I tell people that he's the guy who softened up the entire Assiniboia because he had run previously. His wife had run there, and therefore they had softened up the Conservative group, and we were able to win.

Now, a little bit about it. We actually didn't win on election night. We actually lost by six votes on election night, and I can remember going to the chief returning officer and we said, what happens when there's only a six-vote loss? And she said, wait, there's an institutional vote. And we went, what's an institutional vote? And we found out it was from the hospitals and the prisons and different institutions and people who had been out of the country, et cetera. So I'd like to tell people that I won a great

deal of the institutional vote, so we moved it from six-vote loss to six-vote gain by the time we actually—after the election. We then had three recounts, three court cases, and it went all the way up to the Manitoba Queen's Bench. And, finally, in about December, I was finally made the member for Assiniboia. So it was won.

I'll tell people I was then referred to as Landslide Jim Rondeau because three-vote margin was one of the tightest in history. People bugged me. I have a T-shirt that was bugging me, and so people teased me for the first three years. And I want to tell people that I'd like to say thank you for that, because we decided to go on a huge effort to win the hearts and minds of everybody in Assiniboia.

So I'd like to say that we've been never targeted by the party. I'd like to say thank you to Edie Daniels, who has delivered lots of flyers in all this, my other—my executive Tom Paulley, Ed Patzer and others, because what we did was we decided that we would go through and reach out to every single person in the constituency once every 89 days. So we decided to walk through and do all sorts of projects to touch every organization, et cetera.

So I'll paint you a picture. When I got elected in '99, there was 30 empty buildings. Unicity Mall was closed. There was no recreational facilities that had been updated since Manitoba's centennial. And we said, let's make a difference, because I knew that I was going to lose that next election because it wasn't an NDP stronghold.

So we worked on Centennial Pool. We worked on making sure that all the play structures at every elementary was updated. We worked on seniors housing projects, school renovations. We got the senior centre moved and expanded, and then we worked on projects with army navy 283, Assiniboia memorial, the social clubs, seniors organizations, youth organizations, and we started working on Grace Hospital. And then we started working on MTS Iceplex and Yellow Ribbon trail and some more seniors housing and some more projects, and it was interesting because I totalled them up, and it was about 79 projects that we've worked on in the last 16 years, which isn't bad.

And I know one of my colleagues poked me once and said, hey, Jim, you're getting more than your share, and I said, yes, and? Because I think what you have to do is you have to work with your organizations and make sure that you get what's

available, and you work with them to develop projects, et cetera.

So I'm now pleased to tell the House that, rather than 30 empty buildings and Unicity Mall closed, there's no places open almost. It's full, and I think that was working with organizations, and I do admit that when I'm at the Y working out in the evenings, I think I'm the only one who's excited that it's really, really crowded out there. And converting an old Canadian Tire to a new YMCA is fabulous.

We've also been busy, and I'd like to thank Esther Hiebert, who served as my constituency assistant, executive assistant and special assistant, and Teresa Bowerman, who served as a constituency assistant and executive assistant, because people don't know what I actually do. And I actually got an award from the—from our side, and basically it was the Energizer Bunny award, and the old—the former premier gave me this award because we did 15 to 25 events a year. We actually co-ordinate 47 events at Christmastime and about 89 events throughout the year that we actually run and deliver.

I'd like to say thank you to both Esther and Teresa because when you look at the amount of work that they actually do, it is truly amazing. Things such as the literacy bookmark we start planning at the beginning of the year. We get about 180 cases of books. We actually get all sorts of people who participate from around the West End and it's really huge. So I'd like to say thank you.

To give you an idea of what these nice ladies do is we have the literacy barbecue which involves about 1,100 people. We do presentations on different things in government which is up to about 1,000 people. We have community cleanups over a five-day period. We have a sleigh ride and community discussion, which involves about 500 people. We have a seniors' fair, again, about five or six hundred people. We have community barbecues in about 12 to 16 events—areas. We have community club events. We have daycare visits. We have senior residential visits where I go to each seniors building four times a year.

I even had to buy my own Santa suit because we play Santa nine times, and I have a great story where a kid from Heritage School kept on poking me and saying, hey, Jim Rondeau, you're Santa. So every kid knew it was me. And I said, hey, wait a minute; I can't have this happen. So I hired a Santa, and so we went to Heritage School the next year and someone stood there, pointed at Santa and said, hey,

Jim Rondeau, we know you're Santa while I'm standing beside him. But—so I am Santa and it's fun. I won't figure it out totally but that's me.

And I do have one story about canvassing that I would like to share with all people. It's a story that was really interesting. I canvass a lot. I canvass a great deal, and what's interesting about my canvassing is that one election we were knocking on doors, knocking on doors, and keeping busy and there was a sign on the door saying, hey, Jim, we've already voted for you; you don't have to knock on our door again.

And so you know that you've canvassed a lot when people expect you.

I did have an amazing time also as a legislator. I've assisted or led 37 bills with three more I'm trying to move through the House, which we may hand off to others. A swift—a great going-away present for me would be to give me the three bills, not debate them, but I don't think that'll happen. So I don't think I'll ever hit the magic number of 40.

I'll chat about some of the bills, and I'll talk about some of the things that we'd shepherd through. First, I'd like to thank my colleagues who voted in favour of extending rights to same-sex couples. As the first openly gay MLA, I must admit it was one of the difficult things both within and outside caucus. I was honoured to chair the public committee hearings which were extremely difficult, both personally and professionally.

The extension rights to all laws in one fell swoop, rather than one piece at a time, I'd like to say thank you. It was tough but—I don't know what Gord's constituency is—

An Honourable Member: St. Johns.

Mr. Rondeau: But I'd like to publicly thank the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) and others who worked on this issue: Eric—sorry, member for Rupertsland and the honourable Tim Sale. We did the right thing. I believe that time has shown that we were right on this side. It was the right thing to do, and I'm proud that we did it. It was a wonderful moment when all NDP members and the Liberals stood up to recognize that I was equal and deserved equal rights.

I'm also pleased to inform the House that my 10-year anniversary of my marriage will be celebrated this February to my husband. We've lived together for 25 years. It's been great, and I think that

this is a social experiment that has been wonderfully successful. I think that it's one that I believe that has proven correct. In looking back, I only wish that it had been unanimous. I hope in spirit it is unanimous, because I think that we need to continue to look at rights for all and make sure that we do not ever discriminate against anyone.

*(15:20)

I was appointed to Cabinet as Manitoba's—our Canada's first Healthy Living minister, and we're on a cutting-edge prevention agenda, and it was wonderful. The only thing that was interesting, I have to tell a true story which was quite funny, I was appointed, and we didn't know exactly what the prevention agenda was going to be. There was some discussion before the Cabinet shuffle exactly what was going to happen. So Chad Samain was my first SA, and he got assigned to me. We did not have a ministry. We did not have a concept.

So the first day, right after Cabinet ceremony, he said he knew that he had to talk to me and make sure that I was ready for the media. So he dragged me into the elevator and then put on the stop so we could have a discussion. Then what happened was the stop came out, the door opened, and there was Gary Doer. And he said, you better start taking the stairs. He had thought that we had taken the elevator one floor up or down. And so it was neat because he talked about that we needed to walk. That's why I think, I have to report to the whole House, walking across Spain and Portugal and Spain again was part of what I did, but it was a wonderful moment because we started to make a big difference.

And some of the things that we did were interesting: (1) the non-smoking bill. That was a wonderful, challenging bill, but you know, as a person whose father died of a heart attack at 58 years old, it was wonderful to actually move that agenda forward. And to move the youth smoking rates from 30 per cent down to 14 per cent in a matter of a decade, that was amazing. I'd like to say thank you to Denis Rocan for pushing us. I'd like to thank all people, because that was a unanimous bill.

Other things that was interesting, we moved forward on health and nutrition. There's 1,200 gardens up in northern Manitoba. That's great. We actually have a decent price for milk across the province.

We're talking about having a breakfast program where we have \$5 million in a foundation which is

providing breakfast and food, healthy food, across the province. That was wonderful.

Other things was extending—I'm pleased to work with the former Health minister to move forward flu shots and vaccines across, free, for everyone. That was a huge effort.

Also, I'll tell you a little bit of a story on activity. We were at our first meeting, member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) and myself, and we were both new ministers. So we convinced—we had talked about increasing physical activity by 10 per cent in 10 years. And that was a commitment that I made. And I have to admit, I didn't talk to the department or anyone else to do it. Afterwards, the department said that, oh, this was impossible. No one had ever done it. I'd like to report to the House, we increased physical activity by 10 per cent in seven years. And that was a very positive thing.

We also moved forward with programs in schools, et cetera. And it was truly wonderful to be on the cutting edge of prevention. We didn't have a department. We didn't have a ministry at first. And we just moved it forward.

And I'll tell you one story that really talks about the prevention agenda. Right at the beginning, we said that we were going to do the non-smoking bill. And a bunch of restaurants and bars got a whole bunch of dirty ashtrays and they put them in a box and they took a whole bunch of camera crews up to this building and they had a bunch of camera crews and they dumped the ashtray. And without warning, they come up to my office, they dump the ashtrays on the floor. And they said, well, you're going to put us all out of business; there's not going to be any restaurants or hotels or bars in Manitoba come 2004.

And what happened was there was the cameras there, and they were waiting for the shot. And I have to say thank you, because I said, what we're going to do is put all these ashtrays into a time capsule, open them up in 25 years and, hopefully, no kid will identify what an ashtray is. I would like—afterwards, my special assistant Chad sort of said, where'd you get that from? And I said, I don't know. And he says, thank God, because it was the right answer.

In the whole prevention agenda, it was what we're going to do. And I'm pleased that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) started with the FASD project, but we continued to enhance it. We got all sorts of projects and initiatives across the province that started talking about FASD. We started

talking about how we engage everyone in having a healthier society. And that was lots of fun.

And we came up with a new idea every week. And it made a difference. So things like the bike helmet law, the booster seat law, all started talking about the prevention agenda.

So I'd like to say thank you to the department, the ministry and Chad for keeping up with me and making a difference.

Other things really made a difference. We also worked on the Roots of Empathy, Seeds of Empathy and the Good Behaviour Game to make sure that things were done in a long period of time and hopefully the kids will be more robust and easier—more supported in their community.

Other projects that I did were—that I helped do—was move forward with addictions. We had an issue with addictions; there was a lot of problems with how many people could get treatment and all this, there was delays; people were delayed. So I'm pleased to say that Liquor & Lotteries now gives 2 per cent of the profits to addictions, and that actually improved it, where we got \$11.5 million to do addiction treatment. And a lot of it went to women's addiction, kids' addiction treatment, so people didn't have these long—two-year-long waiting lists. People got service.

And I'd like to say thank you to the people at Liquor & Lotteries for suggesting that that might be an alternative, and working with the addiction people.

I'm also pleased that we modernized the liquor laws and regulations; that was a real challenge. We also modernized residential tenancy. The other thing that I found that was interesting in my next ministry, which was the Industry and Mines, was the Honourable Gary Doer stood there and said, what—we want to make you Mines minister; what do you want to do? And I said that we wanted to be one of the best locations to mine in the world.

I'm pleased to say that I worked with the industry, a bunch of the businesses, people within the department and I'm pleased to say that within three years we were the best location in the world to mine and had the best policies. I—to this day I wish I had got a copy of the Fraser Institute report that actually said we were the best in the world because it was really interesting, and we stayed there for a little while and moved to third best. And what's nice is that it wasn't me; it was the department, it was the

industry, it was the financial group all working together with the regulatory bodies to make sure that we just did it right.

And one of the things that we did at that time was we looked at all the orphaned and abandoned mine sites and there was hundreds of them, and after being in Frontier School Division before this we were able to look at cleaning some of those up, and we moved forward on cleaning up all the orphaned/abandoned mine sites. We were one of the first in the world to do that. That was very, very positive.

And, when I went to Cold Lake a couple of years ago and you see this terrible abandoned mine that was huge, just huge, and now that it's been cleaned up. That's very, very good.

We also were able to move forward with the Composites Innovation Centre. That was neat because it's allowed Boeing to move from 350 people to almost 1,500 people and be world leaders in composites.

We were able to move forward on the Vehicle Technology Centre which has helped a lot of our ag businesses. We were able to move forward on the advanced manufacturing sector and BizPaL, and move forward on trade.

It's been a fun time, and I look at the Consumer Affairs files where we had eight bills. It's been an enjoyable ride in the legislation. I will not say that I enjoyed the all-nighters. Most people talk about all-nighters as far as going to the bar. Us, as legislators, that's when we stayed all night talking about bills or listening to presentations.

To be totally honest, I was intending to run in the upcoming election because I love politics and I love my work in Assiniboia, but after one door closed I had the time to re-evaluate my future and look at my options. You know, when one door opens—one door closes, another one opens is a true saying. I have 10 years of my working life left and still want to make a difference.

I came to realize that business life will offer me more challenge and opportunity and I will become more involved with some businesses. My husband and I work in a new media and design business. I have to here—do a plug here—he's won multiple world awards including Emmys in best design in the world. The company I'm involved with has won another Emmy as far as Major League Baseball, so these are good companies and they're exciting people.

* (15:30)

I do have to publicly admit that I do not understand anything that the app developers or new media people say to me. I just learned to say, can you do this; they usually say, yes, and then I talk about what they're doing. I do not know exactly what they're talking about. But it's been a fun time. *[interjection]* Yes, so, as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) says, the Leg. is a good training ground to the new media business. I learn from others very, very much. I trust others very, very much. And you work in a team.

I also have to say that my time as MLA has been wonderful, a true pleasure. I've had amazing experiences, and I have great stories that, my friend from St. Paul, I will tell in a few years. Not right now. But the truth is I have friends from both sides of the House. I will hold the memories close. I have excellent times; I was able, once, to drive the first electric car manufactured ever in Toronto. And it was really neat because this is before they had governors on electric cars. That was very, very neat. And you realize that when you're going 90 kilometres an hour and you step on the gas, it chirps, and you get shocked because of it going so fast. I was able to go and see nuclear reactors where you actually go into where all this is happening. And I have a wonderful thing called an ion tree where they put this glass into the—crystal glass into—and irradiate it. They hit it and it fractures, and it looks like a Christmas tree in the crystal glass. I was able to work in a lot of industries where you look at geothermal heat pumps. And what happens there—it was interesting because we were able to move the industry forward.

So it's been honour. It's been a pleasure. I'd like to thank my husband, Dennis, my family, my friends. It's nice now that I can actually have a chat and meet with them and say, do you want to have coffee, and it's done this month. That's always nice. I'd like to say thank you to the people of Assiniboia for the opportunity to work with them, serve them and represent them. It's been a true honour and pleasure.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, and indeed it is a honour to put a few comments on the record. In the last few days, we've had some remarkable speeches in my time here, more than I've ever seen before, and I would like to first of all start by saying to the honourable member for Assiniboine who we both share the class of 1999 along with the

member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). We were all elected in the same year amongst others. I'd like to point out to them, in my caucus, I'm the last man standing from 1999. And, in fact, several of them went on to move to the House of Commons. One went to try for the House of Commons, and one of our class of '99 has passed away; that would be Mr. Jim Penner. So to see the honourable member for Assiniboine get up and give his swan song, if you will, is unique and interesting for me, because I know some day, my time, too, shall come, where I will be giving my final speech.

I do wish to also mention the speech from the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), one of the longer serving members of this Legislature. And I remember her from when I was much younger and, yes, Mr. Speaker, she was much younger. And, when I got into politics, she was involved already at that time not as an MLA but on the ground and working and helping in campaigns. And I actually remember that first nomination for River East which the individual—it didn't work out well. And then I remember the next nomination where she actually won the nomination meeting and the kinds of work she put into it.

I would like to say to the House and to the people who voted her in all those years, she has been a remarkable woman. She has been somebody who you could disagree with, and I disagreed with her at times pretty passionately, and after that, that was put aside. It was never personal with the member from River East. You had your say, she had her say, and that was it. And I so respect that. And the member is sitting looking at me, and I think I'm going to turn and speak the other way, because I don't want to get all choked up about this because she's been so instrumental in my life. In fact, when I ran for school board, she was already at that time, if I can use the word, one of the *grise éminence* of the party, and I went and I visited her and asked her what she thought and it was very exciting for me when I first ran for school trustee. And she was—

An Honourable Member: Did you kiss the ring, Ron?

Mr. Schuler: And I—my colleague asked, did I kiss the ring? You know what? There's one thing about the member for River East is she never lorded herself about—above anybody else. She was as willing to put in the same amount of work or more than any volunteer, and she was willing to always be just another worker, a hard worker. She worked as if she

was working on somebody else's campaign. She worked so hard, whether it was for her or for anybody else. And I'll have to say to the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), I am going to miss you terribly, and I'm going to miss our friendship here in the Chamber.

But I know what I'm not going to miss. I'm not going to miss our friendship outside of this Chamber. And between you and Don Mitchelson, you know, your loving, kind words and Don Mitchelson's very, very strong advice, and between the two of them, you always got really good advice. So thank you very much for years of service. I'd give you a hug but I've got to keep speaking.

I also would like to mention the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) who is—pardon me, the member for River East was class of 1986. The member for Dauphin, class of 1995 and, you know, his career owes a lot to my career. When I got here in '99, I worked very hard, as did others on this side to get him to Cabinet, and you know we got him into Cabinet and, boy, you know—I'm not going to say any more. I'm just going to leave it at that. I got him into Cabinet and look what he did with it, but, you know what? Just a great individual; enjoyed having time with him. And there was another individual who never lorded his position above anybody else. And, you know, I'd go to him, and I'd, you know, minister, and he would say, no, please call me by my first name. And you know, that kind of thing, just always ready—

An Honourable Member: Sir.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, he wanted sir. No. No, he didn't. He was just always great about it, and you know what? Another individual who, you know, when the cameras are off and question period is over, that you can always go and talk to. And I would like to say to the member for Dauphin, we are clearly going to miss you in this Chamber and we wish you all the best as you move along in your career, and you and your family.

And the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), and I'm so glad she's here today because we got elected the same time, and you know our relationship started off a little rocky. It wasn't the strongest relationship, and then I became her critic and it wasn't the strongest relationship. And by the time she was moved out of the Ministry of Labour, I'd have to say we became exceptionally good friends. And I always like to point out to her that good ministers are only good ministers because they have good critics, so

anything—anything she tries to take credit for, I just want her to know it's because I was there for her. And I want to thank her for her years of service. There's always a special bond between, you know, the class of '99; we came in together—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. As previously agreed, this House is about to recess and to prepare for the entrance of the Grey Cup. And so the House is recessed and will stand recessed, and the bells will ring for approximately five minutes to invite members back, and so we'll now prepare for the entrance of the Grey Cup.

The House recessed at 3:39 p.m.

The House resumed at 3:57 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We'll call the House back to order now.

Prior to the recess, the honourable member for St. Paul had the floor.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's ever been a time in this Chamber where a member has been interrupted by the Grey Cup. And, you know, here are these historical markers in a person's career, and that was one of them. I think it was because of the individual I was speaking about, and it just somehow was fitting it was the member for St. Vital that I happened to be speaking about, and I was interrupted.

And I did want to conclude my comments about the member for St. Vital and the kind of work she did and the effort she put in to this Legislature. I want to thank her personally for the work she did, and I'd like to thank her for her friendship. And I really enjoyed it; it was great working with you and appreciated our time, certainly, on the architects and engineers. It was a very tough time for our province, and there were chances that things could have gone very bad. And there were two very professional organizations that somehow ended up here with their fight, and it took a lot of patience, took a lot of teeth grinding, took a lot of hours and we got it done. And the minister, you were the lead in it, and I accept that and also, you know, tried to contribute as much as I could.

But I can remember when you and I and the deputy minister went to the University of Manitoba school of architecture and we spoke to the students because there were a lot of very hurt feelings after

that committee meeting and after the legislation. And we went and we spoke to them, and it was a great moment, and it was probably the first time I introduced the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) to the height of civilization, which she hadn't achieved to that point, and it's called the Starbucks latte. It's a grande vanilla latte, half sweet, 171 degrees, long pour, 1 per cent, logos lined up. And I actually bought the minister and the deputy minister each a latte and now they, too, know what the height of civilization is. I pointed out to her, anything less would be a Tim Hortons coffee and, well, anyway, we'll leave it at that.

* (16:00)

So we—anyway, I appreciated those moments and your friendship and I certainly wish you all the best in what it is that you do. I know you'll be successful whatever it is you take on here, going forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's an awfully long list this time, and I do want to speak a little bit about the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha). He is probably the most—one of the most likable people you could ever meet, and I want to say that to the member, what a great individual. You're the only person I know who could be in a room of 3,000 people, walk around the room five times, and each time shake my hand and greet me as if you'd never met me before. It just—you know, just love you—love the way you present yourself, love the way you represented your community. I would be at an event. I have a lot of friends and all the rest of it, and you'd come up and greet me as if, you know, you'd never met me before and wanting to make me feel welcome and all the rest of it, and you do that. You do that incredibly well.

And, having been to India, I understand where that warmth and that generosity and that kindness comes from, and that's—when I was in India, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing that I so loved about India is that genuine interest and kindness that you felt everywhere you went. And you personify that, member for Radisson—I'm not allowed to say your name, unfortunately. I'd love to address you, but, member for Radisson, you've been a great addition to this place.

I mean, once in a while we had some fun with you. I can remember the first time the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) asked a question about you and something you had done to a minister, and you got up and we're going to answer. And it was

actually—that was one of the funnier moments; I really enjoyed that, and it just—again, it's your—it's your character, and you just—you want to get in there and you're going to work on things and get things done, and I think each and every one of us in this Chamber are a better person for the fact that you were here.

Thank you and all the best in your future.

The member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat)—great individual. She's—as is the member for Radisson, the class of 2003, and the member for Riding Mountain has been just a great addition, unbelievable passion. I know members opposite sometimes weren't that happy with her on some of the issues she brought up, but she was so passionate and so engaged on those issues and had such a heart for it and, at times, would probably take it too personal, like she just felt that she so had to advocate for them and was just an amazing seatmate. I had an opportunity to sit with her now for some time and just a great individual. I personally am going to miss her. She has stood up for me in the past. When events happened, she was always the first one to jump to my defence, and that is just a great colleague. That's a great friend, and, again, I wish her all the best in her future endeavours, and whatever she chooses to do, I know she's going to do it well. And I thank her for her time here in the Chamber.

Also, with class of 2003 is the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), and the member for Seine River came into this House, and you know, you always look at the newbies that come in and you wonder, how are they going to fare? How are they going to do? And I would say to the member for Seine River, every challenge you rose to. You've surpassed, I think, everybody's expectation by a mile. You were an outstanding parliamentarian here. We always knew that the first two questions you'd answer fairly reasonably, and then on the third one that one was the one where you'd get the real punch. She always waited for that third question and the third answer was the knockout.

And not that I would tell you any secrets, but we always tried to figure what you'd come back with on the third one, and, you know, you were a great parliamentarian and a great performer in the House, and I don't remember that you ever made it personal. You always allowed us to come and approach you as individuals if we had to advocate on behalf of a constituent. Your role as Health minister, I believe, defined your career and you were exemplary at it,

and we're going to miss you in this House and what you bring to this House. And your place in this House, you're going to leave a space. There's going to be empty space when you leave, because what you brought to this place and your character and all the rest of it, we're going to miss that. And I wish you all the best in whatever it is you do, and I'm sure you'll succeed wherever you go. Thanks for being here.

The member for Gimli, 2003—I know he's no longer a member. He was a great individual. I was his critic for a while. We had interesting times. I don't know if he'll ever forgive me for referring to him as the 'pensionator' on the pension legislation but, you know what, he always—even though he'd be pretty angry and pretty upset in question period, you'd meet him personally, and I know his love for his son and he has an incredibly talented son. He was just great at—his son is a great performer, a great singer and it was great to get to know his family, and I do wish the member for Gimli, as I do the member for Southdale, who is one of the class of 2007, I wish her all the best. She's also no longer in this Chamber. She tried a different office and didn't succeed, and I understand she already has another position.

I would like to conclude by saying the member for Agassiz who, when I first met him, never—never thought he would have the sense of humour that he has. And for those who don't know the member for Agassiz, the most unbelievable sense of humour, and he would—there could be that really tense moment and he would say something and you'd all laugh. He just—just an amazing individual, brought a lot of experience into this job, into this Chamber, and we really are going to miss what he brings.

But, you know, with all the individuals who are retiring for whatever reasons, we respect those reasons. We respect why they do that and we understand that you—there comes a time when you move on, whether it's for health reasons or you want to pursue other challenges or, you know, maybe it's just time to go, you've done what you wanted to do. But in every one of these instances, and I want to conclude with the member for Agassiz, we just so appreciate what he brought to our caucus, what he brought here to this Legislature and what he did, I believe, for the province.

And each and every one of these individuals and, if I'm counting right, there are 10, and that's a lot, Mr. Speaker. That's a lot of individuals leaving on their own volition, that's change without getting an election. That's very big, and people have always

said to me, oh, maybe we should do like the United States, term limits. Oh, no, since I've been in this Chamber, I think it's turned over at least once if you looked at the amount of people who've turned over. There is a national attrition, we need no term limits. And there's a lot of great experience from class of '86 of River East, all the way to the class of '07, those individuals who have retired between all of you, what a great, great group of individuals and, boy, are we going to miss each and every one of you and what you contributed.

Each one of you had a different strength. Each one of you brought something different to this Chamber, and we really appreciate what you brought, and we are going to miss you. And I believe I have missed one individual and that is the member for—

An Honourable Member: Flin Flon.

Mr. Schuler: The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Pettersen). I apologize I—you know what—the list is just too long, and I will conclude with the member for Flin Flon. [*interjection*] Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm so into this I'm retiring people on my own, and the member—I apologize, the member for Flin Flon is speaking next. So he—I would like to say to him and I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

To all of those that are leaving all the best.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is a Throne Speech, a lot has been said about the Throne Speech and there will be a vote coming. This is my 16th Throne Speech and I don't think there's probably going to be much surprise in the fact that I won't be voting for it, but, I think the reasons have already been stated by my colleagues and they've done a great job at it and I would echo what they have to say, and look forward to the member for Flin Flon, who is going to be running again and hearing what he has to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member from St. Paul for having that great introduction for me.

* (16:10)

Mr. Speaker, I was going to talk about the importance of Flin Flon in Manitoba, in Canada, in the universe. But I don't think the mood or that is something that I want to go on. I'm just amazed at the mood that's been in the Leg here the last few days. I tell you, if I was a student sitting in the gallery listening to the speeches, I'd be amazed at the

people that talked about their retirement or whatever, and, I tell you, if I was a student, I would say, you know, when I grow up—when I grow up—I want to be just like the minister from—or not the—the member from St. Paul: well-spoken, funny at times, very passionate.

And, you know, so I'm not going to talk about—but there's a lot of love—a lot of love. Yes, a lot of love that I feel around here, Mr. Speaker, and, yes, I hear the train, and I'm talking the love train. And, if you catch it and, say, go on No. 6 Highway or No. 10 Highway, and you're driving up to—up north—you'll notice the work that we've done on the roads. It's amazing. And even on Easterville, and we're even working on roads up north of Thompson, from Thompson to Lynn Lake. But, when you get to the final 15 kilometres of the Highway 10 that goes from—all the way from Flin Flon right down to Mexico—and probably those last 15 kilometres are the most important kilometres of No. 10 Highway—you'll notice that the work that's going on there, the blasting, everything. And I'm really proud to see that, and I'm proud of our government who, in the Throne Speech, wanted a Throne Speech that was, one, inclusive, including everybody in Manitoba. They wanted a speech—or a Throne Speech that was strategic in areas like infrastructure, that we can keep the economy going and keep the unemployment rate down low and create jobs. And they want to make life better for everybody. And I think the Throne Speech did that.

And I talk about the North and I influence the—or talk about the North, and I'm very proud to say that the North is always mentioned by the NDP, and I hope it'll always be mentioned by any government that's in government in Manitoba.

But I also want to say that I was impressed today by the opposition having two mining questions, and, of course, I was at the mining meeting. Of course, Steve Mason, who they mentioned, is a good friend of the minister of mines but also a good friend of mine. And, in mining, being 'cyclical' we—you know, there's good times and bad times. Right now, of course, the price of metals is down, so mining is saying that we need more incentives. We have probably one of the best incentives in all of Canada for mining, but we need more. It's—along with incentives, you need money. People have to have confidence in the mineral bases, and, with that confidence, they'll invest their money, of course. Right now, we've got to create that confidence. We've got to—you know, China has—who's the

economic engine of the world, is not buying up as many minerals as it used to. So that definitely has an effect of world mineral prices right across the world. And it has a deep effect in Canada.

So I was impressed with the couple questions about mining. I take it very seriously. I talk to the minister very often and talk about not only incentives. I'm also on the mineral advisory council which one—of the two issues in mining that junior miners bring up, one is consultation with the First Nations. That's so important, and we're working with First Nations to have a revenue sharing policy that I think we can all be proud of. And that's so important. We've—I know the minister worked long and hard to get that, and we're working on that.

The other thing, I guess, is important, is that we've got to say, you know, Manitoba's open for business in mining. We're creating a lot of parks; I'm all for that. But we've got to make sure that mining and parks—mining and conservation work together so that we can have those opportunities.

Up north, the opportunities are not as often or as much as down south here. I mean, we have mining, which is one industry that's so important, and, of course, hydro. And both those are very important to—and not just in—to the North but it's also an economic engine. Mining in Manitoba produce—or has 6,300 people that are employed in mining in Manitoba; that's a lot. And that's not just in—you know, everybody thinks that mining is just up north. Well, no; there's—I think there's a drill company, a couple drill companies that are from the south, and so people are employed right through the province in mining, and I think that's so important that we look at that.

In—I know the new west agreement has been brought up a few times. I just want to say up north in Flin Flon we're right on the border, so Saskatchewan is very, very important to us. And I know, talking to Rob Winton, the head of HudBay in Flin Flon, that many contractors, many jobs are created and—from Saskatchewan. So we work very closely with Saskatchewan in having opportunities in the mining sector, and that has gone on for years and will continue.

We also, like I say, announced with Hydro, the—a plan to sell them more hydro, which is important because 50 per cent of Saskatchewan's power is from coal, okay, and we've got to recognize—we've got to work as not a new west agreement; we've got to work on a Canadian agreement so that we can have

an energy policy that can benefit all Canadians, not just Albertans.

I mean, let's face it, in the last 10 years of the previous federal government everything seemed to be about oil and everything else was forgotten. And all of sudden now we don't have any—we have no way of getting across the different provinces. You know, we're acting like individual countries, which is crazy. We've got to get our resource to market, and we've got to work together. And I think that's, hopefully, with the new Liberal government, hopefully we can work together in providing that national energy policy so that we can all benefit from our resources.

I know with our mineral resources it's funny to say that, you know, HudBay ships its minerals probably, well, they don't go through Churchill; they go through Vancouver. Well, that's ridiculous. Why don't they go through Churchill and use the Churchill line?

We've got to look at different opportunities that we have. I'd like to see Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta buy the Churchill line and use it for our own resources, like potash. I don't think oil is on the list because it's—right now, with the oil that we get from the oil sands it's a bit dangerous, and with a fragile environment in the North, maybe that's not the way to go. But let's start refining it in southern Alberta or Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

So, there's many things that we've got to look at, and being a northerner up north, I look at the opportunities that we should be taking advantage of, and one is transportation. That's so important, and we're spending millions of dollars on roads up north. And to give you an example the road into Flin Flon, the 15 kilometers is, like, \$20 million. And you say, well, \$20 million?

Well, I'll tell you why. We are going to have, when Lalor mine is up and running, over 50 semi-trucks a day coming into Flin Flon. And the road there had not been paved—I don't know if it ever was paved. It was just, you know, but thank God we got Captain Asphalt and we're going to be paving it next year. And, you know, that is important. We need proper roads.

Chief Andrew Colomb from Lynn Lake wants a road from Flin Flon to Lynn Lake and, of course, if that road goes to Lynn Lake we could also—there's a community called Pukatawagan that has 3,500 people that should have a road. Every

Canadian deserves a road to their community and within that triangle between Pukatawagan, Flin Flon and Lynn Lake is high mineral potential, and if you have a road there, then it becomes economically feasible to mine.

So we've got to open up our northern communities. As you go farther north from Lynn Lake, you know, you go up to Brochet, Lac Brochet and Tadoule, those communities are still on diesel power, which is very dangerous economically. We are the province of hydro. We've got to change that. We've got to look at opportunities of either bringing hydro or looking at other alternatives for power in those communities. And since those communities are on the way up to Nunavut, let's continue the road up there because they need our power too.

* (16:20)

So we have so much potential. I mean, let's face it, if you want a comparison, our hydro is like our—or Alberta's oil. And I'm hoping the opposition realizes that, that we've got to realize that the resource of hydro is so important. And it's so important to be environmentally friendly. Okay, now, if we disturb the east-side road and the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota and that are not for that, well, then, we've got to look at alternatives. If we are for offering our hydro out west to Saskatchewan and Alberta, it makes sense, let's go down the west side. So that argument's been won over three elections, so let's get off that topic and let's work on working together and looking for different markets out west and seeing what we can do there.

I just hope—I can't believe the clock is going so slow, but I just, yes, I'm just starting my tour. I thought I had more time. But—[interjection]—I don't know—but anyways, I want to say that the North—[interjection]—no, I'm not, that's not in my speech. Maybe I'll go back to—let's zero in on Flin Flon being the centre of the earth, but, no, I won't do that either.

I just have to say that when we look at the North, we have to look at potential. We have to look at jobs. And the jobs up north are basically centred around mining and hydro. And we've got to train. We've got to train people for those jobs. I know in the past we've had incidences where we brought a lot of people from outside the province because we didn't train the individuals in our own province. So we can't do, you know, let that happen again, Mr. Speaker. We've got to work together to make sure that the training is there for individuals so that they can take

advantage of the jobs in the North and build roads for the opportunities to open up the mines.

Because when a mine—it's funny, I don't know if people realize this, but you've got to drill almost 1,000 holes before you'll find a mine. So the amount of money that is spent and gambled on, because, remember, mining is not a sure thing, you know, it's an uncertainty. And you're taking the risk with somebody else's money or whatever that you're going to find a mine. But, like I say, it takes 1,000 drills to find a potential mine.

And, when you find that, now you've got to find backers to invest in your mine. Now, it's much easier if you have a road there. It's much easier if you have a rail line there. And it's much easier if you have a commodity that's obviously rare and well needed.

We have got many mines that have been opened and closed in Manitoba. And remember, a mine doesn't have a lifespan of eternity; you know, it's only there as far as the mineral is there. I have to say, at one time, when I worked underground, we would load up the ore in scoop trams that were maybe eight feet long and about four feet wide and fill this up and take the ore on tracks back to the grizzly to empty it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've got machines in there that are bigger than the inside of this semicircle, and what, you know, there are three, four tons, and can mine out ore bodies way quicker than before. And the oldest mine that was in Flin Flon, South Main, took 70 years to mine out. And they feel now that they could do the same—the same ore body could be mined out are five to seven years.

So the long term of mines is much less because the technologies got better and bigger. And so to find a mine, a 3-million-ton mine, you're not going mine it, you need 5 to 6 million tons just to maybe explore to see if this mine is feasible.

And of course, Lalor lake mine has great potential, and they figure it could be there for over 20 years. So that's an amazing—it's one of the largest zinc, copper producers and, actually, of gold, in Canada. So we're very proud of that in Snow Lake.

Snow Lake, like I say, is probably one of the best-kept secrets for jobs for young people but also for a beautiful community to live in right on the lake. And, of course, they take their ore to Flin Flon, and it's gone through the Zpl of the plant with the zinc, and, of course, the pollution, then, is dropped off in Flin Flon. So Snow Lake doesn't have the pollution that other mines have because it's shipped out.

But, having said that, we've got to think about the refining. We're—I mentioned oil, and we should be refining the oil in the oil sands and creating jobs here. Well, it's the same in mining. What we have is we've closed the smelter in Flin Flon because it was outdated. It had to be closed, but we basically said, well, we're going to stop the pollution.

But what we did is—what we're doing is just shipping the ore to China and they're polluting. So we're still polluting. We're not solving the problem of the environment, which is we should be—refine it ourselves in a much more economically way, but the governments have to work together on this because a company is not going to just do the right thing when it comes environmentally. What they'll do is, obviously they're in there to make money, and they'll go by the regulations.

So maybe we have to change some regulations so that mining companies—and if the mines are large enough, maybe we should be refining the ore right here in Manitoba and creating jobs for all Manitobans. I mean, we do have a port here which could easily ship mineral or refined product anywhere in the world. And we also have CentrePort, which is, you know, the gateway north and south all the way to Mexico right up to here. So it's some things we have to look at.

And I guess I'm going to sum up by just saying, you know, I'm proud of the four and a half, five years, or four and a half years that I've been in here. And I look around: what are the changes in Winnipeg since I've been here? And I just—I'm amazed how much it's changed. I mean, I think I live in one of the best parts of the universe, in Flin Flon, but I live down here in just—on Osborne. It was voted the best place in Canada to live. That's right here in Winnipeg, in Osborne. Yes, I'm proud of that. I mean, then all of a sudden, I see National Geographic. I mean, I read National Geographic a lot. I don't think I've ever heard or seen any mention of Manitoba at all, but, all of a sudden, they're saying it's one of the best trips to do is come to Winnipeg. And I'm amazed at that.

And then, of course, we cannot forget—and yesterday, I spoke on it; I said it's the toast of Canada—and that is the whisky in Manitoba from Gimli is recognized the world as some of the best. The only thing is I was looking at the bottle today, Mr. Speaker. I was disappointed in the bottle because nowhere on the bottle does it mention Gimli. It says Toronto, Canada. They're taking the credit for some

of the best whisky in the world. And I'm thinking Gimli should be on there, proud and that. So I think we've got to work on that.

I look at the Jets, Mr. Speaker. I—you know, of course, I cried when they left. Not long, because I am a Toronto Maple Leafs fan. But I did cry because I would go to the Jets games to see the Toronto Maple Leafs. But that's another thing. But I'm proud that the Jets are back. I'm proud about the MTS Centre. I'm proud about the football stadium. We've got the Grey Cup here. I mean, Winnipeg–Manitoba is a happening province. You know, we are on the cusp, I guess you can say, of breaking out of the corral, the corral of just being a western province. We're becoming the province you want to move to because, one, it's got some of the lowest costs of living; it's got the lowest unemployment; it's got jobs and opportunity whether you're in the south, north, east or west. And so we'll break out of that corral and we'll become well known as the province of opportunity.

And I'm proud to say that I've been involved in some of that. The convention centre—I was just at the convention centre for the mining conference, and I'm amazed at the size. I mean, I go to PDAC every year in Toronto. I wouldn't be surprised if they moved it to Winnipeg because, you know, mining is not big in Toronto. I know people can get there, but Winnipeg's becoming a city and a point of travel that is easy to get to. So the Convention Centre is very important. We will get conferences from all over the world coming here because of that. You know, and the opportunity for Manitoba business to take advantage of that, whether you're in the hotel business or in the party business or whatever. I think that's important.

* (16:30)

The other thing I'd like to say about Manitoba is when you look at it, is that we're spreading the wealth around. When I look at Steinbach or I look at Winkler, I'm proud to see these communities. I wished Flin Flon had the opportunities that Steinbach and Winkler had. *[interjection]* You know, they've got one of the best MLAs, I hear, I don't know. I hear—I hear. I don't know. But, I mean, it's proud that I see our—*[interjection]*—I'm still there, you know. I'm still there.

I'm proud to say that it's nice to see different parts of the province growing and opportunities and not just one area. And, like I say, that's one thing we got to realize, that most people that live outside of Winnipeg always say, you know, that the MLAs,

whatever, all they know is within the perimeter of Winnipeg. So we've got to change that and work on that and look at the different opportunities that we have, and I'm proud to say that we are doing that; we're sharing the wealth and looking around.

But I just want to sum up—I want to sum up—that in the last few days it was such an honour to be in the Leg. here to hear the different speeches by the different members. And the civility of it all, it almost takes you back, because I can remember us sitting here when students were here and some of the language and the fighting was going on, it was not something to be proud of as an MLA.

But, like today, listening to the different speeches, I'm very proud to be a member of this House and this Leg., and I recognize the work that individuals have put in and many, many hours, and I thank everybody for doing that. And so, at this time, I'd just like to thank everybody and thanks a lot.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I want to wish the member for Flin Flon well in his unretirement, now that he's going to be with us again, at least until the election, Mr. Speaker.

It's been an interesting day here in the Legislature. Certainly, the welcoming of the Grey Cup, I think, was a fun experience for all of us as members, and I want to thank the Government House Leader (Mr. Chomiak) for helping co-ordinate that and for making that happen. I think that was good for us as members, and I think it's something that'll be remembered here in the Legislature, and, of course, we will welcome it back when the Bombers win the Grey Cup, whichever year that'll be, and we hope that'll be soon, and maybe we'll even have an opportunity to welcome the Stanley Cup someday if the Jets bring it home next year; might be optimistic, but we're optimistic people, Mr. Speaker.

So we have great things to celebrate in Manitoba, and I know that there'll be thousands of people who'll be coming to Manitoba for the Grey Cup, some of which are already here and some will come in closer to the game, Mr. Speaker, and we want to welcome all of them regardless of which team they cheer for, even some of the Roughrider fans who we know travel well and often come to the Grey Cups, regardless of where they are in the country. We want to welcome everyone and hope that they feel at home here and that they feel welcome, and even though we cheer for different teams, those who are coming from other provinces, it

is a celebration of sport and it's a celebration of a—or a Canadian tradition. So we welcome them here.

I want to—it's my first opportunity to speak a little bit about the tragic events in France, and that's changing gears a little bit. But, in this world, we know both grief and happiness, and there is certainly grief in France and still today, Mr. Speaker. We know that many are concerned about the possibilities of—in—of continued terrorism in countries around the world.

And we remember those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks in France, and we certainly stand with the people of that country. And they know that we keep them in our hearts, and we keep them in our prayers, and I'm glad that the Legislature took the steps to have the flag of France displayed on the front of this building for a number of days. I think that that was appropriate, and it was certainly symbolic.

I also want to add some of my thanks to people in this building: the Clerk's office, who I often thank and then sometimes I question, but most often I thank, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the work that they do. Last session, of course, we, I think, achieved a great thing for this Legislature. Now, of course, the test is always in time, but I said it then and my motivations may have been questioned by some, but I don't think they were questioned deeply. But I do, now that the rules have been completed, I think that it'll benefit all of us as current legislators, and I think it'll benefit the Legislature in the future, and I really appreciate the fact the Clerk's office took a leading role in that. We also have additional rule changes, I'm sure, that'll come, and we have a dedicated process to continue on with that. And I want to thank them for that effort and we'll continue to refine the rules here and to do things differently.

We've seen, even recently, that this can be a very emotional place, and sometimes it gets heated and things get said that we regret, and I've done that, too, myself, Mr. Speaker, somewhat recently. And we regret doing that, but I think that there is a bit of a change. There is a change in terms of co-operation and working together on different things, and I hope that that continues.

Regardless of who the House leaders are after the next election, I hope that they continue on to be combative where they need to be combative in the political sense, but they also recognize that this place works better when there are discussions and there are

co-operations on the things that are important for all of us.

I don't always, in these speeches, but I want to again thank my wife, Kim, and my son, Malachi, who is now nine, for the support that they provide me, and I'm very lucky to have a family that's very understanding about the nature of this job and the time commitments that it sometimes takes. My wife has only sort of known the political life and that's been somewhat helpful, and I suppose when she sees another aspect of life she might not want to go back. But I do think it's great to have that support, and I appreciate all that she does within our own family and, of course, my son who is also learning a little bit more about what I do as a job, which is both interesting and sometimes concerning. But he has lots of questions about the democratic process and about different political parties and people who are in that. And I am trying to certainly teach him the—great respect for this place and for all people who are elected into this place, and I look forward to continuing to get different questions from him as he grows older.

It's fortunate to do some pictures in this Chamber as we are, in our own seats, allowed to do, Mr. Speaker, and I had my son and my wife here recently. We did some photos here. And I would encourage all members to do that if they have the opportunity, regardless of what they feel their tenure is going to be in the Legislature. We are very blessed, and it's a very unique opportunity and that sometimes the time goes by really fast and you don't take the opportunity to do that. So I would encourage members to do that while they can because it's not something that we will be doing forever, and when we look back, we might regret that we didn't take the opportunity.

There's been lots of different tributes made to some of the different members who are leaving or who already have left this Legislature. I want to add just a few myself.

I know the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who is certainly our longest serving member in our caucus. I had the opportunity to learn a lot from her in discussions that we've had, Mr. Speaker, both about what government is like from the perspective that she's had, but also just how things work in a caucus more generally, and if you haven't been in a caucus and you haven't been elected into a caucus, it is a different kind of thing than almost any sort of environment. It's different

than a boardroom and it's different than a non-profit organization, and it is a learning process. And you rely on advice from people about how that works, and the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) is one of those people who has given me advice over the last many years. I think I've taken some of it, and when I haven't taken it, it's been to my own detriment. And so I appreciate the opportunity to have been able to learn from her, and I know that she's going to have more time now with her family, which is very important, and it was wonderful to see her family in the gallery a couple of days ago.

* (16:40)

And I've heard lots of speeches in this Legislature, both when I was elected but also when I was a staff person. I don't know that I've heard many more that were impactful and as emotional as the one that she gave, and it was a real honour for me just to be able to listen to it. And so I thank her for sharing that with me.

And I know we're going to have other opportunities, maybe not in the Chamber here, but other opportunities to celebrate her great accomplishments, and we appreciate all that she's brought to our caucus.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the member for Minnedosa, who I was elected with in 2003—the class of 2003. And so we often associate ourselves with the year that we were elected and those who we were elected with, and I think that that is certainly very, very appropriate. I had the opportunity to watch her as she has brought forward a number of different issues in her critic roles, whether that was Spirited Energy—the Spirited Energy campaign that was something less than successful, and she did it with great energy. And, you know, I don't want to disagree with what she was saying in her final speech, but she talked about how she thought her personality may have been more suited to opposition. I actually think she would have been a wonderful member of a government. I know in terms of listening to her when she speaks about issues, particularly those who are the most vulnerable in our society, as she brought forward a great heart, and had she had the opportunity to serve in government, I believe she would have been excellent in it, just as she was excellent in opposition.

So not to take umbrage with what she said, but I do certainly believe that she would have served very well in the government, and I suspect, you know, as—if we're fortunate enough in April to win

government, you rely on advice from many people, and she may be very well one of the people who provide advice to a new government, and that would be welcome advice, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) has received many different tributes, some of which were quite colourful in terms of the descriptions of his attributes, Mr. Speaker. For me, I think that, when I think of the member for Agassiz and what he brought to our caucus, certainly his sense of humour was talked about, but he also, I think, had a great sense of wisdom and of judgment that comes with experience and that comes with time, and it's important to have that in a caucus.

I think one of the greatest attributes a person can have is a sense of judgment, and I trust his judgment. I trusted his judgment when we spoke on a number of different occasions. And he is certainly a humble man, which is also appreciated in a caucus, which sometimes can become somewhat boisterous and he will also be missed. But I also think that he is someone who can lend great advice to a government, whatever government it would be, in—after the next election, Mr. Speaker.

There are others who have already this Chamber. It was mentioned about the member for Gimli, who was also elected in 2003, and I remember sitting with him in this Chamber as the Clerk's office was going through a bit of a program with new MLAs in 2003 and kind of teaching us the different rules of this Chamber, and we had an opportunity to talk then, and, of course, you never know what the future's going to bring. At that time, I would have thought, you know, the future would have been different for us, and he might not have been as sure of how the future would be for him. But I certainly wish him well and—as he goes on to other opportunities as well.

The member for Southdale who ran federally and wasn't successful in that endeavour, but it takes courage to run for political office and to leave the position that you're in and to seek another political office; that's not an easy thing to do. And I give her a lot of credit, and I think that anybody who puts their name on a ballot does so with great understanding that the outcome might not be exactly the way you wish it would be. But you make the process better by becoming involved, and the former member for Southdale did that, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has also announced, and I'm making sure I get this right,

because I think there's been some mistakes, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has also announced that he won't be seeking re-election. Speaking of the Grey Cup and speaking of football, we don't sit too far from each other during football games, similar to the member for Minto (Mr. Swan). We actually all sit—and the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux)—we have tickets that are relatively close together. I'm kind of surrounded and outnumbered there, Mr. Speaker, but the good thing is we're all cheering for the Bombers there. We're all cheering for the same team in that environment, but the member for Dauphin and I have had some good discussions at football games, mostly about football, but it sometimes drifts into politics. And, more recently, we've had some discussions about life, and the life of this Legislature and how things have changed and how some things haven't changed, and I've appreciated those discussions.

I know that he was in—a part of the challenges that the NDP went through last fall, Mr. Speaker, and during that time, I had the opportunity to speak to his young son, who, I think, is about the age of my own son. And it was in the building here, and we were just chatting a little bit. And I said to him, I imagine you're reading a lot of things in the paper about what's going on, and some of them will involve your dad. And he said he was reading them. And I just reminded him that, you know, your dad's a good man who does an honourable thing by being an MLA. And I mean that.

And, regardless of what happens, sometimes, politically within this building, what happens within political parties, our kids and those who we associate should know that we do things for the best interests of Manitobans at heart. And I certainly feel that the member for Dauphin has many of those qualities, and I want him to know that as well.

The member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) has announced that he will not be running again. And he has a reputation of being one of the hardest working constituency people in the Legislature, and I can attest to that, that he has long been a hard worker in his constituency. Actually, when I got elected in 2003, he came to the community of Niverville. And he was the minister at the time, and I can't remember what he was minister of, but we ended up taking a picture, and it ended up in one of my brochures. And he always makes a point of mentioning that I included him in one of my brochures. And it wasn't an accident. I wasn't really maybe as partisan as I became later on, Mr. Speaker. But I give a lot of

credit for the member for Assiniboia. He worked really hard. I continue to hear from people in his constituency that he shows up at everything. And a lot of it, as I've heard before from people, is just about showing up and going to events and being with people and ensuring that they're hearing your concerns. So I wish the member for Assiniboia well in his future as well as he goes on to other things beyond this Legislature.

The member for Radisson (Mr. Jha) announced yesterday, I think to some surprise, that he would not be seeking re-election. It was a surprise to me, Mr. Speaker, and I—more often than not, I've talked to him at CSG conferences that we have the opportunity to attend, and his wife often has been coming along to the Midwest CSG. And, when we've been able to sort of sit down over a dinner or a supper, you learn a lot more about an individual and—very gracious, and he always was gracious to my wife, and his wife was always very gracious to my wife, and we had some very nice conversations that didn't really involve politics but really involved his own family, how proud he is of his own family.

And it's nice to be able to talk to members in that way because in this Chamber, of course, things get heated, primarily around question period, and we sometimes lose perspective about the other things. And, tragically, we were reminded just a couple of days ago with the tragic death in Alberta, that we really are, in many ways, you know, connected as a fraternity. Now, we have our own individual perspectives, but we also share a very unique experience. There are only 57 people at any given time—and a little bit less now—but at any given time, there are generally only 57 people who are able to do this job in the province of Manitoba, and so we are connected in that unique way. And I think that that's important, and it's nice to be able to get to know each other in ways that don't just involve individual members' portfolios or critic roles or the different sorts of things that happen here in the Legislature.

The member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) has also announced that she won't be running again, and the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) did a better job than I could in terms of describing the passion that she has brought to this job. She certainly is a fierce defender of the things that she's brought to this Legislature. And we have not always been on the same side of debates that have happened in the Legislature, but I do respect very much her ability to bring forward her ideas and to bring forward her perspective and to do so in a passionate way. There

are not many people in the Legislature, I think, who can match that ability, and I wish her well as she moves on to other endeavours.

The member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald)—and I believe this is sort of the last of the list of people who are not running again unless somebody wants to announce today or sometime soon; then I'll have to make an addendum to my speech. But the member for Seine River has also announced that she will not be seeking re-election. I—there's lots of things, you know, lots of different stories one could tell. She's had a very significant career here in the Legislature.

* (16:50)

One of the ones that I thought was important to share—and I shared it publicly at the time, actually—there was a young boy in my constituency who needed a medical procedure in Boston, and there was an issue around how he would be transported. He had a very rare affliction and it caused a tremendous amount of pain. And there was a question about whether or not he would have to make two trips and how it would work out, and without getting in to too many of the details, the family came to me and asked whether or not some amount of sort of common sense could be brought to this situation. So I sat down with the Minister of Health, over in the loge, and sort of explained to her the scenario, and she listened and clearly had compassion for the situation, and she did, I think, what a minister, what a good minister really should do. She didn't make me an assurance at that time that she would be able to fix the situation. What she said is, I don't know all of the details or the reasons for the department's initial reaction to this, but I'm going to take it with me, I'm going to look into it, and I'm going to get back to you, and I promise that I take it seriously.

And, within a couple of days later, I got a call from the family who indicated they'd gotten a call from the Department of Health, and things had changed. And they'd made the decision to ensure that the young man would be transported in a way that would provide him with the least amount of pain. And so I went to the Minister of Health after, she didn't come to me and tell me this, and I thanked her for doing that, for looking into it, taking it seriously. She did what a good minister would do; she said she couldn't make me any promises, but she did follow through and was able to make a difference.

And the local media in my area were taking an interest in this case, and they'd heard from the family that things had changed. And so it was reported on

the news that he would be able to go to Boston in the way that was the most appropriate. And the local media phoned me and asked me to talk about how I had achieved this. And I was very clear with them that I hadn't achieved this; it was the Minister of Health who made this happen through a discussion that we had. And I thanked her publicly at that time. And, you know, sometimes this is a political environment, so maybe not everybody thinks that's a good thing to do or a wise thing to do, but I think you need to put some of that aside. And so I appreciated the fact that she took that seriously and was able to do this for this young boy. There are other scenarios and other situations, but it's an example, I think, of the best of things that can happen in this Legislature. And I certainly wish her well as she moves on to other endeavours as well.

Now there's been a lot said in the last few days for whatever reason about the city of Steinbach. And there seems to be some sort of a game going on where things are compared to the city of Steinbach, that these are two city of Steinbachs that are happening or three city of Steinbachs, for whatever reason. I can tell you from a Steinbach Chamber of Commerce perspective, we're always happy, I think, from—for the advertisement that is happening about Steinbach, whatever regard it's brought up here in the House.

And certainly the city of Steinbach and the surrounding area, the RM of Hanover, are very much growing and prosperous areas of our province. But the government shouldn't take too much solace in that and try to take too much credit for it, because the reason that the city of Steinbach and the RM of Hanover, and I suspect that my colleagues in the south—from the communities that they would represent, the reason that they're doing so well and the reason that they're growing at the rate that they are isn't a responsibility of the government; it's a responsibility of the people who live in those communities.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the communities that I'm very, very fortunate to represent, and I never take it for granted, have great—are filled with people who have a hard work ethic, great integrity, who are entrepreneurial, who care about their families, who care about their communities, who care about their neighbours. And there's a reason why the areas that I represent are often cited as the most charitable in terms of giving, both in terms of time and in terms of volunteer hours, but certainly in terms of giving financially to

charities, that it leads the country. In fact, I often talk to people in other parts of the country, and when I mention the fact that I'm from Steinbach or the area of Hanover, they cite the fact that there are so many people who give to different charities right across the country from that area. And it's the nature of the people there, and that makes a huge difference in the community. It ripples through the community. When people are willing to give their time and willing to give back to the community financially, it has an amazing impact in a community. I'm very, very fortunate to be able to represent those areas.

Of course, with growth comes challenges, as well, Mr. Speaker. You know, I know that the challenges of growth are better than dealing with challenges of communities that are not growing or that are perhaps contracting in size, and I would much sooner have the challenges that come with a growing community. But there are challenges nonetheless. So, whether or not that is on the education system or the health-care system or on law enforcement, when a community grows, it does change in nature, and much of that change is positive. I would say most of that change is positive, but there are some things that are just simply challenges. And you need to be able to respond to those challenges and respond to them in a way that makes sense for the community.

Now, the government likes to talk about all the great things that they are doing for different parts of the province, and I wouldn't say that there was nothing that's ever happened in the city of Steinbach that has occurred under this government or under the previous governments. When governments spend \$15 billion a year, there are going to be some good things that happen; that's the truth, Mr. Speaker.

But there's also a reality that sometimes things don't work as well as they should, and there are a lot of areas within the community of Steinbach and Hanover and, I would say, the southeast more generally, that simply do need attention because of that growth. Now, part of that, I mean, one could talk about the infrastructure, of course, and the issue of roads. The government talks about roads programs, and yet we still see in many areas of the province, including mine, where there are a lot of distress on those roads because of the growth.

We can talk about law enforcement and the need for additional law enforcement officials. Now, it doesn't always have to be police, and it—in terms of municipal police, it doesn't always have to be

RCMP. We've talked about the community safety officer program. I've talked about that recently publicly as well, about expanding the community safety officer program to ensure that communities beyond the city of Thompson, where it's being launched as a pilot project, can also tap into that. Certainly, I know that representatives of the RM of Hanover and the City of Steinbach would be quite interested in being part of the community officer—the community safety officer program so that they could have individuals who are peace officers, because I understand they achieve that status, who would be able to enforce bylaws in the city or in the RM, but also be able to enforce certain provincial provisions which are provided to them through legislation, whether that would be in liquor control or a highway traffic act or other provincial pieces of legislation.

So I would again encourage this government to move forward on that because it's not something that is, I think, difficult to do. I understand the government wants to do these things in a staged approach, but I think sometimes when they're doing things in a staged approach, Mr. Speaker, it is not to the benefit of communities who are ready to go and on a—and are immediately willing to participate in a particular program. So I would hope that the government would look at expanding that community safety officer program more quickly to the city of Steinbach and to the RM of Hanover because with that growth, of course, does come difficult situations, and I think this is certainly one of those difficult situations.

There are other issues, of course, and I won't go on at length about the issue at Bethesda hospital. I've raised that many times here in the Chamber. Sometimes it's not about just spending money; sometimes it's about spending money wisely and appropriately. That's a project that started, in terms of this discussion, back in 2007. I remember speaking to the then-former—now former Premier Gary Doer about that issue.

And, after the election of 2007, he made a commitment to being involved with the change at Bethesda hospital. It took almost seven years for it to get built and for it to get open in terms of the opening of the hospital, and then after those seven years we find out that it was done poorly. It was done so poorly that it's very, very difficult for those who have mobility issues to be able to access the hospital, to be able to get into the hospital without going up a long and a narrow ramp or a set of stairs.

And this has been an ongoing issue that the Minister of Health—the current Minister of Health (Ms. Blady), when she came into office indicated it was one of her top priorities. And here we are more than a year later, and there are still, if you drive by the Bethesda hospital on any day, you'll see people who are struggling to get into the hospital or to exit the hospital. And, if there's one place that you should not have to struggle to either get into or get out of, it would certainly be a hospital, Mr. Speaker. And so we have grave concerns about that.

Now, we understand that the government has been talking about maybe doing a fix next year. Well, we know what that means. That's code for not doing anything until after the election's over. And that is problematic for a government that says that

there are so many things that they are doing, to allow people who are trying to access health-care services to struggle into a hospital or to leave a hospital, Mr. Speaker, I think is among the most insensitive things that a government could actually do, and to simply say, we're going to wait 'til after election, is very, very problematic.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) will have two minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

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