

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

Vol. LXVII No. 4 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 25, 2014

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
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
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MELNICK, Christine	Riel	NDP
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	PC
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	NDP
OSWALD, Theresa	Seine River	NDP
PALLISTER, Brian	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PETTERSEN, Clarence	Flin Flon	NDP
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REID, Daryl, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Kewatinook	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie, Hon.	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 3—The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), that The Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority Amendment Act be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Robinson: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, with the floodway now completed, the intention of the legislative amendment is to return the responsibilities related to the floodway to the Department of Infrastructure and Transportation.

It also focuses the role of the Crown agency on the construction and maintenance of an all-season road network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and, you know what, it should be mentioned that the Floodway and East Side Road Authority have done a great job in this innovative model incorporating best practices in Aboriginal procurement, completing major infrastructure projects on time and on budget. And I'm pleased to say that the project objective of providing the one-in-700-year flood protection has been provided and the project was delivered under its original budget by \$38 million, savings that was reinvested in improving flood protection in eight additional communities.

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

Bill 200—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk), that Bill 200, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: This bill amends The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Act to designate the mosasaur, known as Tylosaurus peminensis, as the marine reptile fossil emblem of Manitoba.

Yes, the mosasaur specimen, known as Bruce the Mosasaur, was discovered in 1974 in a field near Morden. It has been exhibited in the CFDC, the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre, since that time, and it has won a number of awards, including this last fall when it was designated by the Guinness world book of records as the largest mosasaur in the world. This bill is an excellent way to recognize the significance of this treasure to Manitoba.

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

Any further introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

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

Grace Hospital Emergency Room Upgrade and Expansion

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government promised to upgrade and expand the Grace Hospital emergency department in 2011 and to complete it by 2015.

The Grace Hospital was left as the last of all Winnipeg hospitals to be slated for an emergency-room upgrade.

The provincial government has broken another promise to Manitobans by delaying the start of this upgrade by three years, as failure to begin construction in 2013 has left patients and hospital employees facing long wait times, overcrowding and the risk of unsafe conditions and care.

This provincial government has allowed ER wait times at the Grace Hospital to become the worst in Canada at triple the amount of time that emergency physicians recommend.

Ambulances in Winnipeg, including at the Grace Hospital, continue to face excessive patient off-load delays that are getting longer every year.

Last year the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg had over 23,000 patients seeking emergency care through the ER department and over 2,000 of those patients left the ER without being seen because they became too frustrated waiting to be seen.

Instead of fixing hallway medicine, there are now numbered hallway spaces.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government and the Minister of Health to keep their promise to the people of Manitoba and make the upgrade and expansion of the Grace ER an immediate priority.

And this is signed by J. Buus, B. Buus, R. Garnett and many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

Highway 10 North and 3rd Street North in Swan River—Traffic Signals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Local residents have expressed concerns regarding properties located at the intersection of Highway 10 north and 3rd Street North in Swan River, including the Swan Valley regional high school, the Tim Hortons and the Co-op gas bar quadrisect.

There are no traffic lights or pedestrian crosswalks at this intersection. Students from the high school run across the highway to access Tim Hortons and the Co-op gas bar. When the daycare

centre opens, children will need to cross the highway if they wish to access the wellness centre.

Highway 10 north is a major haul route for farmers and logging trucks, increasing the potential for a collision involving students and/or motorists.

The intersection is a dangerous corner for motorists, including school buses making left-hand turns onto the highway from either direction, especially in the hours before and after school and at lunchtime.

* (13:40)

The traffic on this highway and at this intersection will only increase in the near future with the opening of the wellness centre and the daycare facility.

Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation is only offering to provide a painted-line crosswalk with unlit signage but nothing to actually stop the traffic for pedestrian crossing safety. Motorists often disregard painted-line crosswalks, creating a false sense of security for pedestrians who use them.

On October 3rd, 2013, Winkler mourned the loss of one of their 16-year-old students killed at a crosswalk consisting only of signage.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation consider installing a set of traffic lights, including pedestrian lights, at the intersection of Highway 10 north and 3rd Street North in Swan River.

And this petition is signed by B. Schullman, A. Koch, M. Cook and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Residential and Vocational Service Organizations—Standard Province-wide Funding Formula

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Funding provided to organizations that provide residential and vocational services to individuals with physical and developmental disabilities in rural areas is significantly lower than the funding levels provided to similar organizations in Winnipeg.

This discrepancy in funding levels has affected the recruitment and retention of skilled staff as average wages do not reflect the complex duties of staff that are similar to health-care aides.

Without increased funding, most organizations that provide residential and vocational services will be forced to close.

The closure of these organizations will severely impact the local economy, as these organizations are often large employers and provide necessary services in the community.

The value and quality of life experienced by individuals with special needs residing in a familiar and consistent environment is immeasurable.

Closing these organizations and moving these individuals will be incredibly disruptive to their lives and detrimental to their health and well-being.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Family Services consider implementing a standard funding formula across the province for organizations that provide residential and vocational services for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

This petition is signed by M. Cooper, D. Galay, L. Galbraith and many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions?

Seeing none, we'll move on to committee reports.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, I'm tabling a report, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Tabling?

Mr. Allum: Tabling the—

Mr. Speaker: Oh, hold on. That's—one moment, please.

Any committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing none, we'll move on to tabling of reports.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would like to table the annual report for 2013-2014 for the Manitoba Vehicle Impoundment Registry.

I would also like to table the annual report for 2013-14 for Civil Legal Services.

And, finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the annual report for 2013 for the Law Enforcement Review Agency.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Seeing none, ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have a number of guests that I would like to introduce.

Seated in the public gallery from Kildonan-East Collegiate we have 28 grade 9 students under the direction of Elliot Unger, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And also seated in the public gallery, from Kelvin High School we have 26 grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. Ruben Carr, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

And, I believe, also seated in the public gallery we have with us today from the Town of Swan River Mayor Glen McKenzie, Councillor Lance Jacobson, Councillor Jason Delaurier, Councillor Jason Sakal, Councillor Phyllis Friesen, Councillor Duane Whyte and CAO Julie Fothergill. And also seated in the public gallery today—pardon me. Those folks are the guests of the honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (Mr. Kostyshyn).

Also in the public gallery we have with us today from the RM of Stanley Councillor Pete Froese, Councillor Dick Fehr and CAO Dale Toews, who are the guests of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

And also in the gallery we have with us today members of the Manitoba chapter of Osteoporosis Canada, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Emergency Child-Care Services Hotel Accommodation

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, dissident members of the government told Manitobans that the Premier does

not listen. Yesterday we got ample evidence of that yet again. We asked the Premier about the spending problem that has been made clear to experts not only here in Manitoba but around the world, and the Premier denied he had such a problem and it's apparent it will take a disastrous downgrade in our bond rating here in this province to make him act.

But the same problem exists in social services. Mr. Speaker, for years the government has been told that hotel rooms are no place for at-risk children, yet they continue to use them at record rates.

Now, why has this government ignored expert advice for years and why has this Premier persisted with this dangerous practice?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was in government they cut the support to the foster families organization which recruited and supported foster families. We've returned that support. We've recruited a record number of foster families.

We have hired people to work at the community and neighbourhood level to work with families to ensure that their children are safe and support families. Our Healthy Child initiative starts at the earliest days working with young children in families to get them off to a healthy start so that they can stay outside of the child-welfare system.

And, certainly, when it comes to issues of having to use hotels, the most recent initiative by the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Irvin-Ross) has returned a number of full-time employees to work with those children to make sure that they are safe and well looked after.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will continue along a path of preventing problems for families with early childhood development, ensuring that they get the supports they need, and if for any reason they have to be taken away from their families, they get the attention of well-trained staff.

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier's ignored expert advice for years; so have his colleagues. Here's a quote: We need secure and safe places, but not hotel rooms. That's 15 years ago, and that's Premier Gary Doer and nothing's improved.

The Province was warned about the practice of putting children at risk in hotel rooms a decade ago in an internal report. They still didn't listen. Nothing's changed. Earlier this year the average daily occupancy in hotel rooms was 65 children,

the average age 11. This is deplorable and this government's had 15 years to get this right, and they've got it wrong.

Now, how could anyone believe this Premier now?

Mr. Selinger: The number of children in hotels yesterday was one, Mr. Speaker, and that speaks to the tremendous efforts being made by the department and the minister to ensure that there are proper services put in place to assist those children.

Unlike the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, we did not slash funding for foster families and their support organizations; we've increased it. Last year we recruited an additional 750 foster families in Manitoba and we've increased the per diem rates for foster families so they have more resources to do the job of parenting that they do while they look after children that are in their care.

And we will continue to support foster families and at the same time make sure that we have properly trained staff for those cases where children are not able to have a foster family immediately but cannot be with their own families. And that's what the minister announced last week with the addition of a couple of hundred additional staff to look after children in the child and family services system.

Contract Agencies-Provision Record

Mr. Pallister: There's never been any doubt of this government's willingness to throw money at a problem once it reached a disaster. Mr. Speaker, that's when they deal with it. But the doubtfulness in the minds of Manitobans, including his own caucus members, is whether he will ever learn to listen before it's a problem. The reality is he does not listen.

Now, the minister of Child and Family Services was asked a few weeks ago about the NDP practice of putting young children at high risk into hotel rooms and then putting them in the care of outsourced babysitters, and she was totally unaware of this. Now, if she is clueless as to the major contracts that she and her department have signed, she is very likely also clueless as to the quality of the services being provided by those outsourced babysitters.

* (13:50)

Let's have the Premier table today in this House any evidence of any evaluation done at any point during his premiership of the outsourced babysitting

services that taxpayers have been paying for and that children and their families have been paying for as well.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there are about 200 additional staff that have been hired to provide quality care with trained personnel. There are 71 new emergency foster beds that have been put in place. There is a new residential care facility for vulnerable children with complex needs, and there is the emergency housing program—is being overhauled. That's very different than the members opposite that actually reduced the amount of money they made available to each foster family and cut the organization that supported those foster families.

So it is important—it is important—that when children need extra support and they're not able to be with their families, they get the support they need. It is important that we provide that. It is also important that we prevent the number of children coming into care and reduce the number of children coming into care, which is why we have a very significant commitment to early childhood development, which is why we have a very significant commitment to reducing class sizes in the K-to-3 areas so children get the help they need to succeed in school, which is why it's very important that we have a commitment to universally accessible daycare so that families that are working can have quality care to make sure their children are looked after while they go out and make a living to support their families.

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

Mr. Pallister: So record number of at-risk children, a record number earlier this year being placed in hotels, dozens placed in care of contracted-out babysitters who allegedly had little or no training, our most vulnerable children, children in danger placed in greater danger by this government. No respectful parent would do that. Why would a government do that? This government did that, Mr. Speaker, and they're failing to properly protect these children.

I'll ask the Premier again: Over 15 years of this government, did anybody, any of the four different ministers that have been in charge of this portfolio, did anyone care enough to evaluate the quality of care being provided these vulnerable children? I'd like him to table some evidence that that work was done by this government at any point in the last 15 years.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was in Cabinet, he cut \$1,300 from the amount foster families had available to purchase the necessities for the children in their care, \$1,300 per family. That is his record. I know he wants to run away from that record. That is his record.

We have increased the amount of money available to each foster family. We've increased their per diem rates. We've recruited more foster families into the system. We've provided better training and support for foster families. We've put in place more emergency housing support for children that need that kind of care, and we've put in place emergency foster placement resources as well.

And, in addition to that, we've done more on the prevention side with—hired an—over 500, I believe, child-welfare workers to work at the community and neighbourhood level to support families to be able to do the job of parenting right in their home communities. That's the kind of commitments we've made in Manitoba to ensure families get the support they need, and we will ensure that we continue to do that, as opposed to the members' opposite approach—

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

Government Record

Mr. Pallister: Most of the running away around here is being done by ex-Cabinet ministers on that side of the House.

So let's give this back, Mr. Speaker. The Premier claims—the Premier claims—he's going to use fewer hotels in the future. That's the same claim that this government's been making for years, and this year they've had the highest reliance, of the last seven, on hotel rooms. He claims he's going to hire more workers and save money. That's the identical promise that this third last minister made, and it hasn't happened yet.

By implication, what the Premier is saying is that the outsourced workers that this government's been using have been providing low-quality care at higher cost. Now, that must mean that this government is admitting its own practices over many years have been misguided and dangerous, and that must mean that this government's been negligent in its responsibilities to our most vulnerable children.

I'd like the Premier to stand in his place today and apologize to the vulnerable children and their

families in this province who have been so neglected by this government.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the member has forgotten this, but it was in 1996. It was in 1996 that the government started outsourcing contracts to look after children in hotel rooms, and that was at the same time as they were reducing resources for foster families. They reduced resources for foster families. They obliterated the organization that supported foster families and they started outsourcing that work.

We are doing the opposite. We are providing more support for foster families. We are increasing the resources they have to provide the necessities of life for foster families. We've increased support for their organization so they can mutually support each other in that very challenging task of being a foster family.

And we are doing prevention. We are working with families in their neighbourhoods, in their communities, with them at the school level, at the early childhood development, preschool level to ensure they get off to a healthy start, and we are getting very good results for those early childhood developments. It is making a gigantic difference not only for the children and their families but for entire neighbourhoods for an entire generation of children. They're getting that.

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

Mr. Pallister: More than 70 children have died in care since this gentleman became the Premier of Manitoba, and he claims he's getting results. That's an abomination to any thinking Manitoban.

Mr. Speaker, this government announces a probe. Before the probe is completed, without any evidence, without any research, the government then announces it's reducing contracting out after years of ignoring that advice. Now, that's an admission of years of negligence by this government.

Now, this decision—this decision—reflects a sad reality in this province that children have been placed at risk by this government in what they now claim was inferior care, a poor quality at extra expense for the taxpayers and to the families involved.

Now, I ask the Premier again to table any evidence that he has that over the last 15 years—and he refers to 18 years ago before any of these

children that have been neglected by him and his administration were even born; let's get real here, Mr. Speaker, and talk about today's problems affecting today's Manitoba children—any evidence that this government ever once looked into the quality of care being provided to those vulnerable children.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we looked at the quality of support and care for our children that were at risk immediately upon coming into government, and what we discovered was this: that the National Child Benefit made available to low-income families, the government opposite, when the member was part of that government, was clawed back and made not available to families on social assistance. We reversed that trend. We made the National Child Benefit available to all families and all children regardless of their income or their source of income because we thought all children should get the support they need to have the necessities of life.

We saw that the foster family association had had its funding slashed. We restored that funding so that they could have mutual support. We saw that the per diems for families with—that were foster parents had been reduced by \$1,300 and we saw that that was having a negative impact on the quality of life for those children, so we restored that funding. And we saw that there was contracting out of services and we put in place more emergency placements. We put in place more foster families. Last year alone we recruited 750 additional foster families.

So every single day we have made investments that have improved the support—

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

Child and Family Services Department Contract Service Agencies

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, last week the minister of Child and Family Services announced the hiring of 210 workers to deal with the problem of high-risk children in insecure, unsafe situations. From this action we can only assume that the minister's probe into her own department, done only after the problem became public, must have shown a crisis situation.

Can the minister tell us today what her probe into her own department found that caused her to make such—to take such dramatic actions? Will she table this probe into the department's mishandling of contracting out?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Every day we have 500-plus social workers going to people's doors providing them with support and encouragement and making very difficult decisions, always with the basis of what's in the best interest of that child at that time. And in those decisions they're developing support programs such as parenting, for some families, addiction treatment. Mental health services are being offered. In some cases, because of the need of the child, a child is having to be apprehended, and when that happens we need to be able to share—to support them in the best way that we can, and that's why we continue to recruit foster parents. Seven hundred and fifty last year were recruited.

* (14:00)

We are going to continue to work with families. Prevention is No. 1, ensuring that families can stay together, because that's where children will flourish.

Mr. Wishart: I take it, then, Mr. Speaker, the probe never really happened.

The use of contracting agencies to provide services to child and family services authority and agencies has been greatly expanded by this government. If dramatic action was needed, why—what does this say about previous ministers' management?

Has this minister or previous ministers not cared enough to determine if the quality of care being provided by these agencies was adequate? Mr. Speaker, has this government's mismanagement put these most vulnerable children at further risk?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: In the spring of this year we noticed what was happening. The number of children that were being apprehended was rising, and when that happened we also noticed that there was a trend of more children in hotels. And hotel placements are the placement of last resort. We know that they are better served with a foster family, better served within their own family if that is at all possible.

And when we noticed that, we pulled together a number of professionals from all of the authorities that work together to reduce hotels. And in the spring, after doing their work of getting children into stable placements, secure placements where they would be supported, we also identified that there were other benefits that needed to happen to the system. We identified the need of hiring over 200 more staff that we would train and supervise,

that they would provide support to our most vulnerable children.

Emergency Child-Care Services Government Record

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I assume the minister must have read that in the paper; it seems to be where she gets her information.

Tears after the fact are not enough. Crying with the family after a disaster will not solve the problems. Back in 2007, then-minister of Child and Family Services, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), said, we know a hotel room is no substitute for a family. And he further said that hotels would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

Has this government's mismanagement put children at risk? How many of these most vulnerable children have had their lives destroyed because of their mismanagement, and why should Manitobans believe that this time is any different than the last?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Since we've been elected, since 1999, we have been working with multiple stakeholders, different levels of government, different First Nations communities and Metis communities in the intent of building a—better and stronger services to support Manitoba families. It doesn't start at the child-welfare system; it starts with prenatal benefits, it starts with early childhood development, it starts with good schools, good programing such as employment training programs.

That's what we need to continue to do is to build a strong support for all of Manitoba families, because when we do that our children will flourish. And when there are incidents where children's safety is at risk, we will be there to support that child as well as support that family.

We will not put at risk the child-welfare system with reckless cuts such as \$500-million cuts that that member's offering—

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

Foster Care Emergency Placements Increase Bed Capacity Plan

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): But if all of the things the government is bragging about is seeing better results for children, why are we seeing a doubling of children in care?

Mr. Speaker, under this dysfunctional NDP government's watch, the child and family services system has been in crisis after crisis and, as a result, the most vulnerable children are falling through the cracks and are being put at risk.

In 2006 the minister said, and I quote: We need to get children into family rooms and out of hotel rooms. Our plan is to enhance the fostering capacity emergency placement beds.

Mr. Speaker, where is that plan today and why isn't work—why isn't it working?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Every day there are professionals within our system that are supporting Manitoba families, and that is crucial. You can make fun of that, but I think that it is very valuable, the work that the professionals do across this province to support Manitoba families.

What the member is neglecting to recall is the announcement that I made on Tuesday. That announcement is building on our foundation of building a better system, hiring more social workers, ensuring that they have good training, making sure that there are prevention services that are available to families.

What we announced on Tuesday were—was more staff to provide support for youth, over 210 staff, better training for that staff and supervision. But we didn't stop there. We talked about the recruitment of more emergency placements, 71 more emergency placements, better assessments and looking outside of Winnipeg for safe houses to be developed so children can stay closer to home where they can stay connected with their school as well as their—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the plan was announced in 2006. Fast-forward eight years later, a new minister, but the same old, recycled, failed plan is in place today to create new foster homes and emergency shelter beds, the same language that was used eight years ago.

How can anyone believe anything that this NDP government says? Will she not just admit that her plan, her failed plan, is failing the most vulnerable children in our province of Manitoba?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that our government since 1999 has worked every day to provide supports to families, and in those supports

you can see it through the lifespan, so prenatal benefits, the work that we are doing with the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, the work that we are doing as far as child-care benefits. What we have done is ensuring that families have a strong foundation.

We continue to work with all of the agencies and the authorities to ensure that they have the services that they need. We need to continue to work to support the vulnerable children.

We're committed to that and we can show you, because since 2006, through Changes for Children, we had 300 recommendations. We can tell you today that over 90 per cent of those recommendations have been implemented. There are more social workers in the front line, better—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable minister's time has elapsed.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is a record number of children in care today in this province as a result of failed policies of this government.

Will the minister not stand up today and just admit that the overhaul that she announced is just a recycled promise made eight years ago that failed the children in the system, the system that they're in and that this government is supposed to be protecting?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: What I will tell you is that we have a commitment for all Manitoba families that we're committed to the most vulnerable people of Manitoba.

We will continue to make the improvements to the system that we have made.

We have invested over \$440 million. We've doubled the investment in child welfare. We have not made any suggestions that we were going to cut services to—in the child welfare. We are not going to make those reckless promises. We are going to continue to support families.

I strongly support our initiatives to build a stronger system, to continue to build on the work that we have done as far as more staff, making sure that we have better trained social workers. The Social Work Profession Act is being implemented, and because of those services we are going to continue to see better results for families.

**Family Services
Abuse Case Concern**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): This minister just said she's committed to helping families, committed to helping vulnerable families. Well, Mr. Speaker, last week we learned different.

Mr. Speaker, we learned that yet another serious sexual assault of young victims, a nine-year-old and a 10-year-old, were victimized by a convicted pedophile who was given permission by Family Services to have unsupervised visits with these young victims. When asked, this minister knew of this horrific—did not know of this horrific event, but what she said was, I have no idea, but I just read about it in the paper.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why she didn't know of this horrific event, who in her department did know about this horrific event, and what did she do about it?

We are tired of an incompetent government. Families are sick and tired of an incompetent government who continues to make press releases and have no action behind them.

*(14:10)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, when any child is hurt or abused, we all feel the pain.

It is our responsibility to ensure that we have a system that protects the children. We will continue to do that with the investments we've made, making sure that we're involved with public education, making sure that children and families are aware of their rights. We work every day to ensure that, as we're building a better system, hiring more professionals within our system, making sure that families have the resources that they need.

We know that we have more work to do and we're committed to do that.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the mother insisted, begged, that this would not happen, and the minister had deaf ears to the situation.

And this is not an isolated situation. The minister of Family Services in July 2013, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), had learned of a very similar serious departmental breach of child safety through the media. She then said, and I quote, this is—there is

zero tolerance of people who would allow a sexual predator to remain undealt with.

Tragically, that is exactly what did happen and continues to happen within the Department of Family Services under this dysfunctional government.

So I ask the minister: Where is the zero tolerance within her government? Why would this NDP government allow a sexual predator to revictimize vulnerable children?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Any person, any individual, elected individual or unelected individual, does not want to see a child be abused or injured. The people that are in the front lines every day are making the best decisions that they can make. We are working with the No. 1 priority of keeping our children safe and looking out for their well-being.

We've made investments into the system. We'll continue to make those investments. We'll continue to make sure that we provide the necessary support to all of Manitoba's families.

Mrs. Rowat: These victims are having to listen to this minister who has no idea what's going on in her department. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the minister she has the power, she has the authority and she has the mandate in this province to protect vulnerable children. This minister has forgotten her responsibilities. She is obligated by law to provide safety and support for these children.

This nine-year-old and this 10-year-old were not protected, they were not kept safe, and we are the busiest child-welfare system in the country and, respectively, every single minister, past and present, have demonstrated that they cannot control their department. They have no idea what's going on, they are in the dark, and children remain unsafe and unprotected within this province.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Mr. Speaker, when I was given this opportunity and privilege to be the Minister of Family Services, it was unbelievable. I'm a parent and I'm a social worker and I've worked in the front lines, and in doing that I know the pain that the families have felt. I've seen it for myself.

We're going to continue to work with all of our partners. It's all of our responsibilities to keep Manitoba children safe, and while we're doing that, we're going to ensure that we're building a better system with all of our community partners, and as we do that, we will protect more children.

No one is proud of 10,000 children in care. However, those children are safe, they're protected, and for those children—

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

Science, Reading and Math Education Assessment Results

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve better. Our kids deserve better. We have all seen too many examples of this—of Manitobans paying more and getting far less.

Manitoba scored dead last on the recent—dead last in Canada on the recent Pan-Canadian Assessment in science, math and reading.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask this new old minister: Why does he and his government continue to fail our kids?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Well, I'm very pleased to be asked a question about education, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, quite frankly, when I read the alternative throne speech that they presented, I would love to have been a fly on the wall in their caucus to hear what they had to say about education. What have you got? Nothing. What have you got? Nothing. Okay, we've got nothing on education. Mr. Speaker, they certainly have nothing on education.

Now, let's talk about our recent initiative to cap class sizes, Mr. Speaker. We announced that we're putting that in legislation to ensure that we have the appropriate ratios where students can get more contact time, more one-on-one contact time with the teachers so they can address their specific needs, and I know the member from Lac du Bonnet does not support that. He spoke against reduced class sizes, and as a teacher, I'm really surprised that he would do that, quite frankly.

Mr. Ewasko: We haven't just become last in the country. We had started this slide when the NDP government took over office 15 years ago, and they've continued to get worse, Mr. Speaker. When this member from Gimli took over as Education minister we kept that slide going, and now he's back in the seat, back in the saddle.

Being last in the country wasn't good enough for this government, though, Mr. Speaker. They are now

losing ground. We are 10th, but yet the gap is starting to widen.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP wanted to race to the bottom. They've done that. Now they're exceeding it.

Why does this minister insist on failing our kids?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, 86 per cent of our students are performing at or above the grade level, and where students need more support we're going to provide more supports for those students.

Members opposite cut funding before and they've promised that they would cut funding again if they were, God forbid, elected to be government in this province.

Now, the member opposite doesn't support the initiative that we've brought forward for small class sizes. He suggests that's not going to make a difference. Perhaps he'd like to meet with the 300 teachers that we hired to support that and tell them that what they're doing doesn't matter. I'd love to see him do that.

Last time we had 300 teachers in this building, I was one of those teachers in the gallery when they were attacking the education system like they did in the '90s. If they're elected, they'll decimate and cut the education system once again.

Mr. Ewasko: It's evident to me that this minister is absolutely thrilled to be holding down the last spot in the country.

Mr. Speaker, same old rhetoric that this dysfunctional NDP government has been spinning time and time again. They're tired and they're—more than evident they're self-serving over the last few weeks as well.

We finished eighth, this government stood up and said, sorry, we can do better, we will do better. We finished ninth, they said the same thing: we must do better. Dead last and getting worse? Once again, same rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, these kids have had their entire education provided to them by this spend-more, get-less government. Why are they continuing to fail our kids?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, 86 per cent of our students are achieving at or above the appropriate level. Fourteen per cent need more attention and we're going to make strategic investments to support that. We have twice as many— or, pardon me, three times as many students now

enrolled in apprenticeship programs. We've seen record enrolments at the university. We've increased the graduation rate by 15 per cent. We keep investing in education and improving our education, providing more resources where we need those resources.

Their plan? Oh, I got nothing. I got nothing. Let's cut \$50 million. Let's lay off 700 teachers like we did in the 1990s, because that's what it would mean if they cut another \$50 million from the education system, Mr. Speaker.

And as I said, if a teacher from Lac du Bonnet, former teacher, would like to stand up and talk to those 300 teachers and tell them they're not making a difference, I'd love to be at that meeting to see how they respond to his suggestion that more investments in education aren't making a difference—

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

PST Increase Infrastructure Spending Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last year the net debt of our province grew by \$1.4 billion. This included a deficit of just over \$500 million plus just over \$750 million because the government borrowed money to pay for capital expenditures.

* (14:20)

A major capital expenditure was infrastructure. The Premier has said he used PST money to build infrastructure, but public accounts show that the Premier actually borrowed money to pay for much of the infrastructure built last year.

Why did the Premier say he used PST money for infrastructure when, in fact, much of the money was actually borrowed money and not from the PST increase at all?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the additional resources from the PST supported infrastructure investments in Manitoba. We made a record amount of infrastructure investments in the province, as we committed to the people of Manitoba. We spent well over \$700 million on that.

We've published a report on that which shows that it created over 8,100 jobs, lifted the economy by \$1.1 billion, paved roads throughout Manitoba, including strategic infrastructure that supports CentrePort, Highway 75, Highway No. 10, Highway No. 1 going both east and west, and all of these

things will increase the productivity of our economy while creating good jobs in Manitoba right now.

So we said we would dedicate the resources from the PST to infrastructure and we have made sure that infrastructure reflects the amount of money raised on the PST.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says reflects; it doesn't mean that the money actually raised from the PST went to provide infrastructure.

In fact, the provincial government report says the government raised \$190 million from the increase in the PST last year. Seventy-five million, as the government already acknowledged, was not spent on infrastructure but on other items. Of the \$115 million which the Premier claims he spent on new infrastructure, quite a lot of this money was actually borrowed money, according to the public accounts documents which I table.

How long does the Premier believe that he can deceive Manitobans as to where the money for infrastructure actually came from?

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate getting the information from the member opposite.

The—we said that we would dedicate the PST resources to addressing infrastructure priorities of Manitobans and we put forward a five-year plan to do that, a 5-and-a-half-billion-dollar plan, and that plan will create approximately 60,000 jobs over the life of that plan, person-years of employment. It will lift the economy by over \$6 billion. It'll increase exports outside of Manitoba. It will create good job opportunities now and result in very significant investment in private equipment and private sector investment in Manitoba. That's all by way of ensuring that we grow the economy at a time when the global economy has been fragile.

So the PST, people said, make sure that those resources result in good infrastructure investments in Manitoba, and we have ensured that those resources have resulted in good infrastructure investments in Manitoba.

Provincial Deficit Impact on Manitobans

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier and today's NDP took \$190 million from the pockets of Manitobans by raising the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, and yet now we know that the money that was actually used for infrastructure was to great extent borrowed money going to the

very purpose which Manitobans were told by this Premier he was using for infrastructure.

Manitobans know that borrowing money comes at a cost. The people of our province can't stand to fall further into the bottomless pit of debt that the Premier keeps digging for us.

Does the Premier realize how much more of a future financial burden he and today's NDP are imposing on everyday Manitobans by the course he's taken?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We follow the generally accepted accounting principles where infrastructure is amortized and spread over the life of the asset: if it's a road, up to 20 years; a building, up to 40 years. We followed the standard accounting procedures for that.

With respect to the debt, Mr. Speaker, the debt as a proportion of our economy is lower now at about 29 per cent than what it was when we came into office, and the cost of servicing the debt in Manitoba is less than half than it was when we came into office. It was about 13.3 cents on the dollar to service the debt in '99. Last year's budget showed about 5.8 cents on the dollar to service the debt.

So at a time when the economy needs to have productive investments to create good jobs and to stimulate growth, we are doing that. Interest rates are at a record low. The cost of borrowing is at a record low and the cost of servicing our debt in Manitoba is less than half than it was when we came into office.

Our economy has performed in the top three in the country over the last decade, and that is a testament to good public policy supporting economic growth in Manitoba accompanied by good private sector investment and good training opportunities for young people so they could stay and live and work in the great province of Manitoba.

New Cancer Hub Announcement for Winnipeg

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): My family and I lost seven lives to cancer over the last five years, and cancer has remained a scourge in our society. The cure still we're looking for, and this government is investing in services that make the challenging journey a lot easier.

Today the Minister of Health made an exciting announcement.

Can the minister please tell us how the new cancer hub will help improve the cancer patient's journey?

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

As a cancer survivor, I know that while one person gets diagnosed with cancer it's an entire family that lives with its impact, and we know that every family has been touched by cancer in this province, and that's why we're building the best system in the country to deliver the fastest screening, diagnoses and treatment and why today I was so pleased to announce a new cancer hub in Winnipeg to enhance support for patients suspected of having cancer and to ensure that they are able to access treatment services as quickly as possible. This new hub in Winnipeg builds on the successful work done to develop community and regional cancer hubs in rural Manitoba which offer enhanced and better co-ordinated care.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a virtual clinic which provides expert advice, support and navigation services to patients and navigation support for health-care providers to ensure patients are referred quickly and appropriately, and it builds on the \$100-million investment in the battle against cancer which includes important initiatives like cancer drugs to the drug formulary, Manitoba Home Cancer Drug Program, hiring front-line staff and—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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

Rett Syndrome Awareness Month

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): October was Rett syndrome awareness month and I rise today to raise further awareness for this rare neurodevelopmental condition that almost exclusively affects girls. In fact, it is my understanding that only one young man in all of North America has been diagnosed.

It is caused by a defective gene on the X chromosome and it affects one in every 10,000 girls. Early childhood development appears normal, but as the syndrome progresses the child loses the functional ability of their hands and ability to speak. According to the Manitoba Rett Syndrome

Association, a typical child is described as thus: 25 per cent may never walk at all and about half of those who do walk will lose that ability at some time; 80 per cent have epileptic seizures, some which are mild and some which are extreme which require medication to control; and 100 per cent are at risk to some degree of curvature of the spine requiring surgery. Most girls need assistance for all activities of daily living: feeding, dressing, toileting.

Girls with Rett syndrome have unusually bright eyes and can understand much more than they can express. The most severe challenge in Rett syndrome is apraxia, which means that the will to move is present but the child is unable to carry through the movement. Imagine the frustration. Most girls are very fond of music which has a calming effect and is used as a tool of communication.

Emma Guimond, a constituent of mine, was born in December 2008 and in October 2013 was diagnosed with Rett syndrome. Emma is fortunate to have a supportive and caring family, and her mother, Trish, who is with us today in the gallery, restarted the Manitoba Rett Syndrome Association after years of dormancy. This association had originally started about two decades ago, but due to the rarity of Rett syndrome in Manitoba the organization had a lack of numbers and was inactive for several years. Trish's hard work and perseverance have helped raise both funds and awareness. Getting any organization off the ground has its challenges, but those challenges pale in comparison to the day-in-day ones facing children like Emma and their families.

*(14:30)

Emma has started grade 1 in Oak Bluff this past fall and is doing well. She enjoys swimming and especially enjoys horseback riding through the Manitoba Riding for the Disabled Association.

Mr. Speaker, no drug has been universally successful in improving the symptoms of Rett syndrome, although there are some promising leads.

Mr. Speaker, Rett syndrome is not very well known, which makes the recognition of Rett Syndrome Awareness Month all the more important.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Osteoporosis Month

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, November is Osteoporosis month in Canada. Today I wanted to recognize the Manitoba Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada. Many of their members have

joined us here in the gallery today. They have provided leadership and education, empowering and supporting individuals in our community who live with osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is often referred to as the silent thief because bone loss often occurs with very few noticeable symptoms. Two million Canadians live with this 'disabling' disease, though fortunately this condition is often preventable and fewer and fewer Manitobans deal with it today than in the past.

The Manitoba Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada has been an important partner to us in implementing the Manitoba falls prevention strategy. As part of this strategy, they have promoted the Canadian falls prevention information material and co-ordinated a falls prevention week to raise awareness around prevention of falls and injuries among older adults, and to encourage leadership and collaboration among organizations working with older adults across the province. Mr. Speaker, thanks to their dedicated work, Manitobans, both patients and health-care professionals, are better informed about how to prevent osteoporosis and manage the risks that come along with it.

By working together, our government and the Manitoba Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada have improved access to osteoporosis prevention and treatment. One important way that we can prevent osteoporosis is by making sure every Manitoban has access to a family doctor so we can catch bone density loss before it becomes 'disabling'. Since 1999, we've gained net gain of 665 more doctors and over 3,700 more nurses practising in Manitoba. As a government, we have continued to invest and protect in improving health-care services for families across the province.

I'd like to thank Janet Choboter, Cheryll Unryn, Marg MacDonell, Cheryl Baldwin, Tam Yamashita, Roma Maconachie—sorry—Joan Bartley, Jeannette Jackson and Frances Goovaerts of the Manitoba Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada that have joined us today in the gallery. Your dedication is inspiring to all of us.

Thank you.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I rise today to recognize the importance of November 25th as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. We have one of the worst records

when it comes to violent crimes against women. At nearly double the national average, Manitoba has the absolute worst rate of sexual assaults compared to other provinces. There were 1,379 reported sexual assaults in Manitoba in 2013, and Winnipeg was tied for second highest rate amongst major cities. According to the Winnipeg Police Service's annual statistical report, there were over 680 sexual assaults committed in the city in 2013. The estimated number is even higher when unreported assaults are considered.

The abhorrent reality of violent crimes against women and girls in Manitoba made national headlines earlier this year following the tragic death of Tina Fontaine and the attack against Rinelle Harper. Poverty, racism and social injustice make our Aboriginal population here in Manitoba especially vulnerable to gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, we in the PC caucus acknowledge that violence to and exploitation of women and girls, particularly those who are Aboriginal in Manitoba and throughout Canada, is a crisis that needs immediate action. Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we must look forward and find better ways to improve prevention and ensure needed supports are available in Manitoba. As a province we can and must do better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. I stand here speaking to you as a survivor. Many women and girls live day to day with some form of abuse. To raise awareness and spur change, the UN has created 16 days of activism against gendered violence, beginning with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 21st–25th and ending on December 10th, Human Rights Day.

Addressing violence against women is no easy undertaking. Many incidents of violence go unreported and have a devastating impact on those who are often already vulnerable. Amplifying the voice of victims and empowering bystanders to speak are critical first steps in addressing this problem.

As a part of this year's campaign, everyone is invited to Orange the World in 16 days. By wearing orange to visually demonstrate your support, people

working to end gendered violence will observe Orange Day on the 25th of every month, and this year it has been extended throughout the 16 days of activism.

Here in Manitoba there are many community groups working to reduce violence against women and girls. These dedicated individuals and organizations strive to prevent gender violence by helping youth and families develop stronger, healthier relationships. One such group is the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters which was formed in the mid-'80s. They work to eliminate all forms of violence and increase public awareness of abuse. They offer a welcoming atmosphere where women transitioning out of unsafe relationships can receive understanding and support.

The Broadway Neighbourhood Centre, another great organization in our province, started the program brothers resisting all violence every day. This program seeks to end violence against women by encouraging men to lead by example and to commit to being a part of the solution. These are only a few of the community groups working in Winnipeg to end the many different forms of violence, intimidation and harassment that target women.

Just like these fantastic groups and the people who drive them, I believe all Manitobans can be positive role models by working against the violence that still exists today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Legion of Honour

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, on November the 18th I had the pleasure of attending a special ceremony supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs Canada where the government of France chose to pay special tribute to Canadian veterans who took part in the liberation of France in '44. In all, 12 medals were awarded to distinguished veterans in Manitoba.

At this tribute, Bruno Burnichon, Honorary Consul of France, officially recognized two deservng Canadian veterans and Gladstone Legion members as Knights of the National Order of the French Legion of Honour to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy and Provence.

Mr. Earl Stewart and Mr. Roy Snaith were awarded the National Order of the Legion of Honour. This prestigious honour is the highest decoration that France bestows, regardless of nationality, and is

awarded in recognition of outstanding achievement made in service to the French Republic. The award was established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte and is made in service to the French Republic in either the civilian or military capacity.

Mr. Stewart, a 90-year-old resident of Gladstone, was a gunner sergeant in the 5th Field, 28th Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery. His regiment landed at Caen on July 7th, '44, and first saw action on July 12th at Authie. As a testament to the regiment's fortitude, they fired the first 25-pounder and also captured the first German taken by the 2nd Canadian Division.

Mr. Snaith, a 93-year-old resident of Portage la Prairie, originally from Austin, was a trooper in the 12th Manitoba Dragoons. He landed at Sainte-Croix-sur-Mer on July 7th-8th, 1944, and soon after witnessed intense fighting. The Dragoons suffered heavy losses where Mr. Snaith himself was wounded in battle.

Both recipients are recognized with the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, The Defence Medal, the France and Germany Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal. Upon being presented the National Order of the Legion of Honour, the Honorary Consul proclaimed: Even though these gentlemen are not French citizens, they are French to us. If we are here today, it's because of them.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all honourable members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating these two heroes who fought selflessly to preserve the freedoms we as Canadians enjoy to this day. Their sacrifices deserve our appreciation and recognition. It is the least we can do. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that concludes members' statements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH

(Third Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: And to resume the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) and the amendment thereto, debate is standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert, who has four minutes remaining.

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): I'd like to offer the Leader of the Opposition another chance to stand

up for Manitobans in the last four minutes of my speech when we talk about the school tax credit that we're doing for seniors, \$235 this year, and we have a commitment to eliminate school taxes for seniors by 2016. This takes another 7,200 seniors off the tax rolls.

Is the Leader of the Opposition going to stand up now with his alternative throne speech and tell us that he is not going to support cutting taxes for seniors?

I thought not, Mr. Speaker. He just sits down in his chair and doesn't say anything.

The doom-and-gloom party over there talks about how bad things are in Manitoba all the time when that's not the fact. Today we saw how retail sales are at a high, actually, a record high across the country. We saw a higher than average in Canada record sales for September.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, during these uncertain times, people can rest assured that this—our government's priorities are front-line services and not cutting the things that they depend on. Just a snapshot: 500 more cancer-care treatments per year and the fastest cancer diagnosis treatment in Canada, \$1.2 million for community clinic health care, cutting the waiting list by 40 per cent for hip and knee replacements, a state-of-the-art new diagnostic machine that will shrink wait times for breast cancer screening.

Which one of these would the Leader of the Opposition cut in his alternative throne speech? What did the Leader of the Opposition do, Mr. Speaker? What did they do when they were around the table? They cut nurses, they closed hospital wings and they created health-care hallway medicine. Not this side; we keep moving forward and investing in the future of the people in health care in this province, and the people that we care about can trust us.

Someone else that the people can count on is the floodway that protects the city of Winnipeg when the Red River floods. These gates were rehabilitated over the last few years by our government, and the floodway was doubled over the last 10 years because we know the value of infrastructure and how it protects people in Manitoba.

What did they do, Mr. Speaker, when they were in power? Nothing. Mothballing seems to be a theme over there.

Mr. Speaker, St. Norbert has so much to offer. I enjoy all the walks to the St. Norbert Farmers' Market every weekend to get fresh produce and check out the 100 per cent Manitoba-made goods that are sold there, and you know what we did last summer? We invested in that market. Do you know what the PCs' plan would have seen? More cuts. That market wouldn't have seen an investment, and they wouldn't be moving forward increasing the amount of vendors that they have.

I work for everyone in my riding, Mr. Speaker, of all political stripes, to improve the quality of life, and I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and get involved with the community. That includes sandbagging people's homes and digging trees at the local schools with—shoulder to shoulder with the parent council advisory committees.

Mr. Speaker, I know that on this side of the House we have compassion. It has been proven over and over again by the long list of investments in every corner of this province. We have not laid off thousands of people like the opposition did, endangering public safety and disrupting lives and damaging the economy. We know austerity doesn't work.

I hear the opposition almost every minute asking for more and more and more spending when it comes to their areas, but all they say they would do is cut, cut and cut. I actually think that they like we are in government because they actually can get investments in their area. Underneath the alternative throne speech, underneath the Conservative leader, they would have zero investments in their area. In fact, the cuts would hurt their areas the most.

We are not mothballing projects; we have thousands of jobs coming online because of all of our investments. The Leader of the Opposition must have stock in the mothball companies because all the projects he wants to do would be mothballed, Mr. Speaker. That's all he talks about.

Today Manitoba is consistently among the lowest unemployment rates in the country, unlike when it hit 10 per cent under the Leader of the Opposition. We have the third best economy and we are growing 2.5 per cent every year over the last decade. We are here for all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to be so.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a relief to come to the end of that speech.

It's a pleasure to rise today in response to the Throne Speech, in particular our leader's amendments to the Throne Speech, which I am very proud to support. I think that they are very good amendments. In fact, if the members opposite look around they'll find that some of their colleagues put a lot of those words on record that we used for that. So, certainly, they should feel particularly comfortable with many of these words.

I also would like to thank you, as Speaker, and I also would like to take this opportunity to thank the table staff for their services and the officers and the other staff in the Manitoba Legislature here who make our job a little bit easier all the time so that we can get more accomplished, and this government certainly needs to work on accomplishing more.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents in the constituency of Portage la Prairie. I'm very proud to represent that lovely constituency. It is very diverse and, certainly, many people there that are great supporters and they have contributed in many ways at various levels of their life right from youth right through to seniors in the community, and we need to remember and recognize every one of them. In particular, it's the youth that need to be concerned in the future because we keep spending their future, and so we need to pay a lot of attention to how well we spend these dollars and whether or not we spend them appropriately.

I guess I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). He seems to keep bringing back the issue of protests and the Assiniboine diversion, and every time he does that he builds my support in the community because community is solidly behind these people. They did not get treated right, they have not been treated right and they continue to be treated with very little respect. So every time he brings this issue up, it provides me with an opportunity to send an email loop out to everyone, and I get so many positive comments, I greatly appreciate that. In fact, he may well be—he may well be my best fundraiser.

Mr. Matt Wiebe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

But the member from Thompson also—probably very aware that he has a name in our community. They call him Captain Flood in regards to all of the floods that he has already generated in our community, and I think I should take this opportunity to express our concern that he may well be lining us up for another flood in the spring of '15 with lake levels now at 813.6, just under flood stage, outlets

restricted and the Waterhen at full-at-in full force now, the-very likely Lake Manitoba will have the pleasure of rising over the winter, which very, very, very rarely happens, and that'll put us in great shape for next spring. So I am very concerned, I guess, and as are many Manitobans that, given the excess moisture situations that occur already in the Assiniboine River valley, that any amount of snowfall, be it average or above average, will line us up for another flood next spring.

So I'd like to put that on record as something that we can look forward to, generated by the member from Thompson, for his ability to not manage this infrastructure that is out there now.

So we continue to pay attention to that and, in fact, I would be-I would be at fault if I did not mention how well the Portage Diversion has been looked after by this minister. Right now we have a situation where the banks have had to be rebuilt on the Portage Diversion two times in four years to contain the flood waters, and they continue to do that. The bottom of the floodway has never been cleaned out and has islands with trees on it. So it's such a good facility that people are actually considering this very much of a joke. They're looking forward to seeing what happens, but we hope that it doesn't happen because it very likely will cause a lot of grief in the local community and probably flood out those individuals who have been repeatedly flooded over the last few years.

And, in fact, we're beginning to be concerned about putting bridges at risk, including the bridges on No. 1 Highway and the CN and CP rail bridges, which cross the Portage Diversion near Portage, cross the diversion near Portage, that are the last-or the main rail links across western Canada and would be, if they were breached, would be at a cost of millions of dollars per day.

So, certainly, I hope the minister's paying a little bit of attention to that, and even right down to local access issues, because community used to use the bridge and control structures at Portage as access, created a little lake there, and so to get around the little lake we used to be able to cross the bridges, but now we can't-can't, in particular, cross the one bridge, and no one seems to want to tell us why. Certainly, I've asked the minister for explanations and received none. I asked for engineering reports and been told that it would be a public safety issue for me to get those reports. So people are quite concerned about the future of those control structures

and, in fact, how stable they might be and how well-managed they are being by this particular government. So he's certainly sowing a lot of doubt in the community

The Fairford shutdown, which was recently announced, really cannot turn out well for Manitoba. You take those-that type of water volume and reduce it. We had all summer when the emergency channel should have been fully opened and it was not, to get that-to get Lake St. Martin down to a reasonable level. It did not. The minister offered a briefing one day which I wasted my time attending because he really had no additional information at that briefing.

And, you know, I can sit down and I can do the mathematics probably better than he can because he offered no numbers that day, and we did the water in and the water out-outflows, and I consulted, actually, with several people, including other hydrologists, and some people from the university, and they came to the same conclusion I did-that the outlet on Lake St. Martin, the emergency outlet, was operating well under half of capacity. If it had been doing anything more than that, the lake would have dropped far further than it did.

*(14:50)

So he can spin it all he likes and create whatever myth he wants to create. Numbers do not lie and certainly provided us with far more information than the minister did that day.

We can only hope that things go well for the future, either for the Portage Diversion or for Lake Manitoba, but also we're quite concerned about the lower Assiniboine.

I received a call the other day from a constituent who wanted to phone me up to inform me that a 10-metre stretch of the dikes on the Assiniboine had collapsed into the river, and he was quite concerned about that. He had tried to contact MIT and received no response whatsoever from MIT, so we did pass along the information. I do hope that somebody's following up on that because the constituent's house is right there beside the Assiniboine. In fact, he lives in a well-over-a-century-old farmyard along the Assiniboine. He might actually be high enough to be saved himself, but if the river breached there because of the collapsed dike, big chunks of Manitoba near to Winnipeg, near to the Fort Frances area-or St. François area, sorry-would be flooded very quickly. So I do hope someone pays attention to this, because

clearly maintenance on the Assiniboine River dikes haven't been a very high priority for this government.

And they've had many opportunities going right back to 1999, when they actually had an agreement in place that if they'd followed through on would probably have renovated those dikes because it was at that time that PFRA, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, turned over those dikes to the Province of Manitoba and at time when they were prepared to spend some money on it. And, in fact, an agreement had been hammered out between then-Premier Filmon and the federal government to do a stage-by-stage redevelopment, and the first year was actually accomplished. PFRA did the work. It was the Province's responsibility to acquire the properties because right there with most of the river area—sorry, the land along the river are actually river lots, and they say if they're old title that the landowner owns the water—or owns the land to the water's edge, so the dikes in most cases is, in fact, private property.

So someone had to acquire that property so that work could be done on it, and it was the Province's responsibility to do that. And that happened the first year, and then no follow-through was done, and then, of course, the federal government was very happy not to meet their commitment on that. They couldn't work on the property because no one had bothered to acquire the property. So we didn't get the maintenance opportunity done in those day—in that time that should've been done, and we pay for that even today.

In fact, that is probably the only time in history that we have ever worked on the dikes on the lower Assiniboine when it was not in a flood situation. So certainly we would've been able to do a much better job and perhaps increase the capacity of the lower Assiniboine so that the amount of water that's diverted north to Lake Manitoba would've been quite significantly different than it is now.

So certainly there's been many lost opportunities to help with the flood situation, and we do still express our concern about what might happen this coming year. I think there's a number of very concerning opportunities for things to go wrong. And we certainly hope that situation does not arise again, because it seems the constituency in Portage la Prairie ends up paying some of the greatest price on that, not only along the Assiniboine diversion but around Lake Manitoba. And that certainly applies to a large area all the way around the lake further from

my constituency and also to those people along the river.

So we kind of have people that are hit in three different ways at three different times, and the compensation programs for some of these people have simply been non-existent. I know the government likes to brag about all the money they spent in 2010, but there was no money spent on those that were impacted by dikes along—the seepage—dike seepage and borrow pits along the lower Assiniboine. In fact, to this day, many of those borrow pits are still there abandoned by MIT and actually making a seepage problem even worse than it would be otherwise. So additional costs are being pushed off onto private individuals, and there's really no move to do anything in a co-ordinated manner. It's crisis management at its best.

And we keep building up the dikes on the Portage Diversion, and it's interesting because the Army Corps of Engineers had an experience in 2005 on the Mississippi River in the US where they discovered that raising levies—which effectively is what the Portage Diversion might be termed if it was built in the US—raising levies higher and higher actually create a—quite a substantial increased risk to surrounding communities, and they were unfortunate enough in 2005 to have a breach that caused flooding on hundreds of thousand acres and hundreds of thousands of families. It was a major blow in some of the Mississippi Delta areas to many families.

And they came and—they—and to solve that problem they have now put in place a different set of quality standards that many hydrologists and engineers around the—North America and around the world have put in place as the standard to be built to and the Portage Diversion no longer qualifies within that standard because of all the changes that have been made. It is now outside standard for engineering, which leaves us to wonder what the future holds for us as we continue to manage simply by raising the sides instead of cleaning out the—doing the maintenance on the bottom. In fact, there hasn't been major maintenance done on the bottom end of the Assiniboine probably since it was constructed. They do a little bit around the gate every year so that they're able to open it, but that seems to be the only regular maintenance that's put in place.

That behind me, though, in terms of the poor example of water management that are in place in this province, they seem to also refuse to deal with the origin of the additional runoff. There are

many programs in other jurisdictions that have put in place programs to help and encourage the landowner to take more water, to hold more water in the landscape, reduce the amount of runoff and, hopefully, reduce the amount of flooding downstream. And we even had a pilot project in this province at one time called Alternate Land Use Services that was put in place and run for three years with a huge uptake on a voluntary basis of over 80 per cent of the landowners in the RM of Blanshard which was the trial area, and great results. The summaries were all very positive, but nothing further was done here in Manitoba.

Other provinces learned from our example, however, and there are now projects—well, the whole island of Prince Edward Island, actually, has adopted this as their major conservation project. Parts of southern Ontario use this particularly in the high-intensity areas of agriculture down there because it provides them with other alternatives in terms of benefits, ecological services benefits. Parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta have already moved on this type of project and it seems to be expanding in those areas. But we seem to be very slow on the uptake in this and, hopefully, we can learn from this example that other provinces have learned from us and that ultimately we can come to a program that works very well for Manitoba and helps reduce some of the risks. In particular we need to be talking more and more with our neighbours to the west, encourage them to get involved in this as well and look at other alternatives in terms of water storage, and I know this government likes to talk about them but, actually, you have to do some of this. Talk doesn't hold back much water, and we certainly have learned that the last few years because we've had lots of rhetoric around it but very little in terms of action. In fact, the year after the flood, they actually cut their budget by 70 per cent when it comes to dealing with flooding issues. So, clearly, their commitment to this is today we're committed to it, tomorrow we're not. So certainly leaves us with very few solid opportunities to look at in the future.

I would like to also talk a little bit more about my critic's portfolio, and we had a lot of questions today regarding Child and Family Services. We certainly are very concerned about how this department is running. We hear about the 'crises.' We hear about the ones that make the press. We don't hear about the many cases that don't turn out well but don't actually end up in the press. And I—since there's been a few issues that have made it to the press we've

been getting more and more calls from people that have been impacted one way or the other by Child and Family Services who have not been treated well and who's families have not been reunited and the results have been less than perfect. And, in some cases, yes, you can understand why a child was removed, others it is very difficult to get to the bottom of the case and find out if there was, in fact, a good solid reason for action and how you can move beyond that, because most families want to be reunited. They work—in many cases the parents work extremely hard to get their children back and are prepared to take extreme steps, go—take training and courses and parenting courses and deal with addictions issues, in some cases even relocate to better situations so that they have a better chance of getting their children back.

*(15:00)

But it seems as though in many cases the workers are less than co-operative, certainly don't go out of their way to help the parents receive the training that is necessary, and I think that's very deplorable. I think a stronger focus on reuniting and rebuilding to strengthen the family would get a number of kids back in the family situation, and as we discussed earlier today, there's nothing better than the family situation to be rebuilt and it is certainly appreciated by many families when they do get—and they do have their successes. I've certainly been involved in a number of cases where eventually, after six months or a year, children were returned to a family, and hopefully that remains well. I know they continue to be monitored by Child and Family Services even after they are reunited, and, hopefully, that's to everyone's benefit. But I hope the focus isn't on taking the children away, that the focus is providing the supports for the family that are necessary.

But we continue to have children that die in the care of Child and Family Services, some of it by accidents, but way too many by suicide. And clearly those children are not getting adequate supports; psychologists and psychiatrists to deal with these children are very scarce in the system. I can give you a couple of working examples, though they are not from CFS directly. I have Agassiz youth facility in my constituency, which is a facility for those that are underage and who have been at odds with the law. And usually they've been getting pretty good services. Psychologists there recently have been cut back to half a day a week for 200 kids, which is a

fraction of where they were, and that's clearly not enough.

And we also have Manitoba development centre in my constituency, which is a home for those with severe mental disabilities, and they have not seen a psychologist there since last March, which is—they're supposed to have a half a day a week on—or, sorry, half a week on staff all the time, three days a week on staff all the time, and they have not seen anyone there to help with their caseload since last March. So clearly we're struggling to provide the services that are necessary. Maybe it's because we're a rural area. We're certainly classified as that, though I would argue that half an hour or 45 minutes outside of Winnipeg is hardly to be called remote. In fact, you can waste more time than that on Pembina Highway on a bad morning. So, certainly, we're not difficult to get to. I hope that's not the case.

There are currently over 10,600 kids in the CFS system. That is way too many. And we look at other provinces that have similar demographics and similar populations to us, and we find that they're at quite substantially less numbers. So there's something to be learned from these situations, and certainly we can do better than we have. Things like family breakdown, addictions and violence certainly contribute a lot to the need for more children to be in Child and Family Services, to be picked up by Child and Family Services and in their care.

However, these are basic problems with poverty. And our poverty numbers in Manitoba continue to rise. And, in fact, we appear to be No. 1 in the nation when it comes to poverty, in particular child poverty, and that is certainly not something that we want to aspire to. And I think that this problem puts us out of line with other provinces. It's very much the reason why we have so many problems in so many other places, whether they be addictions, whether they be CFS, whether they be health care, I think a great deal of our problems rolls back to poverty.

And certainly there needs to be a lot of things done and—to improve the situation, not the least of which is to provide more job opportunities, but we also need to come up with programs and help people transition from income supports, like EIA, back into the workplace. And look at Saskatchewan who have been very aggressive on transitional programs with considerable success and say, well, why can't we do something like this in Manitoba and get people back in the workplace? In many cases it's disabled people

that can work a portion of the week but not the whole week. In our system that really isn't allowed. Any time you get more than \$200, you're basically over the welfare wall and you might as well quit. And that's what happens to many people, and—but in Saskatchewan they continue their supports at a much higher level and certainly help people transition back into the workplace much more successfully than we have seen here in Manitoba. In fact, their portion of people that are receiving income assistance as a percentage of the province has been dropping, where ours has been rising.

So, clearly, there must be some difference in policies. There's not just—there is differences in the marketplace, that is clear, though they go through their cycles and employment opportunities and we go through ours at different rates. But there's clearly something else happening here besides just the employment opportunities.

In fact, I know that there was a program put in place under Income Assistance to help people create their own employment, so to speak, get a—create a business. And I was working recently with a constituent who was trying very hard to make that program work and, finally, he had to give up in frustration not because he didn't seem to be headed down the right road, but because there was no recognition that when he collected things like the PST on some of the work that he provided, that wasn't his money to keep. He had to remit that as is his obligation, as anyone's obligation would be for providing a service, but Income Assistance thought that that was his money to keep and they counted that as income.

So, over the period of several months, basically, that—they insisted he actually live on. So over a period of several months that ate away at—because he had to remit it—ate away at any cushion that he might have, and basically, I think, was a big factor in having to shut down that business which was off to a very promising start. And it was simply a lack of recognition of what is standard business practice and what needs to be done when you start a business. And he did his level best and I certainly encouraged him as much as I could, but at some point when you can't get—and we went through the appeals procedure and everything—you can't get recognition of what—where that money should go, there's simply no other options for you. You have to pay that bill or the court will come and visit you, usually in the form of a sheriff, and so he was in a situation where he had to remit that and that basically put him out of business.

And it's a shame to have a program with the right intent but the wrong regulations because somebody in that process doesn't understand how that should work. So, certainly, very disappointed that that program may be beyond the books and it may look like a good initiative, but it doesn't work.

So we certainly see that, and it kind of reminds me a little bit, going back to housing when we had special programs for those in boarding houses and who owned boarding houses to improve them, and looking for results in that I would think it was a great initiative in theory. We were looking for results and they had had, if I remember the numbers correctly, something like 22 applications over four years of which three had been approved.

So it was another one of those situations where it looks like a program, it smells like a program it walks and talks like a program, but it doesn't work. So certainly it was disappointing in that case as well. I know, talking to some of the people that had tried to qualify for it, they said all you ended up doing was banging your head against the wall trying to do paperwork.

So, leaving those behind, I would just like to make a few further comments. I am certainly proud to support our leader in his motion here, non-confidence against this government. I think this is a government that has demonstrated very clearly to Manitobans that they are not functional, that they are not capable of delivering the services on a consistent quality basis that Manitobans need and that the opportunity should be put forward as soon as possible for the electorate to make the decision as to who they want to be government here in Manitoba.

So I would certainly encourage the members opposite to think very strongly about providing support to our motion of non-confidence. I think this would be the cleanest—clearest opportunity to say to Manitobans that they are not happy with the government they have been representing and that they are prepared to go back to the drawing board and start over, and I think that there are many Manitobans that would take that message and look very hard at what the options are for the future.

And so I certainly would encourage the members opposite to vote with us on this non-confidence motion and, hopefully, we will be successful in it because I think it is timely and it is what we are hearing from Manitobans all the time. Why not have an election? That's what we're hearing from Manitobans, and if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was

actually listening to Manitobans as he frequently says, that's what he would be hearing too.

Thank you very much.

* (15:10)

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It is my pleasure to rise today to put a few words on the record, and I have to say I had a good speech prepared here and—but listening to the words of the member opposite who just spoke, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), whom I respect and I normally have respect for his opinion, to listen to him just a few moments ago I'm very, very disappointed in some of the misinformation and misdirection that he put on the record here, and I just have to assume that maybe it's the company he keeps. I don't know, but, you know, he's starting to become one of them, where it's more important to politically distort events for advantage outside of this building rather than deal with the truth.

And now that I have their attention with my preamble, I'll just make reference to the points that I'm speaking about here. And I guess, first of all, the member opposite is a little sensitive. The—his presence—disruptive presence in the Portage Diversion a short time ago has been raised once again in this House, and I know that's a point that hurts him because, you know, that was a highly, highly irresponsible and dangerous act, as we all know. The prevention of the operation of the Portage Diversion at that particular time with the massive, huge ice floes that were coming down the Assiniboine River, if that ice had gone east of the controls and into the dikes and then subsequently breached those dikes, the damage for Manitobans would've been astronomical. The impact could've been in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A highly irresponsible act, so I understand that he's a little sensitive on this particular topic.

Now, what I'm making specific reference to today is, well, a couple of things: (1) the so-called closure at the Fairford River water-control structure recently. It's like this was something new. This is something that we do every year as government. We operate that structure to flow the maximum amount of water, but the fact is when the freeze-up occurs and that ice starts to crystalize in the river, it creates something called frazzle ice which very quickly builds up in every curve and nook and cranny in the river and the next thing you know it's causing flooding and so forth. We are obliged to reduce the flow at that control structure until such time that the

river freezes and we can open it back up again. So this is nothing new. This is nothing new that we effected this year, and, in fact, this is a good-news story, not a bad-news story, because we reduced it, the flow, from roughly 13,000 cubic feet per second down to 10,000 cubic feet per second instead of to 5,000 cubic feet per second or less, which is typically what we do reduce it to.

This year, because of the fact that we have the emergency outlet and we have it in operation, we were able to reduce the flow to a lesser amount this year than we do under normal circumstances. And in the press release we also made reference to the fact that the closure would be for half the amount of time than it normally is. So there you have it, a deliberate and blatant attempt to dis-misinform and mislead Manitobans over what is in essence a good-news story. These guys, in their Orwellian way of looking at things, have to twist and turn and manipulate something and try and turn it into a bad-news story.

Now, another topic, the emergency outlet, you know, and, first of all, you know, this government should be credited with taking the initiative in actually building this emergency outlet. But how do these guys—they focus on the amount of flow. Now, you know, we—I think we're running it at about 80 per cent of capacity now, which is a lot of water. We didn't go to that initially and we were condemned for that, members opposite rising up, why don't you do something? Why don't you open it up wide open?

Well, you know, if you just thought for a few minutes, the reason is evident. There are impacts downstream such as I just described earlier with frazzle ice and so forth. This emergency outlet does have an impact on the environment, and when I say the environment, I mean the fishery. The fishery is very important to Aboriginal people and maybe not so much to members opposite, but I represent these people and it matters to me and it certainly matters to them.

Now, when you run too much water through the emergency outlet as it's currently structured, that water goes into the big Buffalo Marsh and then down the Buffalo Creek back into the Fairford River just upstream of the community at the mouth of Anama Bay.

And here's something members opposite should be aware of. Not all fish species spawn in the spring. That's simple science. I don't know if all of them know that. Myself, I do because, well, I'm a fisherman but, you know, pickerel spawn in the

springtime. The jackfish spawn in spring. Not the whitefish. Whitefish spawn in the fall, and this is the time that we're referring to.

Now, the fact is if you put a whole bunch of water through the emergency outlet which subsequently goes down the Buffalo Creek, in effect, you have a greater flow of water going down the Buffalo Creek as compared to the Dauphin River, and anybody that understands fish will know that a fish will go where the stronger stream of water is, and we don't want the fish going up the Buffalo Creek to spawn instead of the Dauphin River to spawn because when the water is then turned off or whatever under whatever circumstances, those fish can be stranded.

So, you know, I know their Conservative colleagues in Ottawa don't think that any environmental impact is necessary whatsoever. Listen to Bob Sopuck, the neophyte member for Dauphin-Marquette, wherever, talk about the environmental impact and all of this: We don't need that; here, we've amended the law; that's all just nonsense; you can just proceed with this construction the very next day, right.

Well, I don't agree with that, and representing all these people, all these Aboriginal people, the fishers, we cannot just ignore an environmental impact. So, you know, that is part of due process when you're talking about a capital project in excess of, or in the neighbourhood of, half a billion dollars. Proper procedures, proper engineering design and environmental impact review and the constitutional duty to consult with First Nations people, all of this is necessary for a project of this magnitude.

And may I just add, this is not a project. In fact this is five projects. Now, listening to members opposite, in particular the Leader of the Opposition who keeps saying, I could build this in one year—or okay, not one year, three years. He said he could build the secondary outlet out of Lake Manitoba in three years. Well, coincidentally, that's how long we said it will take to build this particular project. But note, that's all he ever talks about. That's all he ever talks about is the secondary outlet out of Lake Manitoba, and if they were the government, quite likely that's all they ever would build because, again, they don't care about the environment. They don't care about the Aboriginal people around Lake St. Martin, up the Dauphin River and so forth.

But it's not just one project. It's in fact five projects. There's the Reach 3 which takes water out

of the big Buffalo Marsh into Lake Winnipeg. Anybody that understands drainage knows that you start at the bottom of the drain, not at the top. You start at the bottom. As much as you'd like to just go and start shovelling out of Lake Manitoba, you have to start with Reach 3, and Reach 3, again, in terms of environmental impact, in terms of impact on our Aboriginal people and the fishery, Reach 3, where it was currently projected to outflow, is not good enough. We have to extend Reach 3 further south, south of Willow Point and hopefully that will address those environmental and fisheries concerns. That's the first project.

* (15:20)

Secondly, our government committed to expanding the existing emergency outlet by the same amount of water that we will be adding through the secondary outlet out of Lake Manitoba. That's important. Lake Manitoba, in comparison, has been very well regulated, but the people around Lake St. Martin, those are the people that have been hit hardest, and I know, because I represent the area. So this emergency outlet has temporarily addressed that problem. However, if we start flowing another 7,500 cubic feet per second, which is in the Throne Speech—this Throne Speech—a huge commitment—then we have to add that equivalent volume to the secondary or to the existing emergency outlet.

Now, access to these sites is not a simple thing. These are very remote sites in what is colloquially known in the Interlake as moose pasture. It's a lot of swamp and muskeg and water and bottomless bogs and so forth. This is not easy terrain to access—not easy terrain to access. And we learned that in 2011 when we built the emergency outlet. Therefore, in order to reach these sites, we have to build an access road up the east side of Lake St. Martin to the point of the emergency outlet out of Lake St. Martin with a spur off to reach three. That's another project; that's three projects already.

Fourthly, we want to build a proper control structure at the mouth of the emergency outlet, so we don't have to have a trackhoe sitting there at whatever it is—\$500 an hour—all year. That's the scenario now, in order to operate it, given that it's so remote. We'd rather have a control structure there. That's a fourth project.

Then you get to build the Lake Manitoba secondary outlet. And I'm not saying then; we can begin work on that project simultaneous to this other work, but all of it inclusive has to be done—not just

the secondary outlet out of Lake Manitoba, as members opposite keep talking about. It's a whole package, so that things are done correctly and completely and all needs of all Manitobans are addressed. And that's my commitment. As long as I'm the MLA for the Interlake, I will ensure that this happens.

Now, I have other notes on flooding, members opposite. You know the Leader of the Opposition has a lot of gall, I have to say, to—you know, to talk about flooding and, oh, what they would do if only they were the government. Well, he was in the government, in 1997. In fact, he was the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures in this province, and what did he do just before the onset of the flood of the century? What did he do? And it's not like they didn't know that it was going to happen. They knew it was going to happen. What did he do? Flew the coop. That's what he did—packed his bags, scooted off to Ottawa on a little path of personal ambition. This is the dedication of the wannabe premier-in-waiting on the opposite of the House here. So, frankly, if I have a choice between the two sides, I know what side I stand on.

I know that our government, this Cabinet, this Premier (Mr. Selinger), did the work necessary in 2011 to offset this flood, and they did it largely with our own resources here in the province of Manitoba, which is a very unfair thing, that Manitobans had to bear the weight of this flood to the tune of 700–800 million dollars or more, and that's just damage control during the flood, right? The standard procedure for Mr. Harper in Ottawa was standard DFA; that's it. We're not going one iota outside of the boundaries of standard DFA, and they stuck to that—right, you know—and haven't followed through on even that, and I refer to the emergency outlet which cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 million. This was an act taken during the flood to directly alleviate flood pressures. It's entirely eligible for disaster financial assistance funding. We should be getting 90-cent dollars from Ottawa for this project. What've we got to date? Nothing. Nothing. But that's to be expected, I guess.

And another thing that gets me about Ottawa is they're telling everybody, oh, yeah, if you go ahead and do with these next big ditches we're there. We're there with money. Well, that's nonsense. The way it's going to be with them, it's just the way it was with the flood of 1977. You know how long it took for the Manitoba government to collect all the money for the flood of 1977? Seven years, seven years before we

were fully compensated from Ottawa. So this is the Conservative way of doing things from Ottawa's perspective.

The—Manitoba you go out build not one but five capital projects to the tune of half-a-billion dollars, then maybe come to us and maybe we'll start talking about compensating, and if it's five years, if it's eight years, what it boils down to is it'll be 20, 25 or later before we see any money from the Conservative government in Ottawa. The hypocrisy just boggles the mind. It's just—it's disgusting, quite frankly, how this government in Ottawa has basically put the blocks to the people of Manitoba.

We have to bear the burden, and I heard their members of Parliament stomping around my riding using language like it's a man-made flood. The Province of Manitoba flooded these people, right? Well, that's nonsense, too, Sir, because this water comes all the way out of the United States. It comes from across western Canada. This is not just a—this is not a provincial issue. It's not just a national issue. It's an international issue, and a previous federal government cost shared the construction of the Portage Diversion as well. So they've got skin in the game. So don't tell me it's standard DFA alone when it comes to this. Don't tell me it's a man-made flood the Province did this or that. All governments have a role to play and I sure hope that one day a future federal government will step up and do the right thing.

So I don't know I digressed from my speech somewhat here. But—[interjection] Yes, well, I've talked about the big panic there at the Fairford control structure.

I should talk about a few other things in the Throne Speech. There was so much in here and I have so little time.

You know, education, the north Interlake campus—regional campus this government committed to today. This is a huge, huge thing for the people in my constituency, for Aboriginal people who are Manitobans not just Canadians as the members opposite seem to think. That was the language of the Filmon government anyways, certainly when they applied for a Community Places grant, for instance, just an example. It comes to the top of my head here. Well, they said, no, no, no, you're wards of the federal government don't come to us.

You know, this government changed that. We've gone on to First Nation communities with things like

dialysis units, for instance. One in the Percy Moore Hospital in Hodgson, just—well, it's on Peguis land actually. So, you know, it's no surprise to me that we've made this commitment to take post-secondary technical vocational training into the rural areas directly to Aboriginal people which have such a high unemployment rate. And training in the technical fields it's so necessary in rural areas where there's a shortage of skilled workers capitalizing on this opportunity is long overdue, and I thank the government for stepping down this path.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Speaking of paths, well, the path to Hodgson is Provincial Road 17 from Fisher Branch to Hodgson, which is also mentioned in the Throne Speech. I'm very happy to see that. So much has been done by this government in terms of highways in my constituency I'm hard pressed to find a road that we haven't dealt with. Of course, there are many yet. But, you know, I just look to Highway No. 6, for instance, mention about the path from Grosse Isle to Woodlands is in there. We should mention that we straightened that curve out at Grosse Isle in previous years. Other curves, the one at—towards Steep Rock was done.

* (15:30)

We're looking at St. Laurent. You know, there's a massive construction project from just north of Eriksdale to Ashern—was not mentioned in the Throne Speech but is certainly under way. And another curve we're straightening out is the access road to the Ashern Auction Mart. Here is an access road, it's on a curve, very dangerous scenario, so when this project is complete that scenario will be addressed as well. And we will keep going; \$700 million this government is spending on highways this time around, 2,300 kilometres of roadwork to be done. This is an extraordinary commitment, certainly necessary, and I should compare it to the record of members opposite.

I think I've done it before, but less than \$90 million, that's what the Filmon government was spending in 1999—a pittance. And you yourself, Mr. Speaker, know, having chaired that task force—what the hell—what was it called—not to mention the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar), Vision 2020, the conclusion you came to was that, you know—I think it was, like, 75 per cent of our highways were in the last five years of a 25-year lifespan. We were facing systemic collapse. That's the legacy of members opposite. That's what we inherited from them:

systemic collapse, my goodness. How proud they must be of that. How fortunate it is for the people of Manitoba they were thrust out of office in the midst of scandal and controversy when they were. And don't get me started on that, because, you know, the Interlake was the virtual epicentre of Conservative scandal, whether it was vote-rigging in '95 or a smear campaign against me personally—a despicable act, I have to say, for which Conservative members were convicted of defamation and—but I digress. I'm sorry, I didn't want to talk about that. But search Hansard if you want the story or read the book, eh, *As Many Liars* by Doug Smith. He'll fill you in on all of that.

What else have we got here? Mobile clinic in north Interlake that will fit nicely with new clinic in Lundar and ambulance garage in St. Laurent coming up. Compare that to the plans of the leader opposite, which is privatization, right? We know that. They attempted to privatize Home Care back when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Filmon government. Privatize Home Care, my goodness, you know, the last bastion of our elderly or our sick or physically disabled people, you know, they were going to throw this into the profit mix. But, you know, that doesn't surprise me.

I know that Crown corporations, they're looking at that avidly. You know, the leader opposite being an insurance salesman, MPIC, I'm sure, is on the block. Not to mention the delivery of health care in general. You're talking a budget of five, six billion dollars. You know what they think of that, members opposite? That's a big cash cow, that's what it is. It's a business opportunity for them. They—all their little rich friends are just slaving at the mouth at the thought of them coming to office and managing to get their hooks into big wads of provincial dollars. That's their plan. We all know it, the people of Manitoba know it, and they will stay, stay, stay on that side of House for years to come before Manitobans will ever, ever trust them on anything like that.

You know, the announcements on cancer care, right, and the Minister of Health's (Ms. Blady) answer to a question today, you know, everybody's lost people to cancer. I lost both my mother and father to lung cancer, so I personally have experienced that as well. I certainly want—wouldn't want some company out of the United States orchestrating the care for mom or dad, or myself, for that matter. I trust the provincial government to deliver services like that, much more so than how members opposite would react to it.

I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture on behalf of all the ranchers around Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis, Lake St. Martin, for the feed and freight assistance program. I know that he's worked long and hard all summer to get the message across to Ottawa to Minister Ritz, you know, who in times past has said, well, you farmers want to be compensated twice for the same flood. My God, that was staggering, staggering in its lack of understanding. But, thankfully, they're coming across, and that's another thing covered off.

Money for municipal roads and bridges doubled in this coming budget. I thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Dewar) for that, looking forward to moving forward on that. I might add that main market roads in former LGDs as well, this government made a commitment last year for five years of additional funding, and on and on and on.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I better wrap it up here. You know, as much as I'd like to continue, you know, but—well, there's one or two more things here, I got about one or two more minutes. I read something about a new craft beer strategy. That sounds interesting, home brew—home brewing, not—no, no, no, no, not home brewing, sorry. I'm thinking like an Interlaker here—homegrown brewing industry, that's more like it here, many things like that.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech document is just chock full of good news for the people of Manitoba, and I will conclude by thanking all the people of the Interlake who have sent me here to be their servant. I appreciate the opportunity. It's a wonderful job and I intend to continue in this job with their good will in the years to come.

Thank you very much.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It's a pleasure to be back in the Chamber again this fall. I guess it's actually winter now, we're into the end of November, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the amendment to the Throne Speech that was put forward by my leader, and certainly support that amendment and I will give you several reasons why in the next few minutes.

But I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, welcome to—back—to you and to all members of the Legislature and hope that we have a fruitful and productive session ahead of us. I want to say welcome to the pages who are here. A couple are here to serve us today and to work with us, and to all of those who have been chosen to work in this Legislature, I hope

that you enjoy your stay and that you are treated with the respect that you deserve as young people that may have their eyes opened from time to time when you see some of the activities that take place in this Chamber. But it will be a worthwhile experience and I'm sure you will enjoy that, and I want to say to those that have been selected as interns for both the government caucus and our caucus, congratulations to them. I know that we've put our interns in our caucus to good use already and I know that they will have a valuable experience as they go through the next several months.

To the table officers and all that are back here that support us and to security at the front of the building and those that are here to ensure that our workplace is safe, I want to say thank you to them, and I know there will be some changes that will happen over the next period of time. It's unfortunate that in our free country of Canada we feel threatened sometimes by some of the activities that are going on and we just want to ensure that we protect those that work as staff within the building as well as those of us that sit in this Legislature and do the work of—on behalf of the people of Manitoba that have elected us to represent them.

* (15:40)

And, Mr. Speaker, it's always interesting to listen to the member for the Interlake and follow him in the Chamber when he has had an opportunity to speak, and I heard him say when he first started his comments that he was kind of wondering whose company the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) kept. Well, I would ask the same question of him and ask him whose company he keeps on his side of the House. There are several or, well, at least two different factions presently. There may be more. We're not really sure, but it would be interesting to know whose company he's been keeping in the last little while.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, I've been here for several years. I've had the opportunity to serve in opposition and then in government and then back in opposition again, and so I've had much opportunity and some interesting experiences. And, you know, when I was first elected to the Legislature, and my colleague from Elmwood would remember those days well. He was in the government benches and I was in the opposition benches back in 1986, and we saw a government, the NDP government, in a bit of a state of disarray. As a matter of fact, one of their own members voted against their government and brought

the government down, brought the government to its knees and caused an election.

Mr. Speaker, that was my first experience in this Legislature, and you know what? Everyone knows that I have announced that I won't be seeking re-election again. I'll have another opportunity to speak in this House, so I will be able to speak about that in a bit more detail, but when I came into the Legislature, we saw an NDP government in a state of disarray, and as I leave the Legislature we again see an NDP government in a state of disarray.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take any credit for that, because, you know, I don't think it was all my doing, but it's just very interesting that I've got that history behind me, and maybe as time goes by and I have maybe an opportunity to write a book, I'll be able to speak in more detail about some of the events that occurred.

But, anyway, Mr. Speaker, let's get to the business of today because we don't and can't continue to live in the past. We have to look at what is happening today and look towards the future, and I see some interesting—actually, quite bizarre activities unfolding on the government side of the House, something I have never experienced. And usually there is that Cabinet solidarity, there is some confidence and there is a team effort, especially in government, to try to keep the wheels in motion and to continue to serve the people of Manitoba to the best of their ability. It may not be what we would do if we were in government, but, nonetheless, the NDP government has chosen to self-destruct, and I'm having difficulty understanding how that could happen and how that could be. And I know—was speaking to one member of government the other day and he indicated that, you know, they're in uncharted waters. This has never happened before in the history of our province, I would say probably not in the history of Canada. And so, yes, it is uncharted waters, and it'll be very interesting to see what unfolds and what happens.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that we are, as an opposition, on a path to moving forward with a vision that was articulated in the alternative throne speech and we know, too, that the amendment to the Throne Speech that was presented by our leader this time was very different from what we've seen in an amendment to a Throne Speech. And, you know, it's an invitation to those on the government side of the House that have lost confidence in the leadership of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to stand up and vote in

support of this amendment and in support of the words that they have spoken, words that they have spoken publicly. It's an opportunity for them to stand up united and indicate that they, as they have said, have lost confidence in their Premier (Mr. Selinger), and, ultimately, that would be in their government.

So I'm hopeful that they will take to heart the comments that they have made and ensure that they make the message that they're sending out loud and clear to Manitobans, and we haven't seen that happen yet because we have seen those that have said they don't have confidence in the Premier saying they're still going to support the Premier. Well, Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. People say that when you're in opposition you can have it both ways, but when you're in government you can't. When you're in government you have to stand up and be accountable and show the kind of leadership that people expect of Cabinet ministers and their government.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I am going to let other members of the Legislature speak, and I am going to again extend the invitation to members on the government side of the House that have shown displeasure with the actions of their Premier to stand up with us, to support this amendment and to be very clear about what their intentions are. I'm hopeful that they will have the strength and the fortitude to do exactly that.

Thank you.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand up in support of this Throne Speech. This Throne Speech outlines a path forward for all Manitobans that is inclusive, that is respectful, that is full of co-operation, and in this path it outlines investments in education, growing our economy by infrastructure development which leads to creating good jobs and ultimately provides opportunities for young people.

All government MLAs are focused on families, creating opportunities for our children here in Manitoba and protecting services that matter most like seniors care, hospitals and schools. Manitoba is stronger because we're working together. We're continuing to invest in infrastructure like roads and flood protection. It's a plan that grows our economy and creates good jobs for families. Steady growth, good jobs and a public service people can count on, that's how we will make life better for all Manitobans. Our government has rooted our priorities in those everyday Manitobans. We ended a decade of cuts and underfunding and launched a new

era of investment and growth. Every parent wants their child to have a clear path to a good job.

Investment in education has become cornerstone of our growth strategy since we first formed government. Mr. Speaker, in today's economy, advanced education and training is the best way to get a path to a good career. In Fort Richmond, we have made an investment in healthy living centre, the chemistry lab at Fort Richmond Collegiate. The Fort Richmond Collegiate's new healthy living centre will include space for health, nutrition classes, fitness activities, weight training and numerous other programs that support healthy living. I was also happy to hear that the construction and the renovation and expansion for the École Saint-Avila gym has been completed. Over 350 students will benefit from their newly expanded gym with barrier-free access improvements and a new mechanical room and gymnasium storage. Renovations included extensive improvements to the school. It is a—investments that all community members will benefit from.

Our NDP government is committed to helping young people learn the skills that they need for good jobs by eliminating interest on student loans, by expanding the existing apprenticeship model to certify new occupations outside of traditional trades, launching a new credit transfer portal to help students move easily between programs and institutions, working with the Alliance of Manitoba Sector Councils to bring more employers into classrooms and more students into workplaces.

* (15:50)

Another exciting investment in the area of Fort Richmond is the University of Manitoba Active Living Centre. The new world-class sports and recreation centre will benefit students and staff and community members across the—or community families across the community. We're creating new opportunities for people of all ages to get active right in the community because it's a priority of Manitobans and because we know that it will have a lasting effect for our future.

Not only is our government investing in places for students to learn on campus but what we are committed to is improving student housing as well. Project Domino, a capital redevelopment project supported by \$47 million from our government will create more affordable on-campus housing that meets high-quality environmental standards and

rejuvenates the historic University of Manitoba Fort Garry campus.

Manitoba's economy is steady and growing. We want to keep up the momentum. To do that requires not only a commitment to growing our workforce but also a strategic investment in infrastructure. We will continue to promote new and emerging industries, improve key trade routes and introduce new initiatives to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start their businesses right here in Manitoba.

Our NDP government is continuing to put additional PST revenue to good use for better roads and flood protection, and we're applying innovative approaches to core infrastructure design and construction and maintenance through a new Infrastructure Innovations Council in partnership with the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association.

We are strengthening the Manitoba's primary trade corridor with new flood protection along pathway 75–Highway 75, including the construction of a new and higher bridge in Morris. We're upgrading the Lake St. Martin channel and building a new outlet to flow 7,500 cubic feet per second from Lake Manitoba to provide better flood protection for families and businesses in the Interlake Region.

And we're increasing Manitoba's municipal road budget and doubling funding for municipal bridges. And as we do that, we will be creating more jobs across this province which will equal more people staying in the province and greater opportunities. We're establishing a special planning area to support rapid expansion, trade and strategic growth in CentrePort including the development of the new CentrePort Canada Rail Park. Fort Richmond is seeing increased investment in infrastructure with the repairs to Pembina Highway as well as the renewal of the Perimeter bridge.

We have been able to make these investments, and as we have made these investments, we have protected front-line services. And I'd like to take a few minutes and talk about what does that mean for Manitobans. You've heard in the Throne Speech a commitment for early learning and child care, and in that commitment you heard two important words: universally accessible. Universally accessible will ensure—will help us develop a—more opportunities for families that need child-care space to access it. We have a lot of work to do to achieve that, but I have a lot of confidence in the child-care commission that will examine what is that road forward to ensure that Manitobans have access to universally accessible

child care. And as they're investigating that, they will also be investigating the role of public schools in child care. How do we better work together?

But it doesn't stop there. There's a commitment to look at Aboriginal child-care facilities, making sure that it highlights Aboriginal culture and language. We have some great examples across the province and we need to build on those examples.

We also know that with the work that we have done around early childhood development that that will make a difference. That is going to build and support young souls, and that is going to ensure that we have a great future. There's a lot of interest, and rightfully so, in child and family services, and I'm glad that we're having these conversations in communities, provincially and nationally. They're hard conversations to happen. We're talking about families in crisis, families requiring supports, families deserving those supports, and I am extremely proud of what we have been able to accomplish. But as I say, we have a lot of work left to do.

There have been around 300 recommendations from Changes for Children. We have implemented over 90 per cent of those recommendations, and in the implementation of those recommendations you hear about more social workers, you hear about better training, and today or last week when we had the Throne Speech unveiled we talked about a new masters of social work program that is going to focus on indigenous knowledge. That is extremely important.

We also heard around a new funding model. We need to start, as I talk about publicly, shifting the Titanic. We need to work with community organizations, families and community leaders and all levels of government, and as we're having the conversation we need to evaluate how better do we implement prevention programs, what will that look like, how does that support families staying together?

So we have proposed a new funding model. That new funding model will—the primary focus will be how do we protect children but keep them within their family unit within their communities? That's a lot of hard work and heavy lifting by many professionals in the field. We are going to rely a lot on community organizations as well as for the families to welcome us in and to work with them.

Last week I also had the opportunity to talk about the overhaul of the emergency placement program, and in that overhaul we talked about 210 more employees to be hired to provide support to children. We talked about 71 new emergency placements.

We also talked about a better way of providing assessments to the young people, the high-risk victims to make sure that we can understand and better support their needs. We also talked about making sure that we had services that were in the rural and the northern areas that provided a safe haven for families and children.

Last year we were fortunate that 750 foster parents came to us and offered to provide support to Manitoba's most vulnerable children, and today I'd like to thank them for their commitment to rebuilding those souls and supporting families across the province.

Also in the Throne Speech you heard about the introduction around more transparency in public reporting by the Children's Advocate. We are going to continue to work on that.

One of the pieces when we talk about children in care—and what I know as a professional working within the system, but what I see even today is one of the reasons why children come into care is because of poverty and the outcomes of poverty and that's why our government has been committed to the ALL Aboard strategy for a number of years. It really focuses on safe, affordable housing in supportive communities, education and jobs and income supports and accessible, co-ordinated services. The Throne Speech highlighted those commitments. It talked about moving forward with an increase to Rent Assist as we work towards 75 per cent of market median rent, talked about thousand more social and affordable housing units and stabilizing the rooming houses in co-operation with the City of Winnipeg and other community organizations.

We know that good-quality housing, stable, affordable housing that is safe is one of those foundations that have to happen for families and children. Again, we talked about the importance of labour market development, employment and education and looking at ways to support Aboriginal youth in the education system. We cannot underestimate the importance of those commitments and how they can impact the issue of family support, dealing with poverty and ultimately building a better province.

I know that there is lots of opportunities in Manitoba for many of us. However, for some there isn't and I think it is our responsibility to build a sense of hope and opportunity for all Manitobans.

I've had the pleasure of working with young students at Southeast Collegiate and I was always in awe of their strength and their determination. But there was also sadness in those eyes, sadness related to the number of suicides in the community, the unemployment rate, the poverty. I feel very strongly—as leaders we have a responsibility to demonstrate a path forward for all Manitobans. We need to ensure that they can see themselves as doctors and lawyers and elected officials across this province, that they can see themselves as teachers, as bus drivers, as construction workers, and they can feel those opportunities.

I feel strongly that this Throne Speech helps support that. It supports families but in supporting families it also encourages a path forward that includes good roads, flood protection, and the path out of poverty, education and an opportunity for employment.

So I will not—I will stand today and I will confidently support this Throne Speech with much pride and determination that we have to build a better and brighter future for all Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak on the amendment to the speech for the throne moved by the Leader of the Opposition and the member of Fort Whyte.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment moves that the Leader of the Opposition is telling in its composition. This is an amendment focused on the fact that Manitoba no longer have trust and faith in this government, and good evidence of this—events of this past summer—it shows that this government does not have what it takes to run this province.

We—as everybody knows, we actually witnessed the worst natural disaster in western Manitoba history. We had severe flooding that happened in our—my home constituency of Arthur-Virden. Yes, there was excessive amount of rain in large areas on western Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan and, yes, there was a high water table from the floods of 2009, 2011 and 2014.

We are now having new farming practices in the last 20 years that are now zero tillage, causing 30 per cent more runoff, and many farmers are also

draining land, especially from Saskatchewan into Manitoba, but also throughout Manitoba, too.

This government has failed to recognize and give permits to people who are draining land, and it's mismanagement that I can say that this government has experienced, and that's why we are all in this boat together.

The thing is, when it comes to mismanagement of the Assiniboine valley and the Souris River, this government has failed many times and failed on the farmers who farm that valley too.

I think the biggest thing that we've actually discovered in this—with this flood experience was the fact that this government has not communicated with Saskatchewan when it came to the water issues. I actually, on July 2nd, after the major flood we didn't know if our town was going to survive the flood, I spoke to the Saskatchewan minister of water security and stewardship and EMO and to find out how much more water was coming our way. The minister indicated to me that he never spoke to any of the ministers here, the minister of EMO or the Minister of Water Stewardship.

And it was really a shock to me because the fact is we discovered that there was a lot of issues that were happening in Arthur-Virden this past summer—this spring. Many issues were the Shellmouth Dam, the Qu'Appelle valley river and also the many creeks that flowed into the Souris River. It was surprising that Pierson, who actually experienced a lot of water damage this past spring, early this spring—again, this—we came into the House right here to tell how bad it was and yet this government still hadn't spoke to Saskatchewan. This is a shame. You really let down the residents of Arthur-Virden.

And also, local—I actually took a tour with local councillors who told me about the issues of the different creeks that were overrun with water in these—like, this—during the flood, and there was—I didn't realize how many creeks there were until I witnessed it myself. There was the Graham Creek that hit Melita who destroyed the bridge that was there since 1927. There was the Gainsborough Creek that was also damaged, again, it's now—it went from a creek bed to a riverbed. I went to a farmer, one of my constituents who actually lives in the valley, and discovered that his house had to be moved because his foundation was totally destroyed and his house was still survived. So we were—there's opportunity for moving that house.

But when I went to look at the foundation, I couldn't believe that—I thought he was actually in front of the Souris River, but in fact it was the Gainsborough Creek. It has washed out so severely that it has created a river now. The only reason I knew it wasn't the Souris River was because there was no current in that—on that river. It's just a stagnant body of water. Again, the biggest thing is this government had not talked to Saskatchewan to see what exactly what was happening with our flow of water here, and, again, it really let down the people of Arthur-Virden.

People in Pierson who have lost homes this past summer and now have to move out, and people were stranded in—on their farmyards during that flood, and people had—there was a state of local emergency that was declared after the fact, after these people who for a week were requesting that the government, this local government, this government of the province here actually requested the military to come in, and yet it was—they were disappointed to find out that it wasn't declared until later, until the water was getting closer to the Portage-Winnipeg, and that's when the declaration was. And it was never declared in the Arthur-Virden area.

You really let down the people of Arthur-Virden this past summer, and shame on all of you that sits on the other side there. And the thing is people are still trying to actually settle with the EMO claims. There was many of them happened in our constituency of Arthur-Virden. Every day I'm getting phone calls from those same people trying to settle claims here, and every day I have to hear that all what's happening here, what's happened to this government? And, again, I've noticed that, you know what? That's probably the reason why this government is dysfunctional because I witnessed it this past summer when they weren't there for the people of Arthur-Virden, and it's very disappointing.

And I actually had members of Midland, the member of Brandon West and the member of Spruce Woods come and do a tour during that period of time. I remember on July 1st we didn't have a Canada Day like the rest of you guys had in Manitoba. We actually had to cancel all our activities because we actually wanted to know how—what was—what kind of event is going to happen with the water that was backed up on many of the roads that were in part of a creek that was actually going to flow directly into the town of Virden. We spent up—we spent 'til 2 o'clock at night to finding out if this wall of water was going to be coming our way to get rid

of—to destroy a number of houses on the south end of our town.

We didn't have—the frustration part about this whole thing that happened this summer, there was not a person from the government who had even—had ideas of how much water was coming our way. There was no hydrologist that could tell us how much water was coming our way

And again—and then on June 30th, a couple members of the Cabinet—current Cabinet, came to do a media tour. One was the MLA for Brandon East and the other one was the MLA for Swan River. And when the media actually talked and asked questions about what happened, like what kind of devastation we had in Virden, Manitoba, the mayor actually explained what happened in that day. But, when it came to asking the Minister of Agriculture, is there any other issues that are—any other flooding issues that are happening, and he basically said, well, there is some issues that happened at the Lake Manitoba because of the wind, but he had no clue that every single town, every single municipality in my constituency had declared a state of local emergency.

*(1610)

And every—and I would obviously commend every councillor, every reeve, every mayor who actually worked frantically and with frustration that—with this government to try to save property, start to save lives and resources, and they were basically let the fending for themselves. And the thing is, I—what I find—what was a—was good timing on this whole thing was that the forced amalgamation did not happen until the end of this year, which, again, made more—there was more counsellors, more resource—human resources available to help out, again, because this government wasn't there to help out the residents of Arthur-Virden.

And it was an eye-opener. You know, I was in the private sector for many years and I was out there to help. You know, I was a financial planner. I helped with financial crises and I had to take that same experience I've had, the experience there, to help with the constituencies with all the crises that were happening in our neck of the woods. Again, it's a shame that this government did not declare a state of local emergencies when there was a request for that. We could have had more resources from the military to help out, to bring people's—people from their farms. You know, the town of Pierson had to rely on people trying to bring—any way they could—bring supplies in. That included groceries, medical

supplies, medication for seniors and equipment, gasoline. Those are items that—this was basically our Katrina that happened in Manitoba here, and the government here demonstrated the same—what the government did back in—the US government happened in—during I think it was 2005, during the Katrina crisis. And, again, this shows that this government cannot run this province and it's—it was—it's a prime example, and I'd like to share that with everybody.

The other thing, too, is our constituency actually represents a \$1.5-billion oil industry and \$1.3-billion agriculture industry. Both industries share the same roads, and there's definitely a bigger payback when—from—when both industries are sharing that infrastructure. Again, this government failed to spend—like they overspent in every department except for infrastructure by 26 per cent, and that 26 per cent could have been spent where the oil industry actually produces a lot of revenue and fix up some of those roads that happen—that were destroyed in 2011. And there was an opportune time to do that but instead they let everything—let it be.

And what would happen today, in 2014? Every bridge except for one bridge that's on the 83 Highway has to be replaced, and now these bridges are going to be costing a lot more money to replace because now there's an emergency to get those done. And then the contractors that they contracted to are going to require more resources to have it done. And, again, this is mismanagement of resources, of Manitoba's hard-earning tax dollars that you guys are mismanaging. And, again, there's over—again, I would say about eight bridges that have to be replaced just on 83 Highway alone. That doesn't include other bridges that are in our constituency too. And, again, I believe that those bridges could have been repaired and—if there was a proactive approach, we wouldn't have had to replace all these bridges now.

And, Mr. Speaker, again, when it came to disaster assistance, a lot of those claims that happened in 2011 were just either settled just recently or they're settling—they're still ongoing. And now we're 2014 flood and we have much more DFA claims in my constituency, and I know we—the same people who have had this experience twice have no hopes of what's going to happen when it comes to settling these claims. Again, they're getting the runaround. They're tell—every so often when one actually phones me up and says, I'm dealing with one particular person and then next thing you know he's

been reassigned to two different other people in a short period of time. I know when I was an insurance agent, when you have one adjuster that's so important because, you know, you—when a person loses their home, it's so important to have the service and the respect that should be granted to these people because, again, they're going through some hard times. But, no, you guys sit back and fight for leadership here, who's going to take over leadership of your party and as a premier. So it's *[inaudible]* for that race. But you're forgetting Manitobans in their time of need, and shame on you too.

And, you know, again, and when people in Melita were sandbagging on July 1st when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) actually did a photo op because, again, he wanted to show some Manitobans who watched the news that he's doing his part. But all he came in was—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, sorry, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: On—the honourable member for Riding Mountain, on a point of order.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I just want to put on the record and I want you to be aware of and make comment on, the member for Virden—Arthur-Virden is talking about the flood and how it has affected people in his constituency and how important it is that this government understand how human and how many human challenges and how many people have actually been affected by this flood, Mr. Speaker.

On the opposite end, we have two members from the government side who were mocking him and actually talking about a leadership race. *[interjection]* Yes, they can go and talk on a luge or outside of the Chamber, but they don't need to be talking about a leadership race. And they're—they've got issues in their caucus, absolutely, but you know what? This is very important, and that's why we're here today to hear is from members who have issues and want to share their views. And we have a member here who's talking about the hurt from this government in not listening and responding to the financial hurt that they are facing because this government can't get their act together with regard to flood compensation, Mr. Speaker. So shame on the government.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Conservation, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Actually, on this side of the House, we were speaking about all of the opportunities that we've taken advantage of in speaking with our counterparts in Saskatchewan, repeated discussions with the Saskatchewan minister, the last one even just two weeks ago at the CME meeting and shortly after he was appointed, as well as his 'predecessor,' and talking about the need to get behind the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative. That's what we were talking about. It's actually about the issues that southwest Manitoba is facing, and also I am now able to correct the record, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), I didn't hear of any particular rule that may have been breached, so it's very difficult for me to make a ruling on that particular point of order. So I must respectfully indicate that there is no point of order.

And, while I'm on my feet, I want to caution all honourable members that when they're rising on points of order or responding to points of order, that's not time for debate or engaging in the debate. And I'm asking for all honourable members to follow in the tradition and the practices that we have in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Now to resume the debate for the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Piwniuk).

Mr. Piwniuk: Okay, on July 1st, the Premier came out to Melita to do a photo op, to address a few local residents, a few local government officials. Meanwhile, many of the residents who were sandbagging on the rapid rising Souris River—a dike was promised back in 2011, but still was not completed. How can this Premier come out to do a photo op and actually promise that there was—this dike would've been completed, but meanwhile the people, the residents were ignoring him and basically trying to save their town?

Many farmers of the constituency have been not fully compensated for 2011. I just went around to—with the media. We actually had the Moosomin spectrum and the Virden Empire-Advance wanted to do a story of all the 2011 claims that were not settled and, on top of it, having to deal with the 2014 claims. We spent a whole day talking to individuals, and, for myself, I've heard more about what's happened in

2011 and with the frustration that a lot of the farmers had in our constituency. And at the same time they're going to go through this all over again. They've lost a lot of hope that—on this local government—or this provincial government, and they're getting really frustrated with the way that they've been treated. And I think just recently they announced that there was going to be some compensation for farmers around the Portage that were affected by the farm loss of income, and the thing is we're still waiting for that in the southwest region, and the farmers are really frustrated, and I'm getting phone calls on a daily basis.

And there's a lot of farmers just in the region that—you're waiting—or wondering what's—they're hoping for some kind of compensation, especially when it comes to the—like, the unseeded acreage coverage that they have—receive. They're really worried about what's going to happen in the next couple of years. If this continues, we get excessive water—a lot of the ones—especially young farmers are now facing that they—their deductibles are getting higher and higher and they're getting less and less coverage, and there's playing more and more premiums.

* (16:20)

If this continues, these farmers are going to—we're going to lose a whole generation of farmers in the Lyleton area, the Melita area, the Whitewater area and in the Pierson area, and that's a big concern to farmers who've been there, and, again, this is our backbone of our province. This is what—actually what created the city of Winnipeg as a regional hub for this whole area.

You know, it's as important that our province grows rurally. It benefits the city of Winnipeg because I know when it comes to services, financial services, when it comes to health-care services, large retail stores, Winnipeg is a hub for this whole eastern side of the Prairies. That includes southwestern, southeastern Saskatchewan and northwestern Ontario and all of Manitoba, and when we have a strong rural area, a strong northern mining sector and we have a strong tourism area in northwest Ontario and a strong oil industry in the southwest and southeast of Saskatchewan, Winnipeg benefits. Winnipeg actually thrives and grows.

And the thing is, we are being forgotten in that corner of the province and even in Saskatchewan too. You know, I'm a proud Manitoban, and I really believe that this is why I'm here today and why I ran

for—to become MLA for Arthur-Virden, because I really love this province.

But you know what, what really concerns me now is what all that happened this past summer. When I have some constituents say now, we should join Saskatchewan. You know, it was kind of funny because, you know, five, 10 years ago, we used to poke fun of like fairly competition with Saskatchewan. They were considered the gap between Manitoba and Alberta, and they were losing population. They were going to Alberta. They were losing services. Cities were really not growing very much. And now coincidental that now there's no NDP government there, the province is thriving. The cities are growing.

I have an example of Virden, Manitoba. When we had the last census, I looked to see how fast Virden grew with the oil patch. I thought we should be up to 5 or 6 per cent growth in our census, but when I actually looked, we went only by 2.3 per cent we grew. On the other side of the province—the other side of the border in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, their census indicated that they grew by 13.3 per cent. You know, the two towns are very equivalent. We have an oil industry. We have an agriculture industry.

So why is it that Moosomin is growing faster than Virden? And I'll give you some reasons why. I've actually worked—when I was in business, I was an insurance agent, and we had an insurance agency and we had investments. And, when people came to register their automobiles, and when they found out that, you know, they had to pay sales tax. If I've taken it from my personal name into my corporation or if I insure my corporate fleets from another that used to be in Alberta coming to Manitoba, I had to pay and I had to pay PST. But, when you go to Saskatchewan, they only pay PST on a new vehicle and never again.

And then, with all the frustrations of the red tape that we have even with MPI, people are now incorporating in Saskatchewan. Not only are we losing the Autopac transactions, we're also losing the corporate taxes because they're incorporating in Saskatchewan. The other day I actually drove from Boissevain, as a Remembrance Day service, and I drove to Regina for the Assiniboine basin commission meeting. And, when I was driving, I thought, okay, I'm going to go take a tour of the oil patch through southern Saskatchewan, through Gainsborough and Oxbow and Estevan and

Weyburn, and I couldn't believe the activity that these small towns experience. And that's the same thing in North Dakota. Why is it that Virден, Manitoba; Melita, Manitoba; Pierson, Manitoba aren't growing the same way that those communities are growing? The reason for that is the red tape, the high taxation that we have in this province, the provincial sales tax that we have from—we pay at 8 per cent and they pay 5 per cent.

There's also, Saskatchewan government really embraces their rural areas, and they've actually got to know how important those rural areas are because if those rural areas don't grow, the cities don't prosper, and right now I believe that Saskatchewan and Regina and Saskatoon are growing much faster percentage-wise than the city of Winnipeg, and I think it's all because of the NDP government that we're dealing with here.

And right now we're seeing again less leadership from that caucus. And the other thing we've also experienced, one day I got in my mailbox was a letter from Redvers, Saskatchewan, saying that we're open for business. Our ER's open 24 hours. We have two extra doctors. Please, if you need a doctor, come and see us. That was what the flyer that I received in my mailbox one day.

Meanwhile, on the other side of Virден, Manitoba, we have an extremely busy oil industry, we have a busy agriculture industry and we have a busy Trans-Canada Highway. And, meanwhile, our ERs are closed. And our minister who—our ex-minister of Health indicated that we do have a very busy ER. She could not believe how busy our ER is. Of course, it is. A lot of our population that lives in Virден, 20 per cent is increased because of work crews are coming in. They need those services. We don't get counted—those people don't get counted in our census.

And it's so important to have an ER that's open full—24 hours, seven days a week because, again, our oil industry does not slow down on slow periods. Again, when you consider from Tuesday 'til Saturday is when the—our ER is closed and it's open from Tuesday—Saturday morning to Tuesday morning, how do they—how does this government indicate what is our peak period? Who—how do they know when an accident on the highway's going to happen with a bus turnover? How do they know when there's actually going to be a—oil explosion or a farmer rolls his tractor? How do they know that these are peak periods?

I just don't get that, and we—and in—if Saskatchewan on the other side have a full—in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, have a full ER services, they've never had a problem with doctor 'sortages.' They're doing it right. They're really focusing on rural Manitoba, what this government has failed to do. Again, if a rural Manitoba doesn't prosper, neither does the city of Winnipeg.

And the NDP hasn't—has wasted many of our dollars, our economic dollars that we have in this province and chasing investment away, especially with the instability of the—of what's happening on that side of the House here. You know, every person in Manitoba has to pay \$3,200 more in taxes, of provincial taxes, compared to people in Saskatchewan. And, again, that is reason why I believe that our population is really stagnant in rural areas right now is because, again, there's not focus on looking at the whole picture.

This—the other—this past summer, we did an outreach to Churchill, Manitoba. The interesting about Churchill is that it has a lot of potential, lot of tourism dollars could be flowing there. There's opportunity for tradespeople to go up there, and when we consider that most of Churchill's houses are government housing, you know, there's an opportunity to make the Churchill a destination internationally because everybody knows about Churchill. But this government has untapped the 'opportunity' that we should be seeing for our major, besides Winnipeg, almost the second most recognized community in Manitoba. And it's a beautiful place to go to, and it's amazing. And, you know, we also had the opportunity to have a better shipping port there too. And I couldn't believe it when I was there that this actually exists in Manitoba because, again, you were—it was a warm day and it felt like you could've been on a beach somewhere in—

An Honourable Member: Jamaica.

Mr. Piwniuk: In Jamaica. But with beluga whales.

But we—it's again—it's—this was a total eye-opener of my first year of MLA and, again, you know, it's interesting times. I feel our leader, our party, have a great team to work for. That was probably my highlight of being an MLA, is that the work that we all do here and how important it is that a—teamwork. And this is something that the other side does not see.

And when I was private business we—I had a team that I really admired and we built up a team,

and I feel like I have this in this House here with my—with this caucus, and, again, like I said, what was displayed this past summer in our constituency of Arthur-Virden, it's an eye-opener, how this government is being tired, it's thinking about themselves, and it's self—they're self-centred and it's all about saving their jobs.

Meanwhile, they're not here for the betterment of Manitobans, to be here for them, to be there when they need the most. And like I said, we've experienced our Hurricane Katrina disaster in Arthur-Virden this past year. And, again, I hope we never have to see that again, but at the same time, I would like to see a more proactive government to be there for the people of Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: You need a change in government.

Mr. Piwniuk: And we need a change in government, and it's only time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:30)

Hon. Melanie Wight (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I am very honoured to have the opportunity to speak in the House today, Mr. Speaker.

I would address all the things that went on the record that are untrue except I would do nothing else, I'd never get to my speech. So I'm going to have to leave those aside and just speak to some of the exciting things that we're doing is what I'm going to look at. Very grateful to have this chance, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities, and I would like to thank our previous minister, the MLA for Point Douglas, for the tremendous work that he has done in this ministry since he was appointed in 2011. His creativity and boundless energy and dedication to improving the lives of our children has made a huge difference for so many, and we thank you.

He is definitely a tough act to follow. I'm always following people where they say that those are big shoes to fill, and so I'm always trying to fill them instead with my beautiful heels which I think outdo their shoes.

So, after leaving the corporate world, Mr. Speaker, and the world of theatre, I spent some years—a number of years working with youth involved in crime who had faced many barriers. I taught courses in areas such as the effects of abuse

and neglect in child development and working with sexually abused children, spoke at conferences regarding how to help our youth recover. But during that time I worked with many kids on their autobiographies and their abuse histories, and it was really there where I learned most how now we can be working to help these kids change their lives.

Through that process we helped them to reframe what had happened and we worked with them to help create a new vision, Mr. Speaker, for their future, and through those life stories it was clear to me what we needed to do to change the trajectory of some of our most vulnerable youth.

In cases where we were giving complete histories—this was way back in the '90s; that didn't happen very often—we would sometimes go—I—you know, we could see in daycare, and why couldn't we have done something then to help their—this child and their families, and now I get to work in a department, Mr. Speaker, where the answer to that question is, yes, we can do something that early and we have to and we are.

Great example of this is a pilot project that we're doing of enriched child care at Lord Selkirk Park using the Abecedarian model—I never say that word right, I apologize. I met with Carolyn Young, the director, recently, and she spoke of how not only are the lives of the little ones changed by this program, but even more interesting and more exciting is that so are the lives of the families and of the communities because hope is coming into their child's future and it's becoming brighter and brighter.

The families are engaged and they begin working themselves to increase their own education and job skills. They want to keep up with their child. As Martin Luther said, everything that is done in the world is done with hope. This program, Mr. Speaker, brings hope to the parents as they see it bringing skills like early language development to their children. They have been motivated and encouraged by the leaps and bounds that they see their kids growing by. An article in the Free Press said, it's not rocket science; it's playing games like peekaboo with babies and having conversations with preschoolers, simple things that develop young brains.

In fact, it involves over 200 learning games that involve adult-child interaction. It is the first and only Canadian site to offer this evidence-based approach. The ratio of staff to children is significantly increased. Children are read to—more like they're read with—a number of times each day and the staff

focuses on building learning and language into daily routines. And, of course, as in every good program that we have, nutritious food is always part of it. And we have seen significant improvements well beyond those not receiving enriched child care, and it's very encouraging for our future.

I'm also very pleased to be able to chair the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet. When I became an MLA and learned that our government was the envy of the country, having the only Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet in the country, I was thrilled, and I've missed very few of those meetings over the past three years. It's hard to put into words how much it means to me having this chance to work so closely with some of the top experts in the country in a field that means so much to me.

The Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet provides a cross-'sectorial' approach. It allows us to work across departments, Mr. Speaker, because ECD involves many departments. It's Health and Education and child and family services and Aboriginal affairs and Jobs and the Economy and Justice, just to name a few of them. ECD affects everyone because it is changing the outcomes of our children from prenatal and onwards.

The team at Healthy Child Manitoba has a significant research role, Mr. Speaker, and not only are programs chosen based on evidence showing that they have been successful somewhere else, a good example of this being the good-behaviour game PAX, but also everything is researched here to ensure that these results can be replicated in Manitoba, because that isn't always the case. Not every program will fit somewhere else. So we are also doing the research here so that we can ensure that every dollar that we are investing is invested wisely.

In the case of PAX, the good-behaviour game that currently is reaching 5,000 grade 1 children in over 200 schools, the results indicate even stronger positive effects than we had initially realized—or released. Early results here in Manitoba confirm that children who participate in PAX have significantly fewer conduct problems, they're not bullying other children, Mr. Speaker, and you might remember that our government is very invested in ensuring that our children are not bullied in school with Bill 18, was a great example of work in the schools, working to stop that. It has shown that they have significantly fewer emotional problems, so they're not feeling as anxious or as depressed. It shows that there's

significantly more pro-social behaviour, sharing and helping others, and vulnerable children have significantly fewer peer relationship problems. So it's making a tremendous difference, and it's not a high cost in this program, so it is particularly efficient.

You know, people involved in government, in business, in the economy are all talking about early childhood development. It has been shown that the return on the dollar is anywhere from \$1.50, which is a 50 per cent return, to \$16, which is unheard of. An economist at the head of the TD Bank, for instance, said that there is an economic imperative to invest in children. He said there's no question that for every dollar you spend, the biggest return is, without doubt, that which you spend in children, and the payoff is not just to children and, as I mentioned before earlier, but to their parents, to the economy, to society as a whole.

ECD correlates to stronger performances, Mr. Speaker, in literacy, numeracy, language skills, better self-discipline, better social emotional responses, less likely to use drugs or smoke, hugely positive for all kids, but even greater benefits for disadvantaged kids.

Our commitment to universally accessible child care is also transformational. Mr. Alexander, chief economist for the TD Bank, notes in a speech that Canada invests only one quarter of 1 per cent of its GDP in ECD. In English-speaking countries, our federal government is dead last, and that is a huge detriment to improving the quality of opportunity for all Canadians. It is in that ability, Mr. Speaker, to find a child-care space, which we have done so much work on—I believe it's something like 14,000 child-care spaces that we have added since we came into government, and knowing that your child—you can get that space and your child will be well-taken care of, that is what allows women to be equally able to be part of the workforce. This results in increased productivity in our province. Our commitment in this Throne Speech to a vision that makes child care accessible for all families who need it, while maintaining affordability, is a key component to our ongoing investment into Manitoba's future.

* (16:40)

I would also like to mention, Mr. Speaker, that our child care has the lowest cost in all of Canada, outside of Quebec. This is another one of the many factors that make our province the most affordable province to live in in Canada.

Early childhood development is also connected, Mr. Alexander believes, to greater labour-force participation and increased income. It is a key factor to removing barriers and helping end poverty which, since 1999, has been a major focus of our government. This approach of careful research and evidence-based programs—you know what? It takes a little longer. It's a lot of work, but the payoff is that, as we do it, we know that every dollar that we spend has been invested wisely and will get results for the children—will change the children's lives and that of their families and that of their communities. And, as an added bonus, it'll boost our economy in so many ways. Early childhood development—some call it every child deserves—has a very prominent place in our plan to invest in our future.

As the Throne Speech mentioned, it won't be long before we begin to release the new early childhood development strategy, which will continue our focus to make sure our kids are ready to enter the classroom. We're very excited about that, and we believe it will speak to what we heard when doing consultations that parents are looking for integrated services.

It is interesting, as one author pointed out, that we have a hundred per cent agreement in our country on the need for education starting at the age of six, and yet we know that the first five years is absolutely key to kids reaching grade 1 with any chance of successfully moving forward as 90 per cent of their brain's developed by the age of five. Manitoba is at the forefront of the work being done in early childhood development, and I am so excited to get this chance to be more involved with that work.

We're also working, Mr. Speaker, to end crimes way before they've begun, way before they've had a chance to occur by making sure they have productive, supervised, skilled activities to engage in. And that is what we were doing in things like our 71 Lighthouses and our CSI programs and career track and our mentorship programs such as Wayfinders and our After School Leaders, all of which work to help us reach that goal in 2020 of 75,000 new workers in our workforce.

I want to touch just a bit on how Manitoba's doing, because so often that doesn't seem to be whatever hits our front pages. Interestingly, it hits our business section. I am amazed that the most positive reports that you hear about Manitoba are in the business section. It's incredible because there they're simply reporting the facts. They're telling us

what is going on and they're talking about the excitement of our business leaders. So often—back in 2010, the Maclean's magazine, of course, did that article, which we all remember, about the Manitoba miracle, and, you know, although it isn't often written about now, little Manitoba continues to be a bit of a miracle.

Well, some in the opposition may not realize it: there was a world-wide recession, came in—yes, it was started in 2008 and, in fact, it was the deepest since, I believe, pre-World War II, and its effects are not over. Much of the world has not yet recovered, and the recovery that we do see, it's fragile. In Manitoba, we have maintained throughout a recession that devastated many other places the third lowest unemployment rate in the country. Our economy has doubled in Manitoba. With growth of 2.5 per cent a year to our economy, we have had the third best growth in the country, and we have done that without the significant resources of oil and gas and potash that Alberta and Saskatchewan have. Economic forecasters are once again predicting that Manitoba's growth will be among the best in Canada in 2015. You would never hear that mentioned in the House on—from that side, of course.

We have managed to maintain Manitoba's place as the most affordable place to live in Canada. That's after taxes; we are the most affordable place to live in Canada. While you hear complaints all the time from the opposition, Manitoba is paying the lowest rates in the country and perhaps the world, I'm thinking, on hydro. One of the reasons we've been able to keep the rates so low is that we do, in fact, sell to the Americans at higher prices than we sell to Manitobans. Now you might hear something different on that, and that's because the Opposition Leader is unable to understand the simple concept of spot markets.

I won't take up the time here to explain it to him, but it just is frightening to me that the Leader of the Opposition is unable to grasp a concept that—*[interjection]* I guess, he got the watch. That's right; he got the watch. Okay, it's frightening to me that he can't understand there are two markets. In addition to our confirmed, of course, consistent markets, we have, as I mentioned, the spot markets; ah yes, I'm not going to bother going there and trying to explain it. But it's about additional energy. When we have additional to sell, right, that otherwise just would have spilled over and been lost, then we spell it—sell it on the spot market. Anyway, sorry, it's just so frustrating.

Our rates and service and benefits, of course, from MPI are also the best in the country, without a doubt. There are more than 300 Autopac agents and 17 MPI locations. We have the only all-in-one service probably anywhere in North America, and I would hazard a guess that perhaps anywhere in the world. We have a comprehensive PIPP plan that is the best in North America, and our money stays here. It isn't heading off to the corporate pockets of people in New York; eighty-five per cent of the premiums are returned to Manitobans.

You have universal access in Manitoba, which so many of the opposition don't seem to understand. And what it means is, here in Manitoba there is no discrimination based on age or gender or marital status or other arbitrary factors. Everybody gets a good rate. My mother, who's a little bit old now—well, she's young at heart, older, older—never had an accident that was her fault, ever, has great reflexes and everything else. In many provinces in the country, she would be being penalized for her age even though she'd never had an accident and there was nothing wrong with her driving ability. But that is not true in Manitoba. It's also not true, in Manitoba, that if you have a 16-year-old child, who is learning to drive and has never had an accident, you are not charged extra for that in Manitoba. So that is an incredible benefit.

The member from Steinbach was making—I'm sorry, suggestions that I don't even know what to call them, about the rate stabilization reserve, but it, again, showed such a frightening lack of knowledge that I was left unable to sleep at night thinking about what would happen if he were ever to come into power. Sorry, but the reserve, for example, and rate stabilization in Saskatchewan is around \$300 million, and it is that reserve that allows us to keep our rates stable. It's not that complicated. Okay. Costs at MPI are also driven—they're driven by collision costs; that's one of the No. 1 factors.

So, when we had collisions costs that were \$43 million over our normal collision costs last winter—[interjection] Yeah, because our roads weren't cleaned—that affects our costs, as do volatile global conditions affecting investments and changing vehicle repair costs, which are a result of the new materials and sophisticated cars that we have now. Cars now are not—like, they have to give you an orientation to drive them because it's a computer on wheels, as one man said, computer on wheels. And it's incredibly expensive to repair them. So there's just so many things, and I'm hoping that perhaps the

members opposite could take a minute just to, you know, learn a bit more about that.

As I mentioned earlier, child care costs are the lowest in Canada, outside of Quebec, and we have no equal in what we have done for all people in those areas. During this time, our schools, our universities, our colleges have been revolutionized. Our advanced education is accessible and affordable. The Throne Speech outlines, and I beg the people of Manitoba to read the Throne Speech yourself so you actually know what's in it, a few of the many ways in which our apprenticeship training, new hybrid university-college programs, combining of instruction and on-the-job training opportunities, new trades and technology networks will carry our children successfully into the future.

* (16:50)

To date, we have invested \$1.1 billion into 80 major capital projects that have transformed our campuses. Enrolment is up 52 per cent in colleges, 42 per cent in universities, and apprenticeship training has more than tripled. These are incredible facts that have impacted dramatically on the lives of our kids and on their hope for the future. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that economists around the world are talking about these very things. Early childhood development is on the minds and topics of all of the top people around the world. They're talking about it because they know it is the greatest bang for the buck and it changes lives from prenatal on.

And they're also saying that what we need to do is transform how we are working our schools and our colleges and our universities so that people are much more ready to fill those jobs that are sitting out there. And that's what we're doing in Manitoba. We are doing all of the things that we need to create a skilled labour force. Our youth and our young adults and our future workers succeeding at basic skills raises employment, reduces, obviously, unemployment, raises personal income, creates people who are more likely to volunteer, which is, I think, is an interesting addition. And our changes to the education system, both now and that plan for the future, will make Manitobans ready for an ever-changing workplace.

You know, I remember I read one time the story of Smith Corona. They went out of business, interestingly enough, as the best typewriter company in the world. Yes, they stayed the best typewriter company in the world because they didn't make the changes that they needed to make. And we are doing

that. We are doing that in our apprenticeship programs and in our hybrid universities and colleges and in our high schools where we're having absolutely exciting programs like at Sisler with the cyber security and so many other of those places, and we aren't staying behind. We're adapting to the changing times and I'm excited about it.

An Honourable Member: Change is good.

Ms. Wight: Change is good.

The Throne Speech speaks of how planning for higher learning has to begin in high school, and, as I mentioned, that's what we're doing. It is truly becoming a launch pad where our young people are introduced to all kinds of career opportunities. I wish that I had had them myself, Mr. Speaker, when I was a little bit younger. But there you go, we didn't.

So, but it's very exciting now. And they're learning, Mr. Speaker, they're—by making and by doing. So it's experiential learning. And you might want to check; there's a great article on it in Harvard Magazine. But, you know what, you don't have to read it in Harvard Magazine; we're doing it right here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in fact, right in the North End of Winnipeg. We're on the cutting edge with those programs. *[interjection]* No, they've never gone north, north of Portage. Sorry. Anyway—*[interjection]* Yes, 'tis.

So, there's some very, very exciting things going on in those areas. And, you know, during our time in office, Mr. Speaker, there have been major floods that have cost the Province billions of dollars, yet billions more would've been paid out if we had not been investing, unlike the opposition when they were in power—they did not do the investing they needed. But we invested hundreds of millions of dollars in flood mitigation.

The floodway's capacity has been increased from one-in-100-year protection, thank you, Duff—to one-in-700-year protection, thank you, NDP—and that is one of the many flood mitigation projects completed during the past 15 years. There are many more that were done and there are many more that are planned for the future.

I could, obviously, and would love to, Mr. Speaker, just go on and on, but time, of course, does not permit. Many of the things that I've spoken of involve a theme of prevention. Early childhood education is prevention. Education is prevention. Flood mitigation is prevention. The Throne Speech this year has a category specifically connected to

prevention, and I haven't even got to the things that are all under that, I don't think.

And, Mr. Speaker, what did the opposition do when it came to Crown corporations? I think they sold MTS. We all continue now to pay higher rates because the Conservative government sold MTS to their friends. And, you know what, they were asked in the House every day about it. And every day they said, we have no plan to sell, we have no plan to sell, we have no plan to sell. Oops, sold. But not even sold to the highest bidder. No, it was sold to their friends for way less than what it was worth. We cannot get it back.

What happened, Mr. Speaker, in the '90s to our social programs. They were slashed and cut. There is no greater threat to either front-line services or to our social programs than a Pallister government cutting half a billion dollars out of our budget. It is crazy to suggest that you could continue the most significant infrastructure investment ever made in Manitoba and maintain all front-line services and all social programs while cutting half a billion dollars out of the budget. That is the same as wiping out entirely the departments of Housing, Conservation, Labour and Immigration, Multiculturalism and Literacy, tourism, sports, culture and heritage, Employee Pensions, which I throw in just because your Opposition Leader likes to get rid of pensions, Children and Youth Opportunities, Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Mineral Resources and Healthy Living, and we still have a little bit to make a cut in agriculture. That is what half a billion dollars is, and that is what will be gone if the opposition were to come into government.

Is there really a Manitoban who believes that you can cut that much out of a budget and not affect front-line services or social programs or infrastructure? I think not.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to do a comparison between our vision for investing in Manitoba's future and that set out by the Opposition Leader in his alternate throne speech, but I could not. It was devoid of vision, just as the response to the Throne Speech was the other day. It was not a vision. It was a nightmare.

Should the Opposition Leader come into power, Children and Youth Opportunities will be no more. Healthy Living will be no more. Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet will be no more. Doctor spaces will be cut. Multiculturalism will be gone. Hundreds of nurses and teachers will disappear in the

slash of a pen. Child-care initiatives such as universally accessible will be gone just as the federal government killed the universal child care program back in 2007, I think.

Cutting-edge programs will no longer be funded. It will be a return to the dark days of the '90s where friendship centres, Mr. Speaker, were cut and slashed. Snitch lines appeared on signs and Hydro projects that were our future were mothballed. It is beyond question that Bipole III is needed for reliability. A system-wide blackout would cost our economy in just one week over a billion dollars. We saw this in the past. They cancelled Conawapa. They tried to stall Limestone. Fortunately, we got it built, and it has so far supported \$7.5 billion in sales, something like that. Am I right?

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today, just put a few words that are true on the record. Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Wow. I guess we know now what the NDP campaign is going to be. It's a campaign of fear. It's definitely not a campaign of their poor record anyway.

So, in speaking to the Throne Speech and to the alternate throne—to the amendment brought forth by

the Leader of the Opposition that we are certainly supporting, and if there was any integrity in the Fab Five, they would probably support it as well, but we'll wait to see what happens there.

But, Mr. Speaker, in representing the great constituency of Midland, it's been my pleasure to represent the constituents there in this House and, of course, over the past this past summer which we described as being fast as summer was a little late in arriving and seemed to end all too soon, but across Midland there was lots of summer fairs and festivals that I was able to attend. And, at the community, people, the volunteers who come together in spite of government inspectors trying to shut down every fall supper in the country, we still have a lot of good community events out in the country. And Manitou honey and garlic comes to mind. It's always a fun combination there.

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Midland will have 28 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 25, 2014

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