

Third Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

**Flooding Issues—North, Middle and
South Salt Lakes**

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Flooding issues in North Salt Lake since the flood of 2005 have affected municipal infrastructure and private property. North Salt Lake has overflowed causing flooding to property and roads.

On more than one occasion between 1999 and 2006, the R.M. of Strathclair has met with Manitoba Water Stewardship, Manitoba highways and C.P. railways to discuss possible options to control water levels in the area including excessive runoff.

Manitoba Water Stewardship advised the R.M. of Strathclair that a study of the drainage problems would be conducted.

The R.M. of Strathclair applied to Manitoba Water Stewardship in 2008 to install a tile drain to allow water to move south in a controlled manner.

On April 16th, 2009, the R.M. of Strathclair declared a local state of emergency due to excessive spring runoff and flooding throughout the whole municipality. A trench was dug in the ditch on the south side of the road that runs east-west at the north of NW 22-16-22 west. The water ran from a small culvert through the trench and into a ravine.

On May 7th, 2009, the Minister of Water Stewardship ordered the municipality to permanently close the drain by noon of May 8th, 2009, which the R.M. of Strathclair complied with under protest. Built-up water in Middle Salt Lake began flowing out of control, flooding a section of land already seeded. The water continues to build at the north end of North Salt Lake, leaving the road completely under water since April 16th of 2009.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) consider and approve the licence application to create a ditch across NW 22-16-22 and

to install a 30-inch culvert with a gate to replace the small culvert that exists on the municipal road..

To urge the Minister of Water Stewardship to personally look at the situation involving North, Middle and South Salt Lakes and consider the livelihood of landowners and the lack of access they have to property and homes.

And to request the Minister of Water Stewardship to consider the height of the flooded lakes along PTH No. 16 and CP Railway between North Salt Lake and Middle Salt Lake.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Linda Rapley, Verna Wilson, Audrey Gerrard and many other Manitobans.

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

PTH 15

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

In 2004, the Province of Manitoba made a public commitment to the people of Springfield to twin PTH 15 and the floodway bridge on PTH 15, but then in 2006, the twinning was cancelled.

Injuries resulting from collision on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Lemieux) stated that preliminary analysis of current and future traffic demands indicate that local twinning will be required.

The current plan to replace the floodway bridge on PTH 15 does not include twinning and, therefore, does not fulfill the current or future traffic demands cited by the Minister of Transportation.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate twinning of the PTH 15

floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Dayna de Visser, Trinda Barton, Viviane Evans and many, many other Manitobans.

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, and I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition.

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in Boundary Trails Health Centre while they wait for placement in local personal care homes.

There are presently no beds available for these patients in Salem Home and Tabor Home. To make more beds in the hospital available, the regional health authority is planning to move these patients to personal care homes in outlying regions.

These patients have lived, worked and raised their families in this area for most of their lives. They receive care and support from their family and friends who live in the community, and they will lose this support if they are forced to move to distant communities.

These seniors and their families should not have to bear the consequences of the provincial government's failure to ensure there are adequate personal care home beds in the region.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider working with the RHA and the community to speed construction and expansion of long-term care facilities in the region.

This is signed by Janine Wolfe, J.D. Sawatsky, Bryan Buhse, and many, many others.

Seven Oaks Hospital—Emergency Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The current Premier (Mr. Doer) and the NDP government are reducing emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital.

On October the 6th, 1995, the NDP introduced a matter of urgent public importance that stated that "the ordinary business of the House to be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the threat to the health-care system posed by this government's plans to limit emergency services in the city of Winnipeg community hospitals."

On December the 6th, 1995, when the then-PC government suggested it was going to reduce emergency services at the Seven Oaks Hospital, the NDP leader then asked Premier Gary Filmon to "reverse the horrible decisions of his government and his Minister of Health and reopen our community-based emergency wards."

The NDP gave Manitobans the impression that they supported Seven Oaks Hospital having a full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Premier of Manitoba consider how important it is to have the Seven Oaks Hospital provide full emergency services seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by E. Wench, L. Steinke, and I. Costa, and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

Neepawa, Gladstone, Ste. Rose, McCreary— Family Doctors

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

These are the reasons for this petition.

Access to a family doctor is vital to good primary health care. Patients depend on their family doctors for many things, including their routine health-care needs, preventative care and referrals for diagnostic tests and appointments with specialists.

Family doctors in Neepawa, Gladstone and Ste. Rose are unable to accept new patients. The nearby community of McCreary has not had a doctor available to take patients in months.

Without a family doctor, residents of this large geographical area have no option but to look for

family doctors in communities as far away as Brandon and Winnipeg.

Residents of these communities are suffering because of the provincial government's continuing failure to effectively address the shortage of doctors in rural Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) to consider prioritizing the needs of these communities by ensuring they have access to a family doctor.

To urge the Minister of Health to consider promptly increasing the use of nurse practitioners in these communities in order to provide access to quality health care.

This petition is signed by Denise Lariviere, Gloria Desjardins, Katherine Chartrand, and many others.

Whiteshell Provincial Park–Lagoons

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009 the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Struthers) to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the

shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by Doug Petrick, Karen Hammarstrand, Paula McRobbie and many, many others.

* (13:40)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Seventh Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): "Mr. Spisher"—Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Seventh Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on Monday, September 28, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matter under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 8) – The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique (prestations améliorées à l'intention des employés d'Hydro-Manitoba et autres modifications)**
- **Bill (No. 35) – The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur les conflits d'intérêts au sein des municipalités et le financement des campagnes électorales municipales (modification de diverses dispositions législatives)**

- **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (majoration de l'indemnisation en cas de lésions catastrophiques)*
- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Elections of Trustees)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (modalités d'élection des commissaires dans des circonstances limitées)*

Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. BJORNSON
- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Mr. CALDWELL
- Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. GRAYDON
- Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Your Committee elected Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. CALDWELL as the Vice-Chairperson.

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique (prestations améliorées à l'intention des employés d'Hydro-Manitoba et autres modifications):*

Pat Bowslaught, Private Citizen

Richard Benoit, Retired Teachers Association of Manitoba

Anne Monk, Private Citizen

Peggy Prendergast, Private Citizen

Dick Marshall, Private Citizen

Wayne Hughes, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following seven presentations on **Bill (No. 35)** – *The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur les conflits*

d'intérêts au sein des municipalités et le financement des campagnes électorales municipales (modification de diverses dispositions législatives):

Ross Martin, Private Citizen

Doug Dobrowolski, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Kevin Rebeck, CUPE Manitoba

Councillor Gord Steeves, City of Winnipeg

Councillor Harvey Smith, Private Citizen

Jae Eadie, Private Citizen

George Fraser, Private Citizen

Your Committee heard the following two presentations on **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (majoration de l'indemnisation en cas de lésions catastrophiques):*

Jan Stevens, Private Citizen

Cherise Griffin, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following three written submissions on **Bill (No. 35)** – *The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur les conflits d'intérêts au sein des municipalités et le financement des campagnes électorales municipales (modification de diverses dispositions législatives):*

Errol Black, Private Citizen

Nick Ternette, Private Citizen

Audra Ludwig, CUPE 500

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 36)** – *The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (majoration de l'indemnisation en cas de lésions catastrophiques):*

Steven David Bowley, Private Citizen

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 8)** – *The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act (Enhanced Manitoba Hydro Employee Benefits and Other Amendments)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pension de la fonction publique (prestations améliorées à l'intention des employés d'Hydro-Manitoba et autres modifications)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 35) – The Municipal Conflict of Interest and Campaign Financing Act (Various Acts Amended)/Loi sur les conflits d'intérêts au sein des municipalités et le financement des campagnes électorales municipales (modification de diverses dispositions législatives)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 36) – The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Enhanced Compensation for Catastrophic Injuries)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'assurance publique du Manitoba (majoration de l'indemnisation en cas de lésions catastrophiques)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 37) – The Public Schools Amendment Act (Limited At Large Elections of Trustees)/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques (modalités d'élection des commissaires dans des circonstances limitées)**

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that the report for the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2008-2009 Annual Reports for Vital Statistics, Manitoba Finance, Manitoba Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Labour and Immigration): I'm tabling the 2008-2009 Annual Report of the Department of Labour and Immigration.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): I am proud to present the Annual Report for 2008-2009, the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Carberry Collegiate, we have 24 grade 9 students under the direction of Miss Raegan Dyck. This school—this school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Cullen).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Economy Government Strategy

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to thank the Premier for his announcement this morning of support to the MCIC in connection with flood relief in the Philippines. As the Premier indicated, that's something that all members and all parties support.

Mr. Speaker, here in Manitoba many Manitobans continue to express concerns about their jobs and their incomes, and we had a meeting yesterday with members of the manufacturing sector who've expressed grave concern about the prospects for that sector here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has set out a plan for economic recovery and is providing regular updates to Canadians. When can we expect a similar level of energy and concern to be shown by this NDP government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Of course, the House of Commons had an amendment to the budget in January of last year requiring updates on a quarterly basis. I'll give the member an update every day in this House, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to—I'm pleased to provide to the member opposite that, in 1999, there was a decision made, when he was chief of staff, to place the Hydro headquarters at the corner of Kenaston and Wilkes. Within a month of our election, we cancelled that decision, and today we had the privilege of opening up a new Manitoba Hydro headquarters in downtown Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, we have the energy to merge the Winnipeg and Manitoba Hydro corporations together to provide the operational efficiencies. We have taken 12 offices scattered around the suburbs of

Winnipeg and centralized all those people in one new work headquarters. So, I'm proud every day to stand up giving the people of Manitoba a positive approach to our economic growth.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the—we'll see what the Auditor has to say about political interference in Manitoba Hydro when they—when they come forward with their report into the mismanagement of the most important Crown corporation in Manitoba.

Manufacturers who are laying off Manitobans, people who are losing their jobs, people who are being moved from full-time to part-time jobs because of this government's mismanagement of Manitoba Hydro and the negative impacts that's having on the manufacturing sector, are of no comfort when they hear these sorts of statements and this kind of bravado when people are concerned about their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Finance, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger), who presided over the collapse of Crocus, the biggest increase in debt and dependency in Manitoba history, and the biggest loss of manufacturing jobs has not gotten the job done.

What can the Premier do to assure Manitobans that his government has a plan to protect jobs and increase the incomes of Manitobans?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are raising issues of accountability. The greatest form of accountability in terms of all ministers in government, including myself, is the accountability at an election campaign. They can rant and rave in this House, but it's the voices and votes of people, and the Minister responsible for Hydro has a—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —had a utility that has reduced the debt equity ratio under the Tories from 86 percent to 75 percent. And today we see the population numbers coming out. In—we're not perfect—we're not perfect, but, you know what? We're twice as good as you because the population grew 36,000 under you; it's over 80,000 under us in the same 10-year period.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, his second favourite leadership candidate is the Minister of Finance who presided over the collapse of Crocus, who built up the debt of this province, who increased dependency, and now we have 12,000 Manitoba families who have lost their jobs over the last 18 months in manufacturing. We have problems in the livestock sector. We have issues across the economy. I know the Premier promised he would serve a full term. Half-way through he broke the promise. I think we understand why that's the case now.

Why should Manitobans be optimistic that his government has the answers to fix the economy today, tomorrow and into the future when he's running away?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is the only province projected to have positive economic growth in this 2009 year. Again, we're not perfect, but we are—but, we're four times better when it comes to the rainy day fund. We're not perfect like the member opposite, but we're four times better than you because we have placed four times more money in the rainy day fund today than nine years—or 10 years ago in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, let me finish on the Manitoba Hydro building. Manitoba Hydro building has been getting international awards for the most energy efficient corporate headquarters building anywhere in North America. You were opposed to the new headquarters. You were going to build it with the tumbleweeds. We built it in downtown Winnipeg.

Economy Government Strategy

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, if this government has its way and continues in its way, we'll have tumbleweeds in downtown Winnipeg very soon.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has just been dealt a dose of reality. Work sharing is the norm for the manufacturing sector in Manitoba. Add to that the fact that this government's revenue is driving up—drying up. Hydro revenues are down and even Lotteries revenue is now down. The first-quarter statement shows a reduction of \$318 million in equalization payments are gonna dry up.

Will the new Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) do the right thing and provide this

House with the economic action plan that she sees going forward for this province?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): It's not a four-part harmony over there; it's a little bit more—it's not even a Gregorian chant we're getting from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of tumbleweeds, when we came into office there was tumbleweeds blowing through the old mental health centre, the Brandon Mental Health Centre. Now the economic vision of this government is to put thousands of training spots, apprenticeship training spots in that centre, students going to the new facilities in Brandon.

* (13:50)

But I would point out to the members opposite that we continue to build Manitoba in an optimistic way: the Memorial Cup, with the new improvements to the Keystone Centre, all of which were in the budget voted against by the member opposite.

You've got to be more positive to build an economy. That's why the positive team is in office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Borotsik: Mr. Speaker, everything that the Premier just said is based on public spending. Economies are built on private investment into this economy and all economies.

Mr. Speaker, we've lost, over this last year, 4,800 manufacturing jobs. We've lost 2,500 jobs in agriculture. We've lost 1,400 jobs in construction. What the Premier's talking about is unsustainable when you have to do it on the backs of taxpayers.

I then ask the Minister of Finance: She's going to be stuck with making sure that we go forward in this economy, Mr. Speaker. Will she stand, please, and give us the economic action plan for this province going forward?

Mr. Doer: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a tale of two parties when we comes to the economic action plan.

Members opposite had an economic action plan which is scorched earth. We've had both private sector and public sector increases in investment. Ten years in a row, private sector capital investments have gone up, not down—up, not down, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out, you know, the people are working. The employment rate—the unemployment rate is one of the lowest in Canada. But, as I said before, Manitoba's population growth, including the time when the mayor—the former mayor was in his office, grew by 36,000 in 10 years. It's now 80,000.

Where I come from it's not perfect, but it's twice as good as the kind of scorched-earth policies of the Conservative Party of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Borotsik: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's very fortunate that the Premier is going to be leaving his office very shortly because there will be a legacy left in this province and the legacy is one that he's not gonna want to put his name to.

I should also tell you that there isn't a requirement for legislation to put forward an economic action plan. The Prime Minister has done just that. As a matter of fact, he talks about reducing the tax burden to Canadian families. He talks about delivering targeted help to Canadians. He talks about creating jobs, not losing the jobs that we have in this province, and he talks about laying the foundation for long-term economic growth based on private sector investment.

I can understand why the Premier gets up to speak on behalf of his new Finance Minister. The fact is she doesn't know anything about what's going forward. Please tell us, please tell this Leg, what are you going to do when the Premier leaves to put this province on an economic sound footing?

Mr. Doer: Well, the foghorns are out again, Mr. Speaker. The foghorns are out again.

I say to the honourable member, Mr. Speaker, I say to the honourable member, that every budget we produced tax reductions for all parts of our economy, the education tax reductions, the corporate tax reductions. My goodness, we're even eliminating, under this Minister of Finance, the small-business tax in Manitoba, the first province in Canada to do it. And you, you sir, you, sir, voted against it.

Yes, we do have our name on lots of achievements. We'll start with the Brandon Mental Health Centre: tumbleweeds under the Conservatives; economic growth, apprenticeship and training programs under the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

School Divisions Student Safety Concern Policies

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, bullying continues to be a very serious issue in our schools in Manitoba.

A youth at the school in my community, who was known to be bullied, asked alarming questions of an employee at the school, alluding to violence, guns and bloodshed. The employee reported this incident to senior management at the school, yet nothing was done and subsequently she has been fired.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's whole-school approach to safety and belonging, preventing violence and bullying, says, and I quote: "Intervention clearly demonstrates the seriousness with which the school views violence and bullying, while non-intervention implies they are somehow condoned."

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Education explain why this principle was not followed and why no one intervened after these red flags were raised?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Mr. Speaker, certainly, as mentioned in the House last week, we take—we take this issue very seriously, and we were very concerned about the allegations that have been in the public regarding this particular incident. My deputy has been in contact with the superintendent, and they are committing to work with the custodian in question.

And again, it is our government that has brought forward a number of initiatives to address the issues of student safety, and we'll continue to work with our partners, including Safe Schools Manitoba, including MAPC, including the Manitoba School Board Association, including the Manitoba Teachers' Society, because this is an issue that is very important to us to address and make sure that every day our students go to school feeling safe and our staff go to school feeling safe.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I know the minister wants to hide behind school divisions, but this is his document, and clearly it wasn't adhered to.

What is being done to ensure that bullying is being taken seriously and that this type of incident does not happen again? What is he doing to ensure the safety of students, teachers and employees in our schools?

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, again, we have been the province that brought forward the Safe Schools Charter. We brought forward the legislation. We have a code of conduct that all schools are required to have to respond to inappropriate behaviours. We have staff trained in threat assessment. We have crisis response teams. We have emergency response plans in place. We have a lot of the protocols in place, and it's disconcerting that the protocols have not been followed.

And again, we are looking into this very serious allegation, and we'll continue to work with the school division to find out exactly what happened and, of course, take steps to ensure that something like this doesn't happen again.

Mrs. Stefanson: The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that the policies that he's brought forward are not working, and subsequently children are falling through the cracks. The minister can try and deflect blame all he wants, but this is his document, and he is responsible for these very important issues in our school.

The fact is that he needs to ensure that divisions are following the Safe Schools Charter. What steps has he taken to ensure that divisions are following these principles and that bullying is not condoned in our schools? What is he doing to ensure the safety of our students, our teachers and employees in our schools?

Mr. Bjornson: Once again, we've put in place a number of different procedures and protocols. It is required by law. And, once again, I remember these issues as a classroom teacher in the 1990s when student violence towards teachers and towards other students was a very important issue to teachers, but it was ignored by the government of the day. It wasn't until this government took leadership, developed drug and alcohol policies as a requirement, developed policies around gangs, developed policies around protocols in the event there's a threat in the community that could be perceived to be a threat to the safety of students in the school, talking about lock-down procedures, threat assessments and training for staff.

We are working with all the stakeholders every day to make sure that our schools are safe learning environments for our children.

**School Divisions
Employee Dismissal Policy**

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, Tracy Rose was a school custodian when a bullied youth befriended her and made some alarming statements, such as disposing of a body, lots of blood and what gun to buy. Tracy realized that the youth was crying out for help, and fearing for the safety of all staff and students, she took her concerns to senior management. By her compassion, Tracy may have prevented a potential Columbine situation, and yet for her heroic efforts, she was fired.

Will the Minister of Education recommend that her dismissal be sent to the Labour Board for an independent review?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth): Once again, Mr. Speaker, we have been in contact with the school division. I've asked my deputy to do so last week, and he spoke directly with the superintendent last week about this particular issue. And the division has assured us that they are in contact with this employee and that they will—are committed to working with her to address her concerns.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they met with her to fire her. The minister should get involved and stand up for this employee. It seems that the Safe Schools Charter failed. The codes of conduct failed. The safe schools act failed. The whistle-blower legislation failed. They all failed Tracy Rose and a 17-year-old youth crying out for help.

Will this Minister of Education now introduce real legislation that will protect all school employees from being fired when issues of safety are raised?

* (14:00)

Mr. Bjornson: Mr. Speaker, as I have said and I'll say it again, we have—[interjection] We have been in contact with the local school division. We have asked them to take a look at this matter. We take the allegations that have been in the public very seriously, and we are going to work with the school division to come to a conclusion on what exactly transpired and how the system did not produce the results that we had hoped it would produce in terms of protecting our children.

This is a very serious matter. We're very concerned about it, and we have had those discussions with the school division. They've committed to work with the individual who has brought these allegations forward, and I take the school division on their word that they will work with that individual, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, our staff and students don't need hope; they need leadership when it comes to these kinds of situations.

Last week, this Minister of Education said the school division is conducting an internal investigation into the claims that were made about this particular incident, and he said, and I quote, "We know that the school division is taking this matter very seriously, and we're waiting to hear the response from the school division."

I ask this minister: Does he think it's appropriate for the school division to be investigating itself or will this minister finally show some leadership over the schools in this province and get to the bottom of the issue? Stop fluffing this off to others and show leadership and take this issue on himself. Will he stand up and now do that?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member should know, as a former trustee, what the processes are with respect to the hiring of employees and personnel issues. The member should know that if we're talking about the issue of employment right now.

As far as the other issue, the bigger picture issue, and the unfortunate incident that has occurred, Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are working with the school division to find out what went wrong, and we are going to make sure that we learn from what went wrong and continue—or commit to continue to improve school safety for our students here in the province of Manitoba—in the province of Manitoba.

And members opposite don't need to lecture us about putting in protocols for safety for the schools because nothing existed—nothing existed under the former members, Mr. Speaker, nothing. I was in the school system. I saw first-hand what was happening in our schools. They ignored teachers then; they're ignoring them now.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Catastrophic Injury Benefits

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it's—they're following a definite pattern here of passing the buck.

Mr. Speaker, last night at committee we heard presentations from two individuals whose lives will never be the same because of catastrophic injuries. Their message was simple. MPI does not compensate them fairly or adequately for the true impact of their injuries. While Bill 36 sounds good, it does not nearly go far enough. In fact, Chief Justice Scott called MPI's compensation scheme wholly inadequate.

Can the Minister responsible for MPI please explain to the House why, under his watch, MPI would rather spend tens of millions of dollars on enhanced driver's licence that no one wants, and the overruns which are—instead of paying to the definitely, seriously injured claimants?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, I think, as all members know, the enhanced—the driver's licence initiative is one that many Manitobans have taken up MPI on and can provide some assurances at the border.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, I know, like to stand up in this House and deride MPI. We know what their motive is. Manitobans trust us to safeguard MPI, not the members opposite.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that Manitoba motorists trust MPI; they just don't trust this government with MPI's bank account.

Mr. Speaker, the provisions in Bill 36 don't go far enough. For example, it raises the limit on personal care assistants in section 131. But it amounts to a drop in the bucket for injured claimants who require 24-hour care. At \$17 an hour for care and \$800 a month increases going very far, it's only four days care. There's a lot more days in a month. It's hard for insured claimants and their families to accept that MPI doesn't have enough money to help them when they see the waste and mismanagement going on under the—under—in MPI under this government.

Does the Minister responsible for MPI not agree, instead of asking MPI to spend more than \$13 million on enhanced ID cards that nobody wants,

the money would be better spent on catastrophically injured claimants?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, it's—it was the members opposite, when they actually had their hands on the levers of power, they went into MPI and they undid many of the benefits that had been put in place by New Democrats.

So we know what they do, not what they say, what we know by their actions what they do with MPI. And we know, as a result of the ongoing theme in the member's questions, that members on that side of the House cannot be trusted to ensure that MPI will be here to provide excellent coverage for Manitobans at a reasonable cost.

But, Mr. Speaker, the legislation is going to put millions upon millions to—worth of enhanced benefits for 120 Manitobans, immediately, whether you pass the bill or not.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about millions and millions that are not accessible.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer is cold comfort to people like Jan Stevens, who presented at a committee last night. Jan's husband suffered a brain injury as a result of a catastrophic vehicle accident, but because her husband doesn't fit the textbook definition of brain injured, and they won't accept her doctor's opinion as valid, Bill 36 won't help her.

MPI seems to have lots of money for other things though, like bailing this government out of its responsibility for driver's licensing. In fact, MPI has spent more than \$43 million since 2005 picking up the cost of driver's licensing overrun by this government.

Does the minister responsible for MPI not agree that the \$43 million would have been better spent helping the catastrophically injured victims like Jan Stevens' husband?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, 120 Manitobans will immediately be entitled to \$14 million in new enhanced benefits. There will be an additional \$35 million made available for—in the future by making sure that there are ties to cost of living, additional \$30 million on top of that in the event that other Manitobans are catastrophically injured.

Mr. Speaker, that's not all. There's gonna be, of course, lump sum maximum changes, indexes, of course, personal care amounts increased by \$800 a

month and the minimum income replacement will be increased as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is going to be done by making sure that we balance the premiums and our responsibility to those who are catastrophically injured. This is very robust legislation. I would trust members opposite would support this rather than what we saw as their sordid record of hitting up people who are injured—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Rural Health-Care Services Service Delivery Concerns

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, concerned citizens in both Virden and Melita, as I've mentioned in this House before, continue to wait for expanded use of their hospital and medical facilities. The chronic shortage of staff, both doctors and nurses, have forced many local citizens to seek medical care in Saskatchewan and other Manitoba communities.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health today tell the southwest Manitoba citizens why she and her government have neglected their needs and when, if ever, their needs will become her priority?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have an opportunity to inform the member and inform the House that we have, since 1999, seen a net increase of doctors to the province of Manitoba every single year. That's point No. 1.

We know that in the previous decade, well, certainly six or seven or eight years of those, we saw a net decrease of doctors every single year. Increase, decrease. That's point No. 2.

Thirdly, I can announce to the member that we have, of course, put in even more aggressive recruitment and retention initiatives this fall—\$2.1 million worth—to not only bring doctors to rural Manitoba, to assist them in relocating there and to assist them to take time off, when they need to take time off for their studies, to bring other professionals in. We're committed to this task, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, that's the same answer we got two weeks ago. It's the same one six months ago. It's the same one 18 months ago. The minister's pat answer, through many of these question periods, is certainly wearing thin. Rural Manitobans know that there is a shortage of medical staff, no matter

what she says, in their hospitals. These rural citizens, concerned about the quality of their health care, know that they need more doctors and more nurses and that the facilities are not being maximized. The prime example is the use of Virden's operating room as a storage area for supplies and files.

Is this what the minister calls quality health care? Can the minister tell us today if she has any plans of providing specialized health services at the Virden and district hospital?

* (14:10)

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member, again, that in terms of our approach in increasing the number of physicians, it's multipronged. Number one, of course, we have made a decision on this side of the House that, regardless of the economic climate, we're committed to maintaining and increasing the number of spaces in medical school. We know that members opposite, again, when they had their hands on the switches during tough economic times, they decreased those medical spaces. We're still feeling the effects of that, even today.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to tell the member that, of the first-year students that enter the University of Manitoba's medical school this year, 110 of them, not 70 like under the members opposite, 49 of those students had rural origins and are going to be encouraged, encouraged to work back in their rural communities. While that's going on, we're increasing our incentive programs to bring doctors to rural and northern communities where they're needed the most.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, thou protests too much.

Mr. Speaker, it's a shame not to be better utilizing these rural health-care facilities while we watch Manitobans going elsewhere for their—what should be local health-care needs, local medical services. They're left with shortages of staff, no specialized services, an operating room being used for storage and Melita has one doctor providing emergency service, all weekdays, 24/7.

Mr. Speaker, is this the same, the second-rate response from the minister with the largest budget in the NDP government? Where's the accountability? When can she provide assurances for these citizens, that their health-care needs and the use of their facilities will become her priority too?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is simply not putting facts on the record, in terms of our investments in rural health care. In addition to working with the university in ensuring an increase in rural students in the medical school, the seats of which we increased and didn't decrease, we also have made investments just this fall: \$5 million for the expansion of the Portage hospital ER; \$720,000 to provide community cancer services in Eriksdale; new or renovated hospitals in Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, The Pas, Beausejour, Pinawa, Gimli, Morden-Winkler, St. Anne's, Steinbach, Shoal Lake, and one is on the way in Selkirk; CT scanners in Brandon, Steinbach, Thompson, The Pas; a new mobile ultrasound for Eriksdale; 160 new ambulances.

May I please have more time, Mr. Speaker? Eliminated the fees on interfacility transfers, something members opposite never would have touched. Please, if we could just have more time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Persons With Disabilities Family Managed Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): To the minister responsible for the mess happening to a young lady in Flin Flon: When Chantel Harmon graduated from high school in '99, and for years afterwards she swam in a pool, she worked and volunteered in the community. On family-managed care, things were reasonable. But now on typical NDP fashion, the government and its agencies have decided that they can do a better job.

She's no longer on family-managed care, and this summer when I visited her, she was essentially confined in a small home with no wheelchair access, no lift to help her out of bed, increasing problems with mobility. She had bedsores and suffered from NDP confinement syndrome.

I ask—I ask the minister—I ask the minister why she has failed Chantel so badly.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's my recollection that the department has taken this matter most seriously. I understand that there have been discussions with the family, making sure that the necessary renovations are made for the home. That is all in line with the—with the objective of this government, to ensure that individual Manitobans can continue living in the community, continue living at home.

Mr. Gerrard: While the minister has taken some measures, there are still ongoing major problems. We're talking about an actual person here.

I ask the minister: Why would the health authority spend more than \$10,000 to provide the family with a lift that has electrical problems so that two months after it's put in it's still not working? Why is the NDP leaving Chantel to develop bedsores and condemning this young lady to deteriorate further? Why is the support Chantel is receiving so inadequate? And why has the government continued to give this family the runaround on the one thing after another? Will the minister attend to this serious issue and allow Chantel the opportunity to live in dignity and safety, or will he let Chantel continue to deteriorate?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that it is my belief that all honourable members of this House care deeply about the citizens of our province, and for the member opposite to make the suggestion that he is singularly the one person that cares about our citizens is inappropriate.

Further, I will say to the member that in working with—in combination with Family Services and Housing, with the regional health authorities, we're going to continue to work with this family to provide as much as we can to support this individual in her home. These dialogues are ongoing, Mr. Speaker. We do realize that this is a real person. We work with real people every day and we're going to continue to work to care for this individual and this family.

I know that Manitobans expect no less and I would suggest to the member that we all care about our constituents.

Philippines Flooding Government Response

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the tropical storm, the Ketsana, hit the Philippines last Saturday, dumping more than a month's rain within a 12-year-hour time frame, displacing hundreds of thousands of members of the Filipino—and over 240 people have actually died as a result of the flooding, and we appreciate and we acknowledge the political support for the \$100,000 that is being given to MCI or MCIC.

The question that I have for the Premier is that given the magnitude, probably the worst in 40 years, of this disaster and the impact that it is having on the

Filipino community here, in the neighbourhood of 60,000-plus people, Mr. Speaker, and the family and friends abroad, would the Premier be prepared to match the contributions that are being raised by the community here in Manitoba? An example of that would be the Phil-Can Disaster Relief Committee and others. Will the Premier make that sort of a commitment to the community today?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, again, we did not want to have a situation where the community wasn't able to raise what is required that—and I—would be not stepping forward as quickly as we tried to do. So we've worked with the MCIC people. They have actually people in Manila. We work with the people that are in contact with their loved ones, including people in our own caucus. Obviously, we hope that the human devastation that's taking place with the flooding will not result in further loss of life or with—follow potential disease in other area—related challenges for the people in Manila in the related areas.

We always, with any disaster, keep a watching breach, but we thought we should move forward quickly, again a suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) as well, and that's the announcement we made today. But we do not—we rely on people on the front lines, the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church, the people in the Red Cross, the UNICEF, a number of other organizations on the front lines, but we hope that this makes a difference. We know it will with MCIC.

Manitoba's blessed to have great volunteers that not only take the money that we are pledging and the money from the community that's being pledged, but they also multiply that through the NGO organizations, through church donations, through donations to UNICEF, through donations to Red Cross, through donations to many other organizations, the Mennonite Central Committee's often involved, and that's how we get a great community effort with a great human tragedy.

Eating Disorder Programs Funding

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, many members of this House have been contacted by our constituents about a health concern that is particularly troubling among young women. Eating disorders can have a very serious and sometimes tragic impact on individual Manitobans, their families and friends.

Can the Minister of Healthy Living please tell the House what this government is doing to improve the prevention and treatment of eating disorders?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was joined by many mental health advocates and advocates for eating disorders from across Manitoba. We were proud to open up the first community-based program for Manitoba. Joined was an individual who is no stranger to any of us in this House, Mrs. Elaine Stevenson, who has been a vocal advocate asking for the community-based program to be provided for individuals and for their families to provide counselling services, nutritional information, not only intervention but as well as prevention.

* (14:20)

The important part about this community-based initiative is that it's provincial in nature, that there will be consultations that will happen throughout the province, and we are most excited about the host family program, which will provide resources for people living outside of Winnipeg in Manitoba.

Manitoba Housing Authority Unit Upgrades

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Carman): Amanda Conway is renting a house owned by Manitoba Housing Renewal Corporation in St. Claude. She is considering moving because she cannot afford the \$550 per month hydro bill. The house needs insulation upgrades throughout the house. I have written to the minister regarding this matter and have not heard back. When will the minister answer my letter?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Housing is investing in public housing, unlike members opposite who strangled that budget. But 200 million almost—197 million, I believe—is being invested in public housing to refresh—we refresh it. But as part of that we're gonna make sure that people living in public housing are part of the renovation team so they can enhance their skills. That's transformation in the real sense of the word, and, as well, we're going to be making sure that there are renovations that are good for the environment, that we make green investments, and we certainly will look into the complaint raised by the member opposite to make sure that that particular unit has the enhancements necessary to guard Mother Earth.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, Amanda Conway has a young family and is doing her best to provide for them. She's not asking for interior upgrades such as cupboards or paint, et cetera. All she wants to do is lower her heating bill and prevent mould, mildew from forming from the poor-fitting windows and doors, and all she wants is improvements to the exterior of her house, the insulation of the house.

Why is this minister always in crisis mode and does not have a timely action plan on houses owned by MHRC in St. Claude?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that if there was—if there was any crisis mode that developed it was due, you know, to the members opposite who—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: —didn't get the need for public housing in Manitoba, let alone the need for good and safe public housing in Manitoba. We, along with our federal partners and some municipal partners, are proceeding with \$197 million being invested in public housing, the biggest investment ever in Manitoba history, and we'll make sure that the concerns raised by the member and his constituent are considered fairly, and I trust that members opposite will support this investment in public housing.

It's our view, Mr. Speaker, that it's not just private investments that make economies, it's public investments. *[interjection]* I'm sorry for the member for Brandon West (Mr. Borotsik), but I wish he would be with us and believe that.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Chapman School

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud to rise and share with this House a great achievement that was accomplished by one of the elementary schools in my constituency.

Chapman Elementary School has participated in a Green Schools Program, a program developed by the SEEDS Foundation since 1998. The mission of the SEEDS Foundation is to support Canadian educators in promoting student literacy and active personal and societal responsibility for energy, sustainability and the environment. Their Green

Schools Program is an environmental stewardship program which provides recognition and focus to schools' efforts in taking positive environmental action.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Throughout the school year each class at Chapman school takes an environmental projects—takes on environmental projects and records their results. The results were reported to the SEEDS Foundation, who in turn reward the school with a designated status based upon the number of projects completed. In their first year in the program Chapman received green school status by completing 100 projects, promptly followed by jade status by completing 250 projects. Emerald status was achieved in 2005 by reporting their 500th project.

Last week I had the honour of participating in a ceremony at Chapman school where the students were presented with an Earth status banner marking the milestone of completing 1,000 projects. This is an amazing achievement, especially considering Chapman is a small school with only 80 students.

I would like to take this opportunity once again to congratulate the students, families and staff of Chapman school for their many years of dedication to this program and for the positive environmental impact they have made in our community. I look forward to seeing them achieve their next status level in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Snow Lake Nature Trails

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, on September 11th, 2009, I was delighted to attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the formal opening of three nature trails in Snow Lake: the Boreal, Chickadee and Lakeview trails. These nature trails allow residents and visitors to experience scenic walks through a beautiful forest and lake setting. Interpretive signage on the paths focusses on northern birds hikers might see along the way.

Local citizens of Snow Lake, council members were invited to the opening ceremony which took place at the Pine Grosbeak sign on the Boreal Trail. Following the ribbon cutting, we enjoyed a walk on the trails and then gathered at the Snow Lake Mining Museum, a Manitoba star attraction, for refreshments.

The purpose of the signage project is severalfold. Primarily, this project seeks to be an educational and eco-friendly tourism venture that

effectively enhances the existing trails for the enjoyment of visitors and residents of Snow Lake. Besides the new interpretive signs along the trail, there is also a large sign near the tourist bureau and mining museum that displays a map of all the trails.

The nature trails are beneficial to people of all ages who wish to come out and enjoy them but specifically reach out to students and seniors by providing an interesting and informative way to get exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that this project would not be possible without the efforts of Bev Atkinson, who is the community development officer for Snow Lake. It was Bev who spearheaded the project and planned the signage which now enriches the trails. I would like to thank Bev, her office and all Snow Lake volunteers for initiating and completing this nature trails project.

The trails are being enjoyed today and have a great potential for future expansion. It makes the great town of Snow Lake an even better place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Right to Know Week

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): This week is Right to Know Week and all across Canada people are celebrating and learning about their rights to access of information held by public bodies. It is important for the public to be informed of their rights of freedom of information and the benefits of living in a nation that relies on transparent and accessible government.

Here in Manitoba, the office of the Ombudsman, along with other organizations, have arranged events to help educate Manitobans on their very important right to know. Manitobans are invited to attend free presentations which will outline right-to-know legislation in this province and throughout the world.

Democratic process requires the ready ability of true and complete information and, in Manitoba, our democracy and our ability to participate in government, which is precisely why our right to know is so important. Freedom of information is an essential part of our democracy and is vital to good government.

Mr. Speaker, there are many good reasons to celebrate our right to know. Giving Manitobans access to information encourages citizens to hold their governments accountable, help foster improvements in record keeping and disclosure

practices and promotes a spirit of openness that can create a more reliable and democratic government.

Mr. Speaker, access to information is an important part of our political system. I would like to congratulate the partners in Right to Know Week for taking the time to educate Manitobans on the right for information and for celebrating our right to know. Thank you.

Stop FASD Outreach Program

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the work being done on one of our province's most important child and family programs, the Stop FASD outreach program.

This program does a great deal to combat the most common preventable cause of alcohol-related developmental abilities–disabilities in Canada. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, commonly known as FASD, is a particularly important program for rural Manitoba and my constituency of The Pas.

Approximately 200 children are assessed at the FASD diagnostic clinic each year in Manitoba. To educate the public about FASD, in 1998 Manitoba launched a Stop FASD program across Winnipeg and in rural areas. Stop FASD is an outreach program in which mentors provide the intensive support to women who are pregnant, who are recently—who recently had a baby and had used alcohol or drugs during that pregnancy. The program, which is completely voluntary, provides each client with personal care and a high standard of compassion over three years.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Recognizing the importance of this program, just this month our government invested an additional \$1.6 million in addressing FASD, opening an expanded Manitoba FASD Centre and three new Stop FASD prevention centres in Portage la Prairie, Flin Flon and Dauphin. This increases the scope for the program to seven locations and ensures Stop FASD can better reach our rural population.

In The Pas, caring individuals who dedicate their time to helping parents and children cope with FASD include Carie McIntosh, Donna Janzen, Trudy Wright, Lorna Sanderson, Melanie Read, Marnie Streit, Mary Lukes, Patricia Whitney, Renee Kastrukoff, Tracey Kirkness, Joanne Wyman and Jennifer Sanderson.

On behalf of the Legislature, I want to thank these individuals who are contributing to a better society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

Amazing Agriculture Adventure Program

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I rise today to bring this House's attention to the anniversary of an important education program. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Agriculture in the Classroom's Amazing Agriculture Adventure program. Since its inception, over 15,000 grade 4 and 5 students have taken part in interactive seminars on agriculture.

Promoting agricultural awareness and literacy, the program uses real farm experiences to educate children about the entire agricultural process from the farms and fields to the finished products they consume. Agriculture in the Classroom Manitoba hosts the program twice a year, once in June in Brandon and once in September in Winnipeg.

For its 10th anniversary, the program will be visiting two new venues in and around Winnipeg: the Richardsons' Kelburn farm and the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences' Glenlea Research Station. Through 18 interactive stations, students learn about the greatest aspects of agriculture, ranging from the crushing of Canola to the inner workings of a combine to the difference between milk and meat-producing cattle. Through a live cookie auction during lunch breaks, students even get the experience of a live country auction.

In addition to the Amazing Agriculture Adventure, Agriculture in the Classroom Manitoba runs a host of other programs that increase agricultural literacy, programs such as Made in Manitoba Breakfast and farm tours.

These programs would not be possible without the tireless dedication of its many volunteers. To them and to Agriculture in the Classroom Manitoba, I'd like to extend a great thank you and congratulations to an excellent job of educating our youth on the importance of agriculture in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Mackintosh: Under rule 31(8), I'm announcing the private member's resolution for next Tuesday will be put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is The 100th Anniversary of B'nai Brith in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, as earlier agreed, today we are considering the condolences for our beloved Oscar Lathlin.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. On orders of the day, we'll deal with a motion of condolence.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Oscar Lathlin

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, I move, seconded by the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen),

THAT this House convey to the family of the late Oscar Lathlin, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, its sincerest sympathy in their bereavement and its appreciation of his devotion to the duty in a useful life of active community and public service, and that Mr. Speaker be requested to forward a copy of this resolution to the family.

Motion presented.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of standing in this House many times with many deceased MLAs, but it's a colleague that served with us for so many years and served not only as a colleague but a friend to us. This will be a very, very difficult statement to make on behalf of the life and contributions of Oscar Lathlin.

He was, indeed, a friend, a father, a leader, a Member of the Legislative Assembly, a chief, an elder and a person that, every day, I personally miss, and I know my colleagues miss him as well.

Mr. Speaker, I first met Oscar Lathlin in The Pas when he was chief. He was an individual that—I was the leader of a party he—or, actually, I was a Cabinet minister attempting to be a leader of the party—asked me a number of questions about the proposed constitutional amendments, and it was his intellect, his toughness, his directness that first impressed me on the talent of Oscar Lathlin.

Subsequent to that, I attempted to encourage him to run in The Pas constituency. It was a very tough nomination race. The race was ultimately decided by the constituents of The Pas to select Oscar Lathlin as our candidate, and in that election campaign, he was

declared defeated, which was an interesting issue because all the way through his life, in political life, I think Oscar experienced some of the bias of Winnipeg, particularly in the media. He was deemed to be defeated because people hadn't anticipated the votes in Cross Lake and Norway House, and, of course, after he was declared defeated, he subsequently won. And I don't believe that was the first time that happened to Oscar in terms of people not understanding, from Winnipeg, the type of constituencies that are in the north and the type of constituents that Oscar represented so ably in his political life.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe in the '99 election, it was predicted that he would have difficulty winning, and I know that by the time 2003 came around and then 2007, Oscar was so proud in 2007, as he should be, about the fact that he won every poll in The Pas in that provincial election, again a testimony to his ability to bring his community together, to bring his constituents together and to bind people on common issues and common causes in that northern Manitoba riding.

Oscar was a leader. He was a chief. He was a member of the Legislature. He was a member of Cabinet. He had a toughness and determination that went along with his absolute very, very informed being. He was a very intelligent man, a very knowledgeable person and he had a toughness and determination to him that we all know and we all respect.

But I've said before, he had a tenderness to him that often didn't, again, translate out of this Chamber, often didn't translate perhaps in these hallways, but those of us who knew him, got to experience his love and his tenderness on a regular basis.

I mentioned the story of having a caucus barbeque at our home and Oscar saying to my young daughter that if he put an axe in a tree faced in a certain direction, that it wouldn't rain that night. I was worried, you know, the caucus was going to come over, it's going to rain all over them, we got a small house, you know, what are we going to do? Oscar said, don't worry, I'll put an axe in the tree and—better question, what's the axe doing there in a backyard of Winnipeg—axe in the tree. And then, of course, it didn't rain and my daughter—I could see him later at night with Emily talking for hours about northern Manitoba, Aboriginal history, Aboriginal issues. I see that in her papers now at university. Obviously, his tenderness was very important.

Every one of our caucus members had e-mails, letters of support, particularly when people had gone through a personal tragedy with family members in this—in our team and I don't know, I'm sure it happened on the other side as well because that's the way Oscar was; you know, give no quarter in the House, give no quarter in an election but tenderness on the personal side with everybody.

We know that Oscar was born in 1947. He was born virtually on a trapline in Manitoba. He carried the teachings of the bush and of his elders all the way through his life. We certainly had the opportunity to experience that through his work in Opaskwayak Cree Nation. He, as a very young boy, looked after his dog team, his father's dog team. He was involved in championship races. He had some great stories to tell about dogs. He actually had great stories to tell about everything.

*(14:40)

I think that his story about his hunting and shooting a moose was still a classic. He had us, of course, in caucus eating out of his hands as he lowered his voice and talked about following the twigs that were broken, following the moose through the bush, and the marks in the bush, the hoof marks and the various other smells of the bush to get his first moose, and then he said, and then I got onto the highway, got into my SUV and killed it with my vehicle, and that is the story of his first moose that he ever was able to hunt to complete success, in his opinion.

And, of course, nobody could tell it with the kind of humour that Oscar could. In fact, sometimes he would start off in a very stern way, and, you know, you didn't know where it was going to end, and it would end, very humorous story and learning. Sometimes he would start very sternly and end sternly. So, you didn't want to—you didn't want to laugh too early, because sometimes it wasn't going to be a joke; it was going to be something pretty serious. And so that was, again, an ability of his—of his ability to make—to give a message to all of us, to all of Manitobans and not have any ability to predict where this was going to end and what message it would leave us.

I know he left a good message to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. McFadyen), one which echoes around these chambers every day, about the difference between listening and talking, but I'm not going to steal that story away from the Leader of the

Opposition, except to say it was another funny story from Oscar Lathlin.

He had—he, of course, went to residential school, and he had strong views of education, both positively in the Frontier School Division and the Cranberry school and in the residential schools, and he and—Eric Robinson, the Minister of Northern and Aboriginal Affairs, and the former Grand Chief, Phil Fontaine, had a lot to say about the residential schools and why—and why it had such a negative impact on people, on families.

He was able to describe, along with the minister, the experience of people that were taken away from their families at four and five years old, and with—and forced to learn another language, often, regrettably, with corporal punishment being the means of implementing language changes and cultural changes, and it certainly was important for those of us who didn't experience it or didn't know about it or didn't understand it.

He, Oscar, was a person who was, as a chief, involved in the establishment of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. I know, in 1988, I was the—was elected leader of our party. Howard Pawley stayed on as Premier. But, we had a—Oscar was chairing the Justice committee, and he absolutely implored us, not just to have one commissioner, but to have somebody—and Murray Sinclair had just been appointed by the provincial government—to have someone from Aboriginal background.

And, of course, we were very pleased that Oscar had recommended, in a most vigorous way, that Justices Hamilton and Sinclair be the—the members of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, so that Aboriginal people in Manitoba would not only have justice to be done in that inquiry, but it'd be perceived to be done, and Oscar understood that that would mean the report would have a lot more credibility with Aboriginal people. It was dealing with very difficult situations with the shooting in Winnipeg, with the unresolved and unaccountable murder of Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas, and, of course, all the other systemic issues and challenges in the justice system.

Oscar Lathlin was a strong member of our Cabinet, a strong member of our caucus in opposition. He sometimes was criticized by the media for his voting record, and I would—I knew, and I knew first-hand, that oftentimes the Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and the former Minister of Aboriginal and Northern

Affairs, Oscar Lathlin, would literally drive from question period to a northern funeral, go to the funeral all day, go to a second funeral the next day in another constituency and miss a vote because they were with the people that elected them at their greatest time of need.

And I always thought it was extremely unfair that somebody from Concordia would be evaluated the same as somebody from The Pas. And I think that this speaks to the issue of—and I say that for the member from Russell. He, I'm sure, goes through the same difficulty, the members that represent Swan River, it's a six-hour drive. There are people here that live outside of the Perimeter Highway and, more importantly, they don't live—just live outside of the Perimeter Highway, they represent people from outside of the Perimeter Highway and they're there when people need them. And to judge somebody that's a 15-minute car ride away from the Legislature the same way as we judge somebody six, seven, eight, 10 hours away does a travesty to their responsibilities and I think it—I want to say this to the media. that they should judge people on the basis of their accountability of their—to their constituents first, as opposed to only looking at things from a lens inside of the Perimeter Highway. And I know Oscar felt that strongly and he would want somebody to say it, and I want to say it on his behalf because I think it was very unfair to him—as it has been to others in the past in terms of the kind of responsibilities we have based on geography and constituents.

Oscar Lathlin was a—was a great chief. He was quite moved to move into partisan politics after the events of Meech Lake. He saw the debates here. He was very moved by all sides of this discussion. Obviously, he had his own personal views. I had the chance to talk with him at the Peguis Powwow, in fact. In fact, with—along with the members from Rupertsland; we discussed that early on. He wasn't elected then and we, I think, we had long chats with him about partisan politics, and he had long chats after he was elected with the member, the Cabinet minister for Northern and Aboriginal Affairs.

I just want to say that he always believed in many things that led to the inequity for Aboriginal people had to be corrected: the fact that people died too young of diabetes in our First Nations and Aboriginal communities; the fact that people—and he had remedies for that. You know, they weren't big remedies but he thought that we should invest in gardens in northern Manitoba and gardens in our communities to try to reverse the fact that the

dependency on the traditional high cost of foods that were being distributed in the north.

He felt very strongly about the lack of co-ordination on clean water. He would point to places like Pukatawagan, where the sewage treatment plant was upstream to the drinking water intake, and he would have example after example of that which, you know, is just common-sense neglect of Canada's First Peoples.

He was a strong believer in the treaties. He was a strong believer in the dignity of those treaties and the ability to use treaties and treaty land entitlements as a way to get economic opportunity for Aboriginal people, and he believed in that very strongly and that's why the treaty land entitlement of over a million acres was a very important announcement by him and by our government.

Finally, he believed in education and training. It's appropriate that the University College of the North has part of its campus now named after Oscar Lathlin. He, when meetings with the federal government going into the Kelowna discussions with all the premiers that we had discussions with, along with all our colleagues, believed that if we didn't get education right, all the other inequities in Aboriginal communities and First Nations communities would not—never—be resolved. And so the University College of the North was a long-term goal of his that we feel very strongly. It's a very important initiative for all members of this Legislature.

The—getting the graduation rates up for Aboriginal and First Nations children is a work in—I'd like to say in progress, but it's still a work that really needs considerable amount of attention. Oscar would say, spend less money on lawyers and accountants and consultants, and spend more money on teachers, on curriculum, on kids, on schools in Aboriginal and First Nation communities. And he was right when he said that in this Legislature, and he's right today.

* (14:50)

So, if we can have, in our memories of Oscar Lathlin, have one message for this Legislature to carry the torch that Oscar Lathlin brought so proudly to this Legislature, is that make sure that we get every child in this province, including children in First Nation communities, the real opportunity to have a chance to graduate from high school and have a career of choices and dignity, rather than having doors shut by inequity in our education system.

Mr. Speaker, there's many others I know that want to speak and they will add much more than I have today, but to Amanda and Leona, and the family, our deepest condolences.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the Premier for introducing the motion. I'm honoured to second the condolence motion today in honour of Oscar Lathlin, a deceased colleague of all of ours, not from the same party as members on this side of the House, but a colleague nonetheless from this Legislature.

And I know, I think all of us, as members of this House, and members of different parties will find that the more time that we spend here, the more we realize that the personalities that sometimes we see in this Chamber, and the partisan atmosphere of this Chamber, have much more to them than may meet the eye sometimes in the give and take of partisan debate, and Oscar Lathlin was one such person. He, I think, was not by nature an excessively partisan person, but members on this side of the House were from to time to time on the receiving end of comments from the member from The Pas who was passionate about what he believed in, and when he disagreed with us, he certainly let us know in the most direct terms, as was his responsibility.

And I know, as the Premier has referred to, that he offered me some very blunt advice following a committee meeting just about a year and a half ago. And it's advice I take to heart, perhaps I haven't acted on as much as members opposite might like, but certainly, I think, contained lots of wisdom.

The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), I know has been particularly bruised from time to time, in a metaphorical way, by challenges from the former member for The Pas, but it's also something that we recognize as having been motivated by a desire to be a voice for the people that he represented at all times.

And so, in this Chamber where we sometimes, perhaps, have a limited opportunity, especially members of opposition from different caucuses, to get to know the full person, I do want to say that we want to express our condolences to the family of the late Oscar Lathlin.

He had a remarkable life and the Premier has recounted many of the important aspects of his life, having been born on a trapline in 1947, raised on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, and part of a very large and prominent family from northern Manitoba. It

was a family that I knew indirectly through connections through family and friends completely outside of politics, that was, and is, a family with a reputation of great dedication in public service, and Oscar was part of that tradition of the Lathlin family of serving others.

I've enjoyed spending time in watching the OCN Blizzard and the passionate support provided by Oscar and his family for that great hockey team, but also the many other ways that he contributed to his community and to the north.

His life story is a remarkable one. It's unlike the lives that have—that lived by many, and particularly members of this Chamber, and he lost his father at a young age. He cared for his father's sled dogs growing up. He had raised a champion by the age of nine, as I understand it, and then went on after his father's passing to help his mother raise his younger brothers and sisters. He worked the traplines. He pursued a university degree. Ultimately landed a job with the federal government. And, I think, as we listen to the comments from members opposite, people who knew him quite well personally, we know that he had a profound impact on everybody who knew him. He was described as humble, important, hardworking, and completely motivated by a desire to improve the lives of others.

We know he was a graduate of Frontier College in Cranberry Portage, and I think, as a result of his experience in the education system, he came to view education as a critical component of improving the lives of all Manitobans, but in particular members of First Nations communities in our province. One of his proudest achievements was the creation of University College of the North. It brought post-secondary learning to 12 far-flung communities in northern Manitoba, communities that have historically suffered from inadequate economic opportunities, and that provision of educational services has been important to that—to those communities.

In his—in his honour, as the Premier (Mr. Doer) has said, there is an Oscar Lathlin Research Library campaign now under way by UCN. I was pleased to get the correspondence in connection with that initiative in his honour, and certainly pleased to put on the record our support for that initiative and our—and our anticipation that it will be a very successful undertaking, and a fitting memorial to somebody who committed much of his life to education.

Mr. Speaker, he was first elected to this Chamber in 1990, spent some time serving in opposition, then went on to serve in government, was appointed in 2002 Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, and held a variety of other responsibilities in government. He also served on the board of MKO, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and was a member of the policy advisory committee of the Brandon University Native Teacher Education Program. And so he has and did serve in very many ways our province. His contributions will live well into the future, and I think all of us consider ourselves fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve with him in this Chamber.

The member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), the Minister of Culture, said that Oscar Lathlin was known as a very humble but a very important Manitoban, and I think that was a very appropriate description of Mr. Lathlin.

Grand Chief Ron Evans, who was a political opponent from time to time of Oscar Lathlin, was similarly generous in his comments and said that there was a quiet manner about him, a quiet and gentle manner. He just treated people with respect. I believe that's what kept getting him re-elected. I think when the words of your defeated opponent are offered in that way, I think it suggests great sincerity and authenticity in terms of those comments.

So Mr. Speaker, again, I want to extend my condolences and the condolences of members on this side of the House to the—to the family of Oscar Lathlin. I had the opportunity to meet some of them shortly after his passing. It was—the grief that they were feeling was very apparent. Amanda expressed such affection for her father, and that was further evidence for me of what an important person he was to that family and to Manitobans.

And so I'm pleased to second the Premier's (Mr. Doer) motion and express our condolences to the family of the late Oscar Lathlin.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to join other members in extending condolences and sympathy to the family of Oscar Lathlin. I join other members in paying tribute to Oscar Lathlin, to acknowledge the significant contributions that Oscar made to Manitoba and to Canada.

I know one of the stories which Oscar told was of how he escaped from being taken away from his family to a residential school, and how he managed

to get down the trail and away from his home so that he would not be taken away.

* (15:00)

Know it is one story among many that occurred with relationship to the stories of what happened in children being taken away from their families and put in residential schools. And I think even today it sends us a pretty strong signal that we should be very, very careful about taking children away from their families, that we should strive to make sure that we keep children with their homes. And I was actually reminded of this just in the last few days when I met a mother whose three children had been taken away and she'd—not very long ago—and she'd never been given a reason why and didn't understand why. And I think that we can learn a lot from Oscar and his stories in many, many different ways.

Oscar made a huge contribution to the country when he stood up and said no to the passage of the Meech Lake Accord, and that was an action that took a lot of courage and, of course, he had many people, particularly from the Aboriginal community, with him and supporting him. In the Legislature, while I have been a member of the Legislature, Oscar was always dignified in responding to questions, and I asked him many relating to environmental issues, Aboriginal people, northern concerns, and it was always—Oscar had a sense and a sensibility and an understanding about how to respond to questions and to be sympathetic and understanding to the needs of the people that he was dealing with.

One of the important issues that Oscar dealt with, as has been mentioned, was the story of Helen Betty Osborne, the tragic story and the setting up, of course, of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the results of the inquiry and subsequently, setting up the Helen Betty Osborne Foundation, which is providing funds for post-secondary education. And I think that that is part of what speaks loudly to me of Oscar and, I think, to many others, his concern for post-secondary education and concern that children around the province should have access to post-secondary education.

The constituency that Oscar represented, The Pas constituency, was one that was very spread out. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has referred to the distance from Winnipeg, but even when you get to The Pas—to travel by road to Cross Lake and Norway House, is quite another few hours, and it's a challenge that those of us who represent ridings in Winnipeg, certainly it is a challenge far greater than, than we

have in terms of getting around, making sure that you're talking to people and representing people well. And I know from my visits to Cross Lake, to Moose Lake, to Norway House that Oscar did his best, often under difficult circumstances. And although there were challenges, which were great challenges in the constituency, that Oscar tried hard and worked hard for people and, in fact, not only in The Pas but all over northern Manitoba.

And Oscar, of course, was supported by Leona, and I met Leona in Pukatawagan on one occasion, and we had a chat there, and my wife is a nurse and—but the challenges there of Leona, who was often working in Pukatawagan, which is quite a distance from The Pas, of the family getting together and being together were very considerable. And that's something I think that, again, people who, like me, who represent the city of Winnipeg, don't have quite the same challenges, and we certainly need to acknowledge and make sure that we recognize the challenges that Oscar and his family had not only in representing, but in doing the best that they all could do.

So I certainly happy to join the others in this Chamber in recognizing Oscar and paying a tribute to him and extending condolences to family and friends.

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): I thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) for introducing this motion of condolence for the late honourable Oscar Lathlin, and I thank the opposition leader as well for seconding the motion and for those kind words. As well, I want to thank the Liberal leader for those words that remind us of the kind of a person Oscar was to everybody in this House here, throughout Manitoba, and especially in our riding, in our constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune to work with Oscar on many occasions, first as an administrator for social programs while he was the band administrator, and through my association with Oscar at that level, I quickly learned the value of being organized in providing service to your membership. I was also reminded many times of the responsibilities we have as public servants to our people, and so the importance of professionalism in administering our duties in public service was paramount. He had to make sure that we conducted ourselves accordingly that would benefit the people.

I also had the good fortune to be on council when he was chief. It was there that I understood

how far reaching his vision was. It was more than just economic development. It was more than just community development, although those things are important, but his vision included capacity building, educating and training our young people so that in time they would take over the responsibilities of looking after our local affairs, including in the council chambers, including in the businesses that we own, and I'm happy to say that it was because of him and the likes of him that all our institutions, our business institutions, our health institutions, our economic institutions, education and so forth are all managed by our own people. That did not happen by accident. That was designed to happen that way. And it is people like Oscar that had the vision for that to come to reality.

We discussed for a long time the issue of welfare versus education and training, and it was through his vision that it would be much better for Opaskwayak Cree Nation to concentrate on education and training so that's the route we took, and we're very happy we took that route.

During the Helen Betty Osborne, when he was chief, those were tough times for everyone. Those were times where there was uncertainty in the relations between the town and the people of the reserve, Aboriginal people in general, but he never once wavered under that huge responsibility to ensure that there was truth and justice, but at the same time, he also saw the need for healing and reconciliation in the near future.

*(15:10)

And so this is where the formation of the race relations committee was established under his leadership, and that was the pivotal point in my mind that brought the town and the reserve and the outlying communities together. From there we started to grow as people, people with common interests, common goals, survival in the area. It is times like this that I remember how much impact he had in our people.

When he was first elected to the Legislature here we were so moved, so proud that moment, that time, that we were inspired. We were inspired to get involved, somehow, somehow, to get involved, and I think you'll see, you know, the result of that through membership lists in our communities, that more of our people got involved because of Oscar, as he showed us, he showed us what can be done through vision, through hard work and by working with all peoples.

He was passionate about promoting education, passionate about creating economic opportunities for residents of northern Manitoba, and he was equally passionate about maintaining the traditional culture and the way of Aboriginal people, and he practised that, because before he made any decisions he would consult with the elders. He would go and talk to them and from there he would have an idea which way to go. He valued that input from the elders.

He strongly believed that through increased education northerners could increase economic development and thereby enjoy healthier lifestyles. Oscar believed that if we build people, make them strong individuals, they will have strong families. Strong families will create an environment for strong communities, strong communities that are sustainable, socially, economically will contribute to the overall abundance in Manitoba. That's what he believed in. That's what we believe in today. It is because of Oscar that we believe in those things.

I am forever grateful for having known him during different times, cause every time he moved on, it was for the greater good, not only for our people but for all peoples, and I thank the family for sharing him with us.

So, in conclusion, I want to say that his vision, his vision for a stronger Aboriginal community, a stronger northern Manitoba will benefit all Manitobans. I believe that and I will work on that basis.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to also thank the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) for introducing the condolence motion.

It's especially special today that we have a part of the ongoing legacy of our brother Oscar, and I mean brother, all of us that are in this Legislature elected by our fellow citizens in the province of Manitoba, and I'm indeed happy that his daughter, his pride and joy, is in the gallery today, Amanda, and I'm very proud to put a few words on the record about a man that I had a great deal of admiration for.

When I was first elected here, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of learning from Oscar about how this place worked, and I always looked up to him for guidance. He was a little older and I always reminded him of that, that he was a little older than

me and therefore I was told, I said according to our tradition, Oscar, I have to respect my elders, so I may come to you from time to time to seek your advice and counsel on certain issues.

And to this day, it's an awkward thing for me when I go to The Pas, OCN and the areas that he represented because for several years I had the opportunity of travelling with him, as you did as well, too, Mr. Speaker, if I may, and the three of us, along with the First Minister had the opportunity of visiting many northern communities.

And knowing that today we were going to have a day of condolence to honour the memory of this great man, last night as I was coming home from a wake—because we lost another relative of ours at the Sagkeeng First Nation, one of our traditional healers—I was reflecting back on what the Premier was talking about just now about sometimes the unfortunate funerals that we have to attend involving young people, involving some of our elders, and I was reflecting back on the things that Oscar and I used to talk about in our travels and in our time together.

So I continue to speak with him in my own way, and from that I believe that I get some strength, a certain degree of inspiration, and I would say that I get a certain degree of wisdom in carrying on the work that he left here for us to pick up.

I wanted to say that, as I said a year ago, just about a year ago on the 2nd of November, of course, when we lost him, that he was a very dedicated man, a very dedicated family, committed to his children and his partner, his wife who predeceased him by not very many months. He was a very gifted yet humble politician, a person that I viewed to have a lot of integrity, who had a quiet way of getting things done without a lot of fanfare.

Some of us in this Chamber have a tendency to seek out the cameras, I among them, for things that—for things we do and—but I particularly remember the pride and joy that he had in his children. And many times he would talk about his grandchild, who is now six years old, Elyse, and also, of course, his other children and his wife, Leona.

And one of the—one of the ways that I remember my friend and brother Oscar is following the election win in 1999. We had a picture taken with his pride and joy, his daughter, and my pride and joy, my daughter, Shaneen, and there was four of us. And then my daughter, Shaneen, just very recently took

out that picture and said, this is Oscar. And she had a couple of tears come down her eyes and said, Amanda and Oscar look so much alike and, she said, unfortunately, I look like you too.

That's what—she said that, but we're starting to see a little bit of what we're put here on earth to do, Mr. Speaker. The point is that now some of Oscar's legacy is being passed on to my niece Amanda, who is now a newly elected councillor at the Opaskwayak Cree Nation and I'm very proud of that.

Oscar and I had our differences as well. They weren't serious differences. We were coming back from Moose Lake one time and in his van—we were travelling in his van—we got a flat tire about halfway through, between half, the halfway point—I think you know that curve; I look to the member from The Pas—and we got a flat tire. Fortunately, since then, my colleague, the member from Thompson, when he became Highways Minister, fixed that problem up.

*(15:20)

But when we—when we were coming through, we got a flat tire in the van that he was driving, and the great warriors we were, both of us didn't know where the spare was. So there we were for about an hour and 20 minutes arguing with each other as to who would get out and change the tire and install the donut for us to get back to The Pas. And I said, look Oscar, I'm hungry. I said, I'll do it.

So, when finally both of us put our minds together to find the spare, we eventually did. Little did we know the location of the spare tire.

The hunting trips we used to share. He went on his own hunting trips. The Premier (Mr. Doer) described in detail about how he—how he got his moose. I got mine in the hunting sense of the way. I'm not bragging. And we also—we used to share these stories with each other. When travelling to northern communities there's not a whole lot you can do, especially if you're stuck in one night. You're weathered in, in one community; there's not a whole lot to do, but you're forced to spend time with each other. And that is how I became his friend, not only being elected here in 1993, but prior to that, as a young activist, I used to often run into him because he was a leader and administrator in his own community, and then later went to the federal government civil service. So I was very—I was very proud of that.

I had the opportunity of spending a little bit of time with one of his brothers over the—two of his

brothers over the weekend, Don and Riley. Had the opportunity of sitting down with Riley and he conveyed to me, you know, the sadness he still feels to this very day for his older brother because when we lose a sibling it's not an easy thing, Mr. Speaker.

But back to Oscar. Members on this side of the House will know that I have a tendency of—sometimes when I'm in a dilemma, 'cause I, like most members probably in this Chamber, I do my best thinking at night. And that time of the night happens to be when everybody else is sleeping. So I used to give these late night phone calls to Oscar, and he would say, you know, Eric, it's late. It's after midnight.

So I called him one time, and I was on the road, and I phoned him. I said, Oscar, I gotta ask you something. He said, look, Eric, it's after 11, I'm making love. So, I said, well, listen, I'll call you back in five minutes.

So—which I—which I didn't because I didn't want to—I didn't wanna offend him any further by calling him. But there was a lingering issue that we were dealing with at the time so we—I just left it till the next day. And I believe that the member from Flin Flon may have been my passenger in the vehicle that night, in fact, when I—when we tried to place a call to Oscar for something that was troubling us.

I wanted to say that Oscar had a humorous side to himself as well, and that is why I'm reflecting on these stories today, 'cause even though he was very serious, at the same time he had a gentle sense of humour, and that brought a sense of comfort to a lot of people that he had to deal with. Thus, he won elections successively since 1990. And I'm very proud of that record of our friend.

I tried—I never tried to let him down. I always tried to uphold the standard of dignity that he—that he held very closely, and I'm sure I did on occasion, Mr. Speaker, and I know that you and I and the First Minister and others in this Chamber travelled to many communities to work together on issues that are close to—close to people. But I'm indeed honoured to have had the opportunity of knowing him because some of his guidance still guides me to this very day.

Above all, I believe that we should remember what Oscar stood for and that his memory will continue to represent what Aboriginal people all desire and that is that we hold out this hope that First Nations people and all Manitobans one day will be

able to join together in the spirit of friendship, and also that one day Aboriginal people will realize the true political empowerment of becoming engaged in institutions like this.

In my early life and in Oscar's early life, we viewed the government as being enemies of our people and we treated the governments, no matter what political stripe they were, as such. But we had the great opportunity and a tremendous honour bestowed upon our people, by our people, to represent the interest of all Manitobans in this Legislative Chamber. And with that came along the responsibility for Oscar, and others like Oscar, that that responsibility is transferred to Aboriginal people as well; that they are a part of this province and they should feel proud that they are part of their province and they should be feeling proud of who we are as Aboriginal people. It's indeed something that we continue to strive to be. That the whole notion of engagement and being a part of the political system is there for all in the province of Manitoba, particularly Aboriginal people, because Aboriginal people were always, it felt to me, felt to feel like they're outside of the system. And I hope that our children, what Oscar stood for, in terms of greater educational opportunities, will come to realize that when it is time for them to lead. And what our generation leaves for them is very, very important and I know that Oscar is looking from up above, in that spirit world, and hoping that our communities will be self-sustaining and proud people as they once were.

He was a man of great sensitivity. He had some deep thought. A lot of things we talked about were not very—were not very pleasant. Let me give you one example, Mr. Speaker.

There was a time when a lot of us were put in residential schools at a very young age. I think my story is well known. Oscar had a similar story. But for those ones, our parents, the women, and something that is not talked about, but I will tell for the first time in this Chamber today, Mr. Speaker, what Oscar and I talked about. What troubled he and I the most, probably, was the fact that, in order for some of our aunties, mothers, grandmothers in years gone by, with the Indian agents that were put in our communities, to deal with our affairs, supposedly, before band councils came to be, was that the Indian agents—and that is something that has to be revisited and I hope that will be part of the truth and reconciliation process that is occurring under the leadership of Justice Murray Sinclair. And that is

something that Oscar envisioned at one time, too, to deal with the hurts and the pains of Aboriginal people and what they had to endure in those institutions that was suppose to have taught us and take away the Indian in us. And that is our Indian women and what they had to sacrifice. Indian women had to provide sexual favours for these Indian agents in order for them to provide for the young ones that they had at home.

And that is something that Oscar and I used to talk about. And that is an issue that is not widely talked about. And that is something that greatly troubles me to this very day. As a result, I worked with Oscar in dealing with the Helen Betty Osborne case. Very recently, you heard about our government instituting the missing and murdered aboriginal strategy and I'm very proud of that. And when we made that announcement, the Minister of Healthy Living (Ms. Irvin-Ross) and I kept that in mind, in the back of my mind, the conversation I had with Oscar—I believe it was in the community of Oxford House; we had to spend the night there because we were weathered in.

* (15:30)

But that's the first time I ever heard anybody talking about it to the degree that it was bothering me because I only heard about it through stories. That was what Oscar and I shared that night. And I said, one day, we will have to, we will have to talk about this issue. We will have to deal with this along with the hurts and the pains that our children are dealing with each and every day as a result of the pain and suffering that we went through and our parents went through. I said, and we gotta cut—we gotta kill this intergenerational pain that Aboriginal people are faced with.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, allow me to say to Amanda, my true admiration for you as a young leader. I know you will do well and I want you to feel proud of the great work that your father did in this Chamber for all Aboriginal people in the province of Manitoba, and, more broadly, in the country of Canada, and even more broadly, to the world. Thank you for sharing your father with us. Thank you.

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Healthy Living): Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to follow these great speakers and to put comments about a dear friend of mine, Oscar Lathlin. I did not have the privilege to know Oscar the length of time that my colleagues had.

My—I met Oscar six years ago, and I have to tell this House that I'm going to be sharing lots of interesting stories about the journey that Oscar and I found ourselves on. And I don't know how we came to be on this journey, but I am grateful for this journey every day, and that Oscar was a part of it and continues to show me the way.

The first day that I walked into the NDP caucus—it would be an understatement if I said I wasn't afraid. I was terrified. I walked into that room that looked oh, so big, and at the end of the table was this man. I hadn't met him before. I thought he looked pretty nice and I could maybe sit beside him. So I sat beside him, and, out from the doorway came another man. It was the minister from Aboriginal and Northern Affairs that sat down on the other side of me—a scared rabbit is probably the best analogy that I have—and as I sat there something happened. I describe it as I was wrapped in a blanket, and from that moment on that I knew I'd be okay, that I was in the right place and that I was surrounded by some very incredible people.

Oscar wasn't the easiest man to get to know. Really. He was quiet. He had a sense of humour and he had this edge about him. He was very proud. But I found a way to get to know him, and that was through orange juice. When I travelled with him I would bring orange juice onto the plane. I decided that I really wanted to get as much exposure as possible to the north, and felt that Oscar was the person that would help show me the way. So when I was invited on the first trip I made sure I had orange juice. He quite liked it. So on the second trip I made sure I had orange juice, and from that day—those days forward, it kind of became our opportunity for us—for him to show me the north, which he loved and the people, opportunity for me to have my world view opened wide.

Oscar had the most incredible timing. You knew often that he had something on his chest that he had to share, and he would wait till things were—the meeting might be almost wrapped up, and he'd say I just have one more thing I'd like to say. And, Oscar, when he spoke, everybody listened and you could hear a pin drop when that would happen.

He often talked about inequities. He often challenged us on our beliefs and stereotypes. But he also talked a lot about the importance of education, employment and recreation. And when you travelled with him in the north you heard him have those same conversations, whether it was a community leader,

chief or council member, whether it was an elder or a child that he might be sitting with.

He also shared a lot of stories about his family. He was a very proud husband, father and grandfather. He talked a lot about Amanda bowling, that Amanda spent a lot of time at the bowling alley and felt that maybe we should just have bowling alleys everywhere. Really, what that was about was that importance of recreation and a safe place to go.

When he—when he would meet with community leaders, he often spent a lot of time listening, but it also was important that he was able to provide and work with the community around solutions. The last trip that I had the privilege of travelling with Oscar to was Shamattawa. This had been about, I think, the second or third time that we had been there. And we had decided on that day that we were going to be leaving some substantial recreational programs, employment programs for the community.

So Oscar had it all figured out that we would go in and we would have a community meeting, and he brought the most interesting people with us when we travelled. He brought an individual who develops sawmills. So he talked to the community about getting their sawmill up and operational. He was allowed to talk for 10 minutes and then Oscar sent him out behind some building, looking in some pile of stuff for the equipment that was needed to get the sawmill going.

We also had a young gentleman by the name of Kevin Chief that was with us, who talked about recreation programs and talked about what they could do within the school and maybe what we could do with the Leonard Miles arena. Then Oscar sent him to the school.

And then we talked about, with the council members, about what were the next steps. So Oscar sent the staff to go prepare a letter, a letter of request for us. So as he had everybody dispersed doing their thing, he sat in the coffee shop in Shamattawa for hours. He was there—he had to have been there for about four hours while everybody was off busy doing their stuff. But as he was sitting there, he talked to everyone that walked in that door. He sat for a very long time talking to a little eight-year-old named Zena [*phonetic*].

He said to me that—he sent me back to the school to see what was happening, and when I returned, I couldn't find him. So I went to the airport and got on the plane, and I said, okay, when are we going back?

He said, they're not done yet, Kerri. Until we have this letter we're not leaving. So we sat on the airplane eating lemon tarts that the nursing station had provided for him, because everybody loved Oscar no matter where we went. So we sat there for a couple of hours waiting for this letter to show up. The letter showed up. Oscar said, wheels up, and off we went. One week later, Oscar passed away. I didn't know the importance of having that letter in our hand that day, but I understand it now.

Oscar instilled in me that importance and that passion for the north and that desire to work with the people, that desire to ensure that education and employment opportunities are there, and that that wealth of knowledge and understanding, and the wealth of the most important resource that we have in the north is the people. So with that he continues to guide me. I know that he is around us all every day. You just have to be aware.

After he had passed away, I was at home going through some papers, and there was a note, one of those notes that the Premier spoke about that you get from Oscar. And it was just recognition of a program that we'd been working on and it was, go for it, Kerri, Oscar Lathlin. Well, that's framed and that's on my desk. I look at it every day, and I thank him for the gifts that he has given the province of Manitoba, for the gifts that he has given his family and for that passion that he has instilled in so many of us to continue the work that he started.

* (15:40)

And I want to say to Amanda, thank you, thank you so much for sharing your father with all of Manitoba, and for those six years that I had that opportunity to get to know that great man and for the strength that he provides me every day just to try and aspire to what he would want us to be doing. Thank you so much, Amanda, and I know when I heard that you had won that election that he was there right beside you, and my words were: Oscar was so proud of you. And I know that he is with you every day as you go on your journey, and he will support you and he will love you as you continue. And thank you, once again, Amanda, and I just, am just so grateful that Oscar Lathlin represented his people in so many ways and that I was able to participate in it in such a little way.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, as I stand here today, I still remember when I heard the news that Oscar had passed away. For me and for my family, it was—it was losing a member of our family.

I've gotten to know Oscar as a colleague, as a friend, and, as those of us who are northern MLAs would know, there was a certain element of sibling rivalry at times—we'd have our agreements, we'd have our disagreements—a unique relationship that goes with working together in perhaps a unique perspective of this province that comes from driving a good part of it on a regular basis just to go back home to be with family and friends and represent your constituency. And Oscar sure was committed that way.

As coincidence would have it, I got to spend a fair amount of time in The Pas constituency the last few days, and I was reminded of his legacy going into Norway House, Highway 373, going to Cross Lake, Highway 374, improvements to the highway. The bridge—you know what? If we were to name it for what it really should be, in my mind, it should be Oscar Lathlin Bridge, because he was passionate about getting that done. Could have talked, in terms of legacy in The Pas—I mean, I drove by the wellness centre. Oscar pushed it. I know; I was the minister on the receiving end of a lot of the pushing. I look around the room; there are others that were on the receiving end of Oscar's lobbying. You know, I drove into the R.M. of Kelsey, and next year, there's gonna be a dike to protect that community. Again, you might as well call it the Oscar Lathlin Dike because he fought for it. And as I drove by University College of the North, you know, you couldn't think of any greater legacy because, I tell you, no one was more passionate about the University College of the North and about education than Oscar.

But what also struck me, by the way—those are the physical legacies, but wherever I travelled, not just in The Pas riding, but where I've travelled the last period of time, I can't tell how many people have talked about Oscar and how much they miss Oscar, miss Oscar on a personal basis, because what Oscar brought to his position was a passion for his constituents. I tell you, he was so proud of the fact that he'd earned the support of every community, Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal alike, from his work. He was so proud of having built bridges, and those of you know the difficult times of decades gone by, and The Pas and OCN will know that that bridge between The Pas and OCN has become a real bridge in terms of partnerships.

But I also talked to people who remember Oscar's visits. Oscar did visit. He visited families, elders. He knew, when he went into a community, he knew how to get the pulse in the community in a way

that was very unique. And so many people I talk to and have talked to over the last period of time, even—you know, people who didn't know Oscar that well will comment on how they miss him.

I also have to say one thing, too, by the way. Sometimes when I hear eulogies, I wonder if I'm hearing about the same person. You know, I've heard this talk that Oscar was quiet-spoken; I don't know which Oscar Lathlin we're talking about here, but if you ever sat at a northern MLAs meeting to discuss a northern development strategy, was he ever not a quiet person. I think a proper definition, or description, of Oscar was that he saved his words for where it really counted, and when he needed to express his opinion, he would. I don't know if I can give away Cabinet secrets—I guess I can; I'm not a minister right now—but Oscar and I used to enjoy, in Cabinet, at times, and Eric would be part of this sometimes, we'd go sit on the back of the Cabinet room and just start talking, and Oscar would look and say, oh, we're getting nervous. Oscar had had a bit of a twinkle in his eye with whatever he did, even when you deal with the most serious issues.

And one thing about Oscar, by the way, a lot of people didn't see perhaps the side of Oscar that I saw. I remember Oscar as chief of OCN in a very important period of time in development of that community. The progressive vision he had in the '80s and working, I know, with the current MLA for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) and many in the community, it made OCN actually really one of the leading First Nations communities in Canada, and Oscar was very proud of that.

But, you know, he also brought a sense of running meetings. Now I under—I learned the true meaning of the word *ekosi*, Cree word, *ekosi*, [*That's it.*] Because Oscar, after a period of time where some of us—I look at the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and I and other members, you know, for Swan River, at northern MLAs meetings. After a while, we'd have a great discussion and Oscar would just say, *ekosi*. That's it. We had to move on and make a decision. Oscar was great, by the way. We'd have meetings on northern development strategy. We'd have flip charts; we'd have, you know, agendas. I may be giving away a bit of a secret here that, as northern MLAs, we weren't always the most structured group. Oscar brought a real structure and real focus.

But there was a human side, and you've heard a lot of it. You know, I still remember that last meeting I had with Oscar was on the Northern Development Strategy. Everybody was going around the room introducing themselves 'cause we had, we had people there from various departments and from outside of government and just before he got to me, he said, well, this person doesn't need any introduction; he's Niki Ashton's dad. And, of course, this was just after my daughter had been elected MP for Churchill.

And I must say on the weekend I got to talk to Amanda and congratulate her personally on her success in her election, and I kind of wish I could have said to Oscar, congratulations, and, by the way, perhaps introduce him to someone as Amanda's dad, because he would have taken that as a badge of honour; he really would.

You know, on the serious side, Oscar was fearless. I, he was somebody who would stand up for what he believed in. I don't know too many people, by the way, in this Chamber would even have been here when, in opposition, Oscar was actually expelled for this, from this Legislature for actually using the term "racist." He talked about racist policies. Not, not at any—it was not directed at any member of this House, but he had lived it, you know, in the '60s in The Pas. It was segregated seating in the, in the movie theatres. I mean, he'd seen what happened—Helen Betty Osborne.

Mr. Doug Martindale, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Oscar never once shied away from calling it the way he saw it, and I admired so much, by the way, his courage because someone with even, you know, with less intestinal fortitude than Oscar might have backed down from that, and you know, that was a true part of what he believed in. And he really did believe in fighting for northern Aboriginal people, for First Nations people, for Northern Affairs committees, for his constituents in The Pas, and he did have a vision of a society in which there would not be the kind of racism that had destroyed so many lives in the past—a society in which everyone could achieve social and economic justice, and he fought for it every single day of his life.

* (15:50)

Now, as we stand here, the irony is I had the chance to talk today in my other—my spare time—about human rights and discrimination and racism and, as I stood there, I actually thought, Oscar. I thought of what he stood for. I stood with an

Aboriginal worker from Wuskwatim who talked about the racism he'd heard. Now he's still working there, but other Aboriginal workers had quit. And I was reminded that Oscar's legacy to all of us should be to make sure that we continue the struggle.

Now, as we stand here today, I'm reminded of the fact that we move on. It's been some time now since Oscar's passing, but I see in many ways a reflection in this House today of Oscar in so many ways. The new MLA for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), former chief of OCN, whose comments today, I think, reflected the true spirit of Oscar's vision; my colleague, the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), and all of our colleagues here.

And I want to say one thing. I believe five or 10 or 15 years ago—from now, as people reflect, perhaps even 30, 40, 50 years from now, they'll reflect on Oscar Lathlin as being one of the greatest northern leaders and I would say, by extension, Manitoba leaders, because he really was a great leader, and I will never personally forget at the interment, as I stood there and surrounded by Oscar's family and friends, as I saw an eagle fly overhead. I will never forget not just the symbolism of that but what it really said about Oscar's life and his legacy. I'm positive that Oscar is still there in spirit, watching us today. I know what he would say probably by now. He'd say: Ekosi, Steve. *[That's it.]* He was not one for long speeches.

But I just want to say I will never forget Oscar Lathlin. We're all privileged to serve in this House, and I've served with many, many fine people, but I can't think of anyone that left more of a mark on my life, my outlook and perspective, someone I learned so much from, not just in terms of learning perspectives of Aboriginal people, learning the traditional perspectives that I have been honoured to learn from, but his tenaciousness, his sense of getting things done, his progressive vision for the future will always be a part of me and many of us.

I just want to conclude by saying I will always remember Oscar, and to his family, I know you miss him, Amanda, I know you miss him. We all miss him but his memory will always be with us and will be part of the history of Manitoba for many years to come. Thank you.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay homage and honour to Oscar Lathlin.

Oscar and I met at Treasury Board. It became apparent quite quickly during his time in Treasury Board, it wasn't his most enjoyable place to be. The meetings were long, often quite boring, and a lot of the decisions involved finding ways to manage resources and sometimes you had to say, no, and that wasn't really Oscar's thing, to be in a room where the curtains were drawn and it was a slow grind. He preferred to be out of the room. He preferred to be in the north. He preferred to be in the communities, and after a couple of years, he came to me and he said, Greg, nothing personal but I'm gonna get off this committee as fast as I can and get on to doing some other things.

But the one thing I did note during the time he was there, he always hated contracts that came in over budget. That really bothered him for some reason. He just thought that somehow when you're government, people kind of take advantage of you by cranking up the price, and he always thought we should be much more strict on the way we let contracts and make sure they didn't go over a budget. And I actually took that advice and hammered back many times to make sure we could get those budgets down because every dollar you save on one item is something that's more available to do something else, another important priority for government.

And Oscar was also a Minister of Conservation at the same time and that, I mean, he liked Conservation. He did a lot in terms of employment in Conservation, bringing Aboriginal people into the department and providing them jobs and training opportunities, but he really wanted to be in Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. That was something that was fairly obvious to me, and when he went into that portfolio, you could see his passion take shape in the opportunities he had to do things there, not the least of which was modernizing The Northern Affairs Act and bringing it up to date, making it a more modern act and devolving more authority to local communities to manage their own affairs.

And the other part of our relationship was through Hydro, because Hydro is a fairly important institution in the north, and one of the first things we did was, I asked Oscar for advice on who should be on the Hydro board, and he wanted to appoint Phil Dorian from his community, a person that had a lot of experience in business. So Oscar's wishes were honoured, and Phil has and continues to be on the board of Manitoba Hydro. But for Oscar, Hydro was about reconciliation and finding solutions to the

people's needs in the communities he represented, and I know Moose Lake, in particular, was a community and the trappers in these communities, we found a way to arrive at settlements and reconcile their long-standing issues with the flooding that occurred in the '70s out of Manitoba Hydro.

So I was always happy to work with him on those things, and, most of the time, he went into those communities and made the announcements himself, and it was a relationship of trust. I knew he would do the right thing. I was just happy to get the settlements done, and get them through the Hydro board, and then provide Oscar with the information, and he would take it up there and resolve those matters. And he pushed hard to get those settlements completed as well, and I was happy to work with him on those things.

The other thing that I found Oscar was pretty interesting on is that he took a great interest in, not just the affairs of OCN, but the affairs of the town in general, the town of The Pas in general, and the big one that he was on right away and early was the problems at Tolko. He brought back to Cabinet early, at the end of a long Cabinet meeting, he raised that issue, and we were listening to him carefully, and he gave us a heads-up that there were some very serious problems there. And we started, all of us, I think, in Cabinet, working right away and finding a solution to keeping Tolko open, because the worst thing you can do is have a plant like that shut down and lay off all the workers. And Oscar, in his quiet way, motivated us all to find a solution to the Tolko problem.

After that, I realized that Oscar was a man of many residences. He had a home in OCN, he had a home in the town, and he had a cottage on the lake. And he explained to me that, not only did he like living in town and at the lake, in particular, his most latter part of his experience, but he found it was a way to stay in touch with all parts of his community. And if you saw Oscar's career, every election he would increase his majority in the community, and he'd get every poll, I think, at the end of his last couple of terms. He was the winner in every one of his polls, because he made an effort to stretch himself beyond his base to connect with all the people in The Pas, and I noticed the respect grow for him during my trips there.

I did go up during the Trappers Festival and I wore my Festival du Voyageur costume and went up there. We went in the parade together, and actually

just this summer, I found a photo we took together of Oscar and I in front of the arena. I was wearing my Festival jacket and he was standing there, and I've got it up on my bulletin board today, and it's a great memory of the time we had together up there. And it was just one of the many examples of how I was able to connect with him.

And what I noticed was that, in his own quiet way, he was kind of a—he took no prisoners when it came to institutions. He was quite, in his way, critical of things that weren't producing results. He thought there should be more young people graduate from high school. He thought the education authorities could do a better job in educating young people, and he thought there needed to be more support for Aboriginal education. And he thought the Province could play a role in partnering with First Nations communities to increase educational opportunities and educational outcomes, which is one of the reasons I know he supported the University College of the North.

So, if you listened to Oscar, you got a lot of good ideas of what the priority should be when we did our budgets.

The other thing is, is the homeless shelter was a project that he pushed very hard to get done, and we weren't always paying attention for a while on that one, but he finally was able to get us to put the resources into the budget to pay for the homeless shelter.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And when I was up at The Pas this weekend, and talking to one of the local—one of the local people at the health authority, a chap named Don Gamache, he fully acknowledged Oscar's role in making sure that we got the money to open that homeless shelter, which, I understand, has been a very, very positive resource for that community.

* (16:00)

Economic development was obviously fundamental to Oscar's vision for the north, and OCN, during the time he was chief and before that, is one of the most successful First Nations in Canada for moving on economic development, providing jobs to people, whether it's in the mall or the casino or other business enterprises, construction firms, et cetera that they looked at. And Oscar always believed that at the end of the day people had to have jobs to make their own living and OCN I still think is one of the models for Canada on how a community

can develop itself, and OCN was probably the most significant player in the The Pas economy. The more time went along, it became clearer and clearer that the legacy of the leadership coming out of OCN, including Oscar's leadership, were one of the key motors for the economic development of The Pas.

And then I wanted to talk a bit about his interest in health care because, in the last couple of years, he more and more talked to us about the need to ensure that the health-care system was responsive to the people of the north. He was concerned about sort of the delays in reacting to people's needs up there, and he made a point several times that he thought the health authorities had to be more sensitive, more responsive to the people of the north, and I know he had some experiences himself that he wasn't entirely happy with, and a healthy foods initiative was a part of that on the front end providing healthy choices to people. But he wanted the health-care system to be more people friendly, more willing to reach out and help people when they needed it.

A couple of things that people didn't know is Oscar actually would call me up and speak to me in French and he actually knew some French. He took French lessons in the Legislature. He actually took the time to do that, which I found was amazing. I think the hint was I should learn some Cree and his French was better than my Cree, but I got the point. You're not supposed to just keep to your own language, you're supposed to learn how other people communicate, and so that was a lesson well taken.

He had a quiet dignity and a quiet passion about the way he pursued his activities, and we all knew that he was playing that role extremely well, and our job was to help him be successful. He told me one time that he was very aware that the budget of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs had doubled but he didn't think it was actually enough, that it needed to have more money. But he acknowledged that we had doubled the budget and I thought that was important. But he was a guy that kept pushing to find new ways to get things done.

I know he was very proud of his family. I know he was thrilled—he would be thrilled if he knew of Amanda's election. I also know he was very proud of his wife. He used to always tell me about how his wife was in better shape than he was and had more endurance in terms of the work she did up in the communities that she worked in Pukatawagan, and how she was a great nurse and he was always very proud of her.

And he talked about retiring, the last couple of years he told me he was thinking of not running again. He was getting a little concerned about his health and he was trying to decide when the right time was to retire and obviously the time was not of his choosing in this instance. But the one thing I do know is that every day he was here he made a great contribution. He had a powerful influence on many of us in this Legislature and I thank him for his service, and I think his memory inspires us to continue to have a commitment to all northern communities and Aboriginal people.

So I want to thank his family for their presence here, and I know Amanda will carry on that tradition. But Oscar was a great influence on all of us and I'm just proud to have been associated with him for the last decade. Thank you.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I'm pleased to join my colleagues today and join in condolences and also to honour and celebrate Oscar Lathlin, the former MLA from The Pas and a friend to everybody in the House. I convey my sympathies to family members, and congratulations to Amanda, and ask that she also conveys the sympathies of the House once again to her mom.

It was about a year ago today that we in the Legislature held a ceremony in remembrance of Oscar Lathlin, the honourable Oscar Lathlin, who died on the 2nd of November, 2008, in The Pas. I don't think there was a dry eye in the House that day and rightly so for Oscar had certainly earned our respect and our affection. Our grief that day, Mr. Speaker, was a measure of deep feeling and it is today as well—it is today as well.

I first heard—received the news of Oscar's death when I was in the Vancouver airport. I was returning from Korea and did the normal thing, the natural thing, switched on my BlackBerry. It didn't work in Korea. I recall being very shocked and saddened and a little bit bewildered. I knew that with Oscar's passing life would somehow be different, and I think of the poet John Donne who wrote: No man is an island entire unto himself; therefore, ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. That day in November 2008, and again today, Mr. Speaker, the bell tolls for all of us because, in Oscar's death, we're all a little diminished.

Oscar was, of course, First Nations as we've—and we've heard of his work in the Aboriginal communities. In the past Oscar and I had attended

many celebrations together since we were both dedicated to education, and there's been some talk about UCN and Oscar's work on UCN. I was very pleased to work with him on the University College of the North, but we attended some celebrations in the south, too—celebrations like the Manitoba Aboriginal Business awards or the Helen Betty Osborne's—Helen Betty Osborne awards.

I can see Oscar in my mind's eye and imagine him, once again, addressing the students, his people, speaking about education as the key to the future and doing it all in a very quiet, unassuming voice. Oscar was certainly no grandstander, always spoke quietly and with great dignity, and with great poise. He believed in education. He believed that the learning and wisdom which should come with education were essential to sound, healthy communities and sound, healthy lives.

For five years Oscar was my bench mate, sitting right here, and so we got to know each other pretty well. We shared some stories, talked about our families, our hopes for our children and grandchildren. He told me about his good luck in the Saskatchewan casinos, his desire to speak fluent French, and we've heard about that a little bit already, and he told me some other, some pretty funny stories.

More seriously, Mr. Speaker, he told me the story of his mother hiding him from Indian Affairs people, taking him off to the bush and to the trapline, disappearing for some days and only returning when the coast was clear. Through his mother's love and shrewdness she saved her son, our friend, from residential school, and he believed that this escape was absolutely central to the story of his life and to the lives of his family.

He grew up in The Pas, again, as we've heard, where he met a young woman named Helen Betty Osborne. Her life and her death were also central to the formation of his views. We've heard of his graduation from Frontier college in Cranberry Portage and then some of the time he spent at the University of Brandon.

Oscar's achievements were impressive and though, today, we lack a full biography, that I'll know—that I know will come in time. I'm pretty certain some enterprising young writer, maybe one of the Helen Betty Osborne scholars, will tell his story and write the complete biography which really needs to be done. This should happen. His life story should not be lost and our speaking out today, Mr.

Speaker, is a gesture in that direction—not of losing the story, of maintaining the story.

Those of us who worked with him knew his humility, his sense of humour and, as I've said, his passionate belief in education. Education is vital to the future of Aboriginal people. Our friend Oscar, mentor to so many young folks and some not quite so young, came a long way from the traplines of northern Manitoba to Chief of Opaskwayak Cree Nation to Minister of Conservation and then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. It was a remarkable journey and I'm sure it was an arduous, tough journey.

Before he died, his health challenged him but he missed his family and he didn't like flying so he, as we all know, so he drove back and forth to The Pas every week. Not a lot of fun driving that long road, week after week, or so it seems to me. There must have been times when he thought it simply wasn't worth it, when he wondered why he was continuing, but he didn't quit or turn back and, Mr. Speaker, for that, we honour and respect him. Oscar was no quitter.

*(16:10)

Remembering Oscar's dedication to education, I know how delighted he would be with the educational achievements of so many young Aboriginal students. Don't get me wrong, and I know everyone in the House will agree, Oscar was no saint. No, never. And he wouldn't want to wear a halo, it just simply wasn't his style. He was too thoroughly and imperfect, like the rest of us, but let's save the stories and the perfection for another time. Today, as the saying goes, to live in hearts we leave behind is not to die. So let's keep his name close. Keep him alive a little by remembering his achievements and his wonderful stories, his commitment to his people and his honourable example.

Mr. Speaker, Oscar Lathlin was a good man. Let's not forget him. Thank you.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, Oscar and I had two things in common. One was that we were both born in May 1947, Oscar five days before me; and we were both elected on September the 11th, 1990, and we were colleagues together here for 18 years.

Other than that our lives were very different, especially in our upbringing and our careers because Oscar grew up on a First Nations community and I grew up in a suburb north of Toronto. Our life

experiences were very different. And I remember Oscar talking about growing up in The Pas and one of the examples has already been mentioned and that was about the movie theatre being segregated. So Oscar had first-hand experience of discrimination, and, in fact, he described it as racism in a number of speeches in this House.

So we were both colleagues for nine years in opposition and nine years in government. And one of the things I remember about question period in opposition is that in those days we operate under different rules, and so we weren't allowed to have preambles, but there were two individuals, as I recall, that got away with preambles, and one was the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), and one was the member for The Pas. And the reason was that in their preambles they didn't take shots at the government of the day, but they put out some facts before their question.

Now those of us who did take shots at the government of the day, we got cut off by the Speaker and told and reminded that under a certain rule in *Beauschesne* there was no preambles allowed. But I think that was a reflection of the nature of Oscar Lathlin, the person, that he had a gentle nature about him and even though his ultimate question would have been certainly a legitimate and penetrating question, that he got away with a preamble because he was a humble person and he didn't threaten people when he asked questions; he just asked his question. And so he—and I believe the member for Rupertsland as well, frequently snuck in a preamble that was not challenged by the Speaker of the day.

In opposition, as well as in government, I travelled with Oscar a number of times as did many of us in this caucus, and I remember going to communities in the Parklands and in the north and stopping at friendship centres. And I remember very well the Premier—pardon me, our leader of the time, saying that we were in government, we were going to restore funding to friendship centres. And it's rather appropriate that we debated a resolution this morning on friendship centres, and I'm sure that the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) mentioned that. And, indeed, when we did form government, one of the first things we did was to restore funding to friendship centres, and I'm sure that Oscar was very happy that we did that for his communities and for friendship centres across Manitoba.

Now, I've been probably half a dozen times or more to The Pas, but I remember the first time that I

was there and Oscar was my guide, and I remember going to visit the personal care home. I remember seeing the subdivision and Oscar explaining why they decided to have a subdivision and also going down following the river to where the coniferous forest came right down to the river, and there were clearings carved out in the bush, and it was for an eco-tourism business, and I don't know whether that has taken place, but that was one of the visions that he and the chief and council had for economic development.

And I remember going to the band office and seeing the organizational chart and hearing Oscar explain that they had their own community economic development corporation and the various different projects that they were involved with. And I remember walking through the mall at Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Oscar stopping and talking to his constituents. And, you know, it's quite different, I think, being in a community like that and being in a constituency like Burrows in the North End. You know, I walk down the sidewalk and ride my bicycle and I'm sure there's lots of people that don't recognize me, but everybody recognized Oscar, not just in the First Nation community, but in the town of The Pas as well. And so he was constantly stopping and talking to people or they were stopping and shaking his hand and talking to him. There was a kind of recognition and friendship there that was quite impressive.

I was also invited to accompany Oscar and the deputy minister and some staff on a ministerial tour and, as we know, Oscar didn't really like flying. So he drove from The Pas to Dauphin, and some of us flew from Winnipeg to Dauphin and met him there, and we visited his offices in the communities in Dauphin and Swan River and The Pas and Wabowden and Thompson. And it was very interesting to see the interaction between him and his staff, and the respect that they showed him. And it was also good to get to know him better on that tour. On that trip we were supposed to go to God's River First Nation, but it was cancelled due to poor weather.

Now, I remember flying up north on several occasions on charter planes with both the member for The Pas and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson)—the former member for The Pas—and I observed that the member for Rupertsland and Oscar Lathlin would sort of hang back, and so some of the rest of us would get on the plane first. And I asked the staff, I said, how come, you know, like, I figured,

you know, the ministers should get on the plane first. And, anyways, they took the seats at the back of the charter flight. So I asked the staff about that, and they said, well, you know, if the plane goes down the people in the front are more likely to get killed than the people in the back. So I'm not sure that's true, but that's what I was—I was told, and probably explains some of his actions when flying and his fear of flying.

I remember the last visit that I went with Oscar to The Pas, and we drove out to Clear Lake to visit one of his constituents at a cabin, and I regret that I had never took up Oscar Lathlin's invitation to go and stay with him at his cabin at Clear Lake. But we went to visit this constituent and, on the way back, he insisted on—at stopping at the pump house, and he wanted to show us where Helen Betty Osborne had been murdered. And we didn't particularly want to see this, but he insisted that we go there and insisted we get out of the vehicle, and took us to the side of the road, and he said, right there. That's where Helen Betty Osborne was murdered, and it wasn't a very good feeling. I read volume 2 of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry report, which is entirely about the trial and the investigation into the Helen Betty Osborne murder, and it's probably the saddest book that I have ever read.

But, you know, this meant a lot to Oscar in many different ways. I remember him telling me that when the accused were on trial in The Pas that he went to the courthouse every day to observe the trial and be in the courtroom. And I'm sure that that was out of a sense of solidarity for the—with the Osborne family—Oswald family—Osborne. I'm sorry.

And it's appropriate that, you know, we have a foundation for Helen Betty Oswald—Osborne—and also a memorial fund for Oscar Lathlin, and I hope that members and constituents and many others will contribute to the memorial fund in his name.

Now, in doing some research for the condolences debate, I came across a publication called *Cottage North*, and in the January-February 2009 issue there's an article called "Remembering Oscar," and there's some wonderful pictures here of Oscar attending events, mostly in his constituency. And there are some stories here. I'm just going to read a couple of them and some quotes about Oscar and to read them into the record.

And it says that while he was in opposition he served as critic for various portfolios. And the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) fondly recalls

Lathlin's style in opposition. Quote: "When we were fighting for more funding for highways, he loved to point out that the government of the day was spending money for road improvements to see the ducks at Oak Hammock Marsh. Oscar pointed out that we have a lot of ducks up north, as well as people, and that maybe we deserved some road improvements too."

The Manitoba Federation of Labour's Darlene Dziewit admired and respected Lathlin's dedication. She said, and I quote, "Oscar was a quiet, yet tireless worker on behalf of First Nations Manitobans and, indeed, all Northerners. He spent many years in public service, working so hard for his people."

* (16:20)

Former Churchill MP Rod Murphy echoed others' praise. Quote: "He wasn't a traditional NDP door to door campaigner, but when you saw him sit down with a native elder, a single mother in distress, or somebody who just wanted to have someone listen to him or her, Oscar was there; he was really there for that person." End of quote.

Now, one of the things that I admired about Oscar was his way of coping with stress. And we probably all need some coping mechanisms here, especially helpful and beneficial ones. And I remember that frequently Oscar would sit in the loges not reading or not talking to his colleagues, although frequently his colleagues came and joined him—and I think being in the Chamber, and particularly sitting in the loges was one of his ways of relaxing from, I'm sure, a very stressful job as a minister of the government.

But he also had another way of recharging his batteries or recharging his soul and that was spending time alone in the bush, and he would disappear into the bush and nobody could get a hold of him. He was probably out of cellphone range. And when he was ready, he would come back.

So I'm going to conclude with a poem that seems appropriate. And this is also from *Cottage North* because it's about solitude and this was written by Patricia Vickery. "Solitude is a bird, / Soaring, singing, / Wild with wing power, / Wild with oneness. / Solitude is a plant, / Roots spreading deeply, / Pulling at life in the earth, / To throw a brief flower, / Into the air. / Solitude is a lake, / Warmed by the sun, / Washed by the rain, / Moved by the wind, / Its quiet depth serene."

So we all need solitude from time to time, and I think that's one of the life lessons that I learned from Oscar Lathlin, is that we should all take time to be alone, to recharge our batteries, like he did.

In conclusion, I would like to add my condolences to his wife and daughter and family and extended family and the people of OCN and the people of The Pas constituency.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have the opportunity today to add a few comments about a good friend Oscar Lathlin.

Thinking back to last November 2nd, Mr. Speaker, it was a very sad day in the lives of members of this Assembly and members of, no doubt, Oscar's family—and I see Amanda here today—with the untimely and unfortunate passing of our dear friend Oscar.

I remember coming to this Legislative Assembly in 1990, because that was the first year the class of '90, of course, was elected. Mr. Speaker, I know you were one of those folks. And, of course, sitting in that room for the first time and looking at all the new faces in there and not knowing much about each other's families and not knowing where that path of life would take us and the interactions we would have in our years of serving our communities together.

But I did learn one very important thing, and very early, about our good friend Oscar and the term here that has been used about Oscar is his interest in education. His interest in education was not just about the youth of our communities and the people that we represented, Mr. Speaker, but it also included, I believe, members of this Assembly.

And I can think back to my time, and one of the first experiences I had—obviously, being a city MLA, Mr. Speaker, not having had much opportunity to travel outside of the Interlake area and the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg in my years, Oscar took it upon himself to encourage his colleagues to travel to northern Manitoba.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, we drove many times. And, of course, for the few times that we did fly, of course, I know the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and Oscar would look out the window as the airplane took off, and we would look as the aircraft was banking around. They would look below and say, I remember fishing on that rock down there. You know, special places and special memories that

they had that involved their time and interaction with you, Mr. Speaker.

I do know that in travelling to The Pas on many, many occasions, I was interested in learning a bit about the history of The Pas and, of course, Oscar took the time to educate. If people were interested, Oscar was interested in providing the information and in educating folks about the—about his family, about the history of the community and how they started.

And I know one of the first things that Oscar pointed out in my first visit to The Pas was the Gordie Lathlin memorial arena. And, of course, in those days, the OCN Blizzard were a strong presence—were a fairly new team to The Pas at that time but were, obviously, a very strong hockey team. And, of course, Oscar, and I don't say this in any disrespect to other members of this House who have teams that compete against the OCN Blizzard, but Oscar was quite proud of the OCN Blizzard and the role that they played in hockey, a dynasty in this province. And, of course, when the OCN Blizzard would win the championship of this province, Oscar took great delight in recognizing their accomplishments.

I do know that he recognized, and he's expressed to me in our earlier years here, that the Gordie Lathlin memorial arena was a means to give the young people of OCN the opportunity to engage in meaningful activities, recreational opportunities. And he was proud of that particular accomplishment. I think he was a part of the council, at that time, if I'm not mistaken, or members of his family were obviously involved in the development of that arena.

And then, of course, after that it was the Otineka Mall, and I know Oscar was involved in that and was quite proud of the fact. He had told me at the time, he said, there was an opportunity to have—they convinced folks that there was a need for some seed money to allow for this mall to be developed and that this would, of course, provide economic opportunity for the OCN and The Pas communities. And, of course, he was quite proud of the fact that when the community paid off that mall, I think it was 10 years early, paid off the mortgage. And, of course, that was an investment that the community had made. It provided jobs for the people living on OCN, of course. You could see everything grow and prosper in that area, and that the people of OCN were quite proud to be a part of that and the accomplishment of having that mall.

And, of course, then Oscar went on to talk about the Kikiwak hotel and, of course, the opportunities that that provided, and the level of hospitality and meeting place that it had, not only for First Nations people living in northern Manitoba, but all travellers to northern Manitoba, and also the employment opportunities that it provided for the people of the communities in which he represented.

And then, of course, after that came the community hall and other activities related to that, but Oscar always talked about the five-year plan that OCN had for development and opportunities, economic opportunities for the people living in those communities.

And has been mentioned in here, Oscar spent a great deal of his time, I know, not only working with Gord Landriault, who's a member of The Pas, but also talking and working with folks in the mill in The Pas and how important it was as an economic engine of northern Manitoba and how important it was to his community.

Now many folks talk about Oscar believing in education. And I remember Oscar here, when I first came here, he struck me as a very quiet individual, didn't seem to say a lot. But when he spoke, and one of the things I noticed as years went on in this Legislative Assembly and, of course, in our caucus room, and I don't think I'm telling any secrets here, when Oscar started to talk, the room went quiet, and there was respect for what he had to say, and caucus members and members of this House would listen, for the most part, very intently to what he had to say because he didn't always speak, but when he did, you knew he had something very important to say.

Oscar always struck me as being—carrying himself in a very dignified manner, and he was quite respectful of others. And I know coming into this Legislative Assembly, sometimes, in the heat of the debate things can get a little out of control. Oscar always liked to make sure that members knew that we had to respect one another and, of course, from time to time, he would remind members of this Assembly about that.

One of the interesting parts for me as the MLA for my community, Mr. Speaker, I do know that when I first came to this Assembly I was one of five people that had actually—that were sitting in this Chamber, at that time that came from the community of Transcona. So there were actually five MLAs in this Chamber from the community of Transcona. So for me that was interesting. I did not know until that,

of course, until some time later, and I knew, Oscar, in our discussions, had indicated to me that he and Leona and the family had lived on Victoria East in Transcona.

* (16:30)

And I do know I've had the opportunity to talk to Oscar about that and about his neighbours that were living beside him and, of course, Ken and Carol Young still live at that house that was right next to where Oscar and Leona had lived. And, of course, at that time, Oscar would talk about the Youngs and the children because both families had young children at the time, and the babysitting services that would be provided from one family to the other, but one of the things that the Young—Ken and Carol Young—indicated to me that they remember quite clearly about Oscar that when the family moved into the home on Victoria East, Oscar would take the children over to meet the neighbours and then he would say, this is our property. This is your home here. This is the other—your neighbour's property, please respect their property, and so, right from a very early age, he was teaching his children about respect for his neighbours and his friends, something that left a lasting mark upon the neighbours in the community of Transcona.

I do know that at that time, Oscar, I believe, had been working for INAC at that time and, of course, that from that point on, he went on to many other challenges in his life and accomplishments and of course, coming to this Legislative Assembly is no doubt one of his greatest and lasting accomplishments.

Listening to my colleague, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), I do know that Oscar and, together along with our colleague, the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), we had the opportunity to travel to The Pas on many occasions, and I'm always thankful that Oscar took the opportunity to not only invite us to the community of The Pas but he took us to OCN and he took us directly to his home and we sat in his home. He took us to his neighbours and introduced us to the neighbours in the community there and, of course, on one particular trip to The Pas, he took us to Clearwater Lake to visit his friends that were living there at that time, and I believe later on, he purchased a home there, and of course, I was quite impressed by the area. And one of the things that strikes me, as the member for Burrows has indicated, the member for Rupertsland and Oscar took us to the site of—where

Helen Betty Osborne—and proceeded to share with us in great detail the event that had occurred and what it meant to First Nations people living in the area and how much it personally impacted upon Oscar. And he used this opportunity where his colleagues travelled from the city of Winnipeg and knew not much.

We knew about the story of Helen Betty Osborne's life in some limited detail at that time, but Oscar and the member for Rupertsland made a—took the opportunity to educate people that were living in the city of Winnipeg when they would travel to the The Pas, and use that opportunity as a learning experience, and we were thankful for that because it allowed us to have more insight into the events that had transpired and how much more we can do as individuals to build the relationships between the communities, which I think was something that Oscar was always striving to do, build communication links between not only the First Nations communities and each other but also with First Nations communities and every other community in the province of Manitoba and across this country, and that was something he took the opportunity to do.

I know, in one of our early trips into The Pas, he also took us into one of the new schools that had been built, and I thank my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead) for reminding me of the name of the school because I had forgotten it at the time till a few moments ago, and it was the Joe A. Ross School, I think, is the name of the school, and Oscar was quite proud of that school because it had traditional teachings within the school as—in addition to the standard curriculum that you would find in most schools. He thought it was an integral part into the education of the young people that they would continue to learn about the cultural history and values of the First Nations people, but also recognizing the importance of you have to integrate those into the other learning skills that were necessary to function in this world, and Oscar recognized that and he was proud of that.

One of the things that I also remember about Oscar, and he talked often about his family and his children, was the difficult time that he had coming to the city of Winnipeg and to this Legislative Assembly and the distance that he had between himself and Leona and, for Oscar, that was a very difficult challenge because Leona is a nurse, as most folks will know, and I believe may still be at Pukatawagan performing her duties there, but the

separation between the two of them was quite difficult and he would often, as the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) has indicated, talk about his time in this Legislative Assembly and how he would be planning for the future and when the time when he could come back together with his family and share more time with his family, which were obviously so important to him, and a part of who he was as a person.

I know that there are many things that we could say about Oscar and the times he took us, invited us to The Pas to be part of the Trappers Festival, and what a great and wonderful event the community of The Pas and OCN put on every year, and the dog sled races and all of the other activities that go with that

And I do know that at Oscar's service in November of 2008, and I reflect back on the church hall that was filled at that time by so many people that came from all different walks of life to honour and to show respect for Oscar and his work through a lifetime, but I think one of the most important parts would have been the cadets.

Oscar saw that the youth of northern Manitoba needed to have focus. Not only was education important, but I believe that they needed to have an additional focus and that the cadet corps was a way for the youth of OCN and other communities in northern Manitoba to be a part of something larger than themselves and to contribute and to give back to the community.

And looking at those young folks that were a part of the cadet corps as a part of that service just reminded me again how much Oscar cared about his community, and he was always looking for solutions to involve as many people as possible, and especially our youth, our leaders of tomorrow, and he saw that the cadet corps there was an important part. And I knew that he, looking down upon that service, would have been proud of seeing those cadets there and the work that they continue to do and the involvement that they have.

My wife and I had the opportunity to have Oscar visit our home and share a meal with us and, of course, have a chance on many occasions to be part of our caucus functions and our discussions. But I'm quite proud to have known Oscar, even though it was only for a relatively brief period of time since we were first elected in '90, but it was an honour to serve with him in this Legislative Assembly and to get to know him.

I thank him for the educational experience that he has shared, you know, with not only myself but with many others in my community and, of course, with those lessons that he has taught myself and others. We are able then to pass on those educational experiences to others in our family and our friends, and, of course, that role, hopefully, will continue as we continue to spread the educational message that I think that was so important to Oscar. And, as he said in his comments that the UCN has put out on their DVD: I've seen what the priority on education can produce. I think Oscar took every opportunity in his life to share those educational moments and to make sure that others had the opportunity to not only learn from him but other members of his community as he would do.

And he invited us into the community halls when moose were being butchered up, and I remember that was my first experience, but it's those little things, those memories that keep coming back that remind you of what a special person Oscar was and how much he meant to each and every one of us, and we will keep his memory alive for many years to come.

And I thank the family, Oscar's family, Amanda, and Leona and others for giving us the opportunity to share his life and for the opportunity to come to his community to meet the people that were his neighbours and friends and his family and, of course, for the educational experience that he provided for us and the leadership that he provided for us.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and my deepest condolences to Oscar's family.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a few brief moments to add some comments to this condolence motion. And I would begin by first of all turning my attention to the family and saying to them, and thanking them for sharing Oscar with the province, and allowing him to use his talent and the gift that he was given to better the livelihoods of, and the lives of, people in the constituency of The Pas but also to Manitobans as well and Aboriginal people in this province.

* (16:40)

I knew Oscar from a different perspective. I met Oscar back, I think it was 1987, when he was just—shortly after he had become chief of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, and then when I became Minister of Education I attended the The Pas Trappers Festival

and got to know Oscar and his family and got to know them as very generous people, very warm people, and Oscar himself was very proud of the accomplishments of the Aboriginal people in the area of The Pas and what had been accomplished, and so he should've been, because a great deal was accomplished in that community.

But, when I attended the Trappers Festival, the chief and I had a tug of war. This was one of the activities of the Trappers Festival and there was a huge rope lying in the snow and Oscar picked up one end and I picked up the other end and we were gonna have a tug of war. Now I knew I wasn't gonna win, 'cause Oscar was a little bigger than I was and I knew that I wasn't going anywhere. But, unbeknownst to me at least, somebody had just tied the middle of the rope with a small thread, and so when we tugged on the rope, well, you know what happened. I went flying into the snow bank and everybody stood there laughing at me. Well, it was a fun activity and I think everybody had a bit of laughter there and it's a memory that I have of the lighter side of Oscar because he did have a lighter side to him and he could tell some real funny stories as the Premier had talked about and had experienced and I had experienced those on several occasions.

Outside of politics, Mr. Speaker, I remember Oscar as a friend and someone who I could sit with and talk about his life and how he grew up as a young man and how I grew up, and the comparisons and the differences in the way in which we grew up and became adults. And it gave me a better understanding, not just of Oscar, but, indeed, of the way that Aboriginal people have grown up, and I have to say that in my other life as a school teacher, I worked at a school where there were many Aboriginal students and today those students, who are now adults and in their 30s and 40s, are still good friends of mine, and I see them many times on weekends and we still sit down and chat and we consider ourselves good friends, and that's the way I saw Oscar.

Many times he said to me, Len why don't you come up fishing to Lake Cormorant, that's where his cabin was, and he said, well, come up in the summer time when you don't have a lot of things to do in politics and we can do some fishing and we can have a fish fry and just have a nice social visit, and I always wanted to do that and never did, and so I guess we'll have to leave that to another day and another time.

Mr. Speaker, I also got to know Oscar's family and I want to relate this story about his mother-in-law. When I was Minister of Education, one of the things that happened when I represented government was the generosity of the people of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation was second to none. And I remember Mrs. Jebb, who met me at Oscar's funeral as a matter of fact, and I mentioned to her whether she remembered that she had actually made a set of gauntlets and a jacket for me and she actually told me that she chewed the leather on the jacket, and I regard that—and, yes, when I got that gift I came back as Minister of Education and did account for it. But, that aside, I considered that to be the utmost of generosity, and it was a beautiful coat and I still have it to this day and, not only does it remind me of Oscar, but it reminds of the generosity of Oscar's family, his mother-in-law, and, indeed, I have met Leona and the—and Oscar's children. His son-in—or his stepson—was an RCMP officer in my constituency. So I've come to know the family quite well. His brother-in-laws were educators, worked in the school system. I got to know them, Edwin especially, and found the family to be as generous and warm as we knew Oscar to be outside of the Legislature. In the Legislature, in the House here, yes, we gave no ground, but, outside of the Legislature, it was an entirely different story.

So, Mr. Speaker, today, I just want to say that we have lost a true friend to Manitoba and a person who believed in what he lived, and I have to say that all of us have been left a little richer because of the fact that Oscar had impacted our lives. And so, to his family, I want to say to Leona and her family that Oscar is certainly somebody that I miss and someone who I am honoured to have known. And I know that the Province of Manitoba and the northern communities will miss the work that he had, but certainly, his legacy will live on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, what can I say about my good friend Oscar? I can only say if he were here today and if he could express his opinion about condolences, I can actually speak as Oscar because I've heard him say this. He said about condolences: why do we say nice things about people only after they're dead? That we should be saying these nice things while they're still alive. And I think that's a very, very powerful message. So consider that a message from Oscar.

I first heard about Oscar in 1972 when I became a teacher at Frontier Collegiate Institute in

September of 1972, and he graduated that year in June of 1972. I heard a lot about him. He was a great student. I saw his pictures and so on, but I didn't really cross paths with him until the '80s when I was very much involved in a group called Manitoba Coalition of Organizations Against Apartheid. And we did a number of things, one of them was peace walks; I was involved with that. I remember Oscar was part of that as well and we would walk from the friendship centre across the bridge to Otineka Mall.

I remember at the time trying to lobby him because he was chief. I wanted—I wanted to close down the Shell station, which was a bit naïve and foolish of me, but Shell was supporting the South African regime and was supplying oil for the regime, and we wanted to boycott and wanted to put pressure on the regime via Shell.

Oscar said, look, Gerard, I like the idea, but you know, this is our station. These are our people working here. What makes you think that we don't experience racism as well? And he made a good point, so I backed right off and we found other more creative solutions to work together. But I was impressed with him very much at that first major meeting we had about the anti-apartheid movement.

Oscar, well, I remember him giving a speech at Frontier Collegiate. My wife had talked him into coming and giving the speech because she was a little bit ticked by the fact that, at graduation, we always had these great speakers, but we never had great Aboriginal speakers, so she wanted the member for Rupertsland who was a great orator. She wanted Oscar. My wife is probably Oscar's greatest fan. I'm sure if she'd met him earlier on in life she would have been married to Oscar, but I was lucky she didn't get to meet him; I married her instead.

She got him as a guest speaker. And before I could get Oscar to the podium to speak to our students at Frontier Collegiate Institute, he was lobbied by what I can only describe as a bunch of spoiled, whining kind of kids. Oh, they didn't like this about school, and this course was too hard, and why did they have to take calculus, math was a pain in the butt, and so on, particularly the sciences and the math. And Oscar, you could see he was getting a little unhappy about—these were Aboriginal students.

So, in his speech, he said, let me make clear about one thing. There's no such thing as Indian math. If you want to ride the white man's horses—and this was a mainly Aboriginal student congregation or group—if you want to ride the white man's horses to

success—and he was using the symbolism of the Plains Indians where they used to steal one another's horses for, you know, for power and prestige and so on; he was using that image—if you want to ride the white man's horses, if you want to be successful, you have to go that route. There is no Indian math. Your culture's powerful and important, but you have to learn these things if you want to make your culture successful because otherwise this larger culture will assimilate you, will swallow you up. You can't do it by just beading and crafts and that other stuff, which is important. You've also got to learn science and math. We want the lawyers, we want the teachers, we want the scientists. Thank God, we have a lot of them now. But Oscar pushed that from day one, and it was powerful stuff that he pushed.

* (16:50)

Also, I remember a man of humility. Oscar was a very humble man. He shunned the limelight. He hated the limelight. And in all honesty, I can only say the limelight didn't treat him well. I was sometimes furious when I read the articles about Oscar because that was not the man that I knew. But if you use southern standards from the city of Winnipeg to judge us northerners, particularly an Aboriginal man who, at 15 years of age, had to—had to take care of his own family, try and walk a mile in his moccasins before you judge him. But that was not happening. They were using nitpicking little arguments, which in my own mind, and I hope I'm wrong, I thought were impinging on racism. And he had to fight this all of his life.

And so, he did gain staunch allies. I was certainly one of his staunchest allies, but he was a man of humility. He shunned the limelight. He travelled a lot, and he didn't like flying, and I flew with him quite a bit in these little planes, and he was a man of girth and I sort of am a man of girth, and we had sort of humiliate ourselves a bit by asking for extensions to the belt. You know what that's like. Can I have a belt because it doesn't quite fit? That was one of the little indignities we suffer occasionally.

But, he didn't like flying, period, so he would drive. I could never figure it out. The math didn't add up, talking about Indian math versus non-Indian math. He would get to The Pas in six hours; I would get to Cranberry Portage, which is one hour further, in eight hours. I could never do it in less than eight hours. He says, well, you should be able to do

it in seven hours. So, I can only conclude he must have been breaking a lot of—a lot of speed laws.

But, anyway, travel is an integral part of our life as northern MLAs, and I'm glad that the Premier (Mr. Doer) referenced it, because people don't often understand what that entails. I remember once travelling late at night. It was past midnight, when I grazed that bear on the Easterville road, I just kind of bounced off a bear. It didn't hurt him too much. Oscar came two hours later, that same road, two in the morning, actually wiped out a moose in his van, and we kind of laughed about it later on, saying, well, I was a white guy. I was obviously a poor hunter because I could only graze the bear whereas he wiped the moose right out. He didn't tell me that he was hanging upside down, you know, and he couldn't get out of the van for quite a while. So, that was very dangerous. But, those are—those are things that we take for granted because that's part of our northern travel.

I remember Oscar, in 1999, when we first formed government, this powerful, humble man. My wife says the image of Oscar is the buffalo bull, because he is a man that forges ahead, no nonsense. He protects the herd. He knows what he's doing. Nobody's gonna talk Oscar out of his position once he's made up his mind, and that is—you know, that's very good.

But, anyway, once we formed government in 1999, the first thing we did as northerners, as northern MLAs, we got together in Grace Lake, just out of The Pas, and dealt with a—or tried to develop with the Northern Development Strategy, and we tried to focus on housing and health, transportation, education, economic development, to make sure the north would get its fair share.

And it seems only fitting that at the very end, that last week of Oscar's life, when he actually travelled, and he wasn't feeling very well, but he travelled anyway to Winnipeg for an important meeting then travelled back again, the last week of his life. In fact, the last time I really dealt with Oscar was—I believe it was a Friday. I had picked him up with the little plane that I had rented out of Flin Flon, seven in the morning to pick him up very early. Oscar had already made a trip back and forth from Winnipeg that week. We flew in with some staff to Winnipeg, probably took a cab. We were up here, spent all afternoon at the meeting with some high-ranking people, deputy ministers, at least, and Oscar

chaired that meeting and it was a very powerful meeting.

Right now, we kind of put value with those things people did towards the end and we see symbolic things in them, but I've never seen Oscar more powerful than at that meeting. And he was telling the bureaucrats, and they were good bureaucrats, they're hardworking men and women, you still aren't doing quite enough for the north. This has to be adjusted; this has to be done; this has to be changed, because we, in the north, really haven't had our place in the sun. I know there's all kinds of arguments why we haven't, sparse population, and so on and so on. But we haven't really had our place in the sun, and he was, again, putting pressure, I guess it was, on those people that could make it happen.

Via the Northern Development Strategy, we could really build up northern Manitoba. After all, the Golden Boy points north. It was a powerful meeting, and then we flew home with that little plane, and Oscar was sitting across from me, and it's the first time I recall—now, Oscar and I were friends and we did many interesting things together, but the first time he opened up about his past life and about his pride in his daughter, Amanda, and his pride in his family, and his pride in Leona, and education, the importance of UCN and so on and so on. He even told some interesting jokes that I won't repeat in mixed company here, but, you know, this was a different Oscar I'd never seen before, and I was thrilled. We had a great conversation, and we stopped in The Pas. He walked out of the plane wearing his light sort of grey-brown suit he always wore with a really light-coloured pant, walked around the corner. That's the last time I saw my friend, and it hurts me, but that's the last image. That was Oscar. Oscar's gone after that.

He was a man, not only of humility, but many of you pointed out he was also a man that had a great sense of humour. I remember this one time, the member from Rupertsland and Oscar were with me as we stopped in Flin Flon. My wife, dear soul, would pick me up. I mean, this was a regular routine that interrupted her life, but she did it anyway. And we had a little white dog, it was an American Eskimo, a ball of white fluff, really—bounced up and down and barked and knew that I was coming off the plane and just went insane. So we got off the plane to walk to the car. My wife, Lisa, was going to give Oscar and Eric and myself a ride. And, of course, I went out and hugged the dog, and then I walked around the car and hugged my wife. And later on

Oscar says, Gerard, in our culture, if a man has a wife and a dog, they usually hug the wife first. So that was a lesson well learned.

He was a man of dignity. He was a powerful man. He wanted to empower his people, and I think he has empowered his people. I think he was badly judged in his time in office; I used to just go insane when I read some of those articles about Oscar because I do not think they were fair. I can't change that now. All I know is, a proud man who loved his family, who was so proud of the University College of the North, who worked so hard for the Northern Development Strategy, who was so happy with the Hydro development that created employment for his people, a man that helped me personally in numerous things—I can't even begin to mention how many things Oscar helped me with.

I remember one time I had a near revolt of cottagers in Flin Flon because they didn't like this, they didn't like that. And the simple way would have been to send a bureaucrat, send a deputy minister, send a note. Oscar came anyway, and he handled each case individually and he wouldn't let go until they were happy with what he had to say and what he was going to do. He did that. He wasn't afraid of the fire—you know, the fire out there—putting his feet to the fire. He did his job well, but he shunned the limelight and he didn't speak any more than he had to speak. He only spoke when it was necessary, I think.

This particular man who'd helped me on so many occasions, including the seniors housings in Flin Flon, who worked so hard with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry to make it, you know, put in effect those proposals that came out of the inquiry. He helped me with the fisheries problem we had in—although it wasn't my area, it was a Hydro issue in Grand Rapids, the fisheries, he worked there.

The South Indian Lake reserve would probably not be there today, that reservation's status without Oscar's help. I'm sure that the incredible program they have in South Indian Lake building houses wouldn't be there without Oscar's help. He only provided a few dollars. They had a sawmill, a portable sawmill. Young people are involved in building homes, they have pride in their community—little things, few dollars, huge impact.

He was a man of the people. He was my friend. I can't say any more other than God bless him. We miss him. And I think history will judge him much more kindly than some of the people have judged him in the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House not to see the clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is it will of the House to not see the clock so we can have a few more speakers? *[Agreed]*

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to rise and participate in the condolence motion debate on my friend Oscar Lathlin. I will be brief in my comments because the hour is late.

However, there is one point that Oscar and I shared during the winter season and that was avid support of our local junior hockey teams. And as you're all aware, the OCN Blizzard were nemesis of the Portage and District Terriers and on many occasions Oscar and myself deliberated at length as to the pros and cons of last night's game. And it is something that I—*[interjection]* Terriers fared rather well in the last few years. However, the OCN Blizzard were quite an awesome challenge, and Oscar looked upon his favoured team with great affection, and on many occasion the OCN Blizzard were successful as Manitoba's junior hockey team champions.

However, our relationship did not stop at being avid fans of junior hockey. I will say that we are all—both very strong supporters of the army cadet corps, and I very much appreciate the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) making mention of Oscar and his involvement in the army cadet corps because without his support and involvement I do not believe that particular corps would be in existence today. And for that, I want to thank Oscar and it is a lasting legacy that I hope will indeed be there for many more years to come.

* (17:00)

Oscar took very great interest in his position as minister and was a very hands-on individual. Three First Nations communities reside within my constituency of Portage la Prairie, and he was interested in all three. And I will say one occasion he could not have taken it on—the tour on a better day. There's—across the road from one First Nations is a mushroom plant where, as you can appreciate, there is a composting pile that is fairly aromatic at times. And it was on this particular day, a strong south wind which was, could of succumbing to the aroma from that freshly turned pile, and the minister at the time recognized that it was very, very important that this,

that this operation be relocated further down the road and away from the community of Dakota Plains. In fact, the condition which the minister suffered from, asthmatics since a teenager, he said never bothered him at all on that particular day because his sinuses were totally cleared by the, by the compost pile.

The other was that I think we both were part and parcel to perhaps a slight error in calculation when there was a project to restore some of the access roads within Dakota Plains community where, perhaps, the decimal place, the decimal point was placed in the wrong order, and those roads now are the recipient of more than 16 inches of gravel. I believe, though, that those roads will be again another lasting legacy to the minister's interest in making certain that community members had access to the various amenities within the reserve.

It has been mentioned on a number of occasions the humility of Oscar, and the respect I had for him goes beyond words. It was not that I gained that respect for him in a cordial manner. In fact, it was in an adversarial position, in which occurred in this House where Oscar took some of my comments regarding debate as being one of racial nature, and it was something that I took particular note of and addressed the issue after House hours with Oscar and expressed to him that I, for one, had never seen colour of skin in my life.

I was fortunate enough to be raised by two fathers actually, one being my biological father, which I'm most proud of, but the other individual was Chief Rufus Prince, who worked side by side with my father for over 20 years. I was raised with the Prince family, and I came to appreciate the culture and contact with nature that my brothers from Long Plains shared with me. And it was with that understanding that Oscar rose the next day and actually presented to the House an apology, that he had misunderstood, misinterpreted the words that I'd spoken the previous day. And, from that point on, I had the greatest of respect and affiliation for Oscar Lathlin, and I want to thank the family members that are here today for sharing a most honourable gentleman with all Manitobans. Thank you.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, much has already been said about the many accomplishments of Oscar Lathlin, and many people have, many personal stories have been shared by colleagues who have known him better and longer than I have.

However, I would still like to say a few things from the heart about Oscar. He was someone that I was just getting to know as a rookie MLA and someone that I know I had so much more to learn from. While I was new to caucus when I met him in 2007—as I just said I was just getting to know him as a colleague. I can say that, like so many others in the field of Native studies, I already knew Oscar's many accomplishments, and then in coming into this caucus from the university it was an honour to come to work with someone I had taught about for years.

As a non-Aboriginal decolonization scholar, I had the privilege to teach in the Native Studies Department, in the Aboriginal Child Welfare Initiative, the Inner City Social Work Program, and to teach social workers from the Southeast Tribal Council communities. One of my priorities in teaching within these programs was to provide both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with a critical understanding of the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in Canadian society and to illustrate the decolonization process and the work of Aboriginal leaders across Canada.

One of the areas of focus in this class was the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the significant and ground-breaking work of the inquiry, and later, the Implementation Commission. It was in teaching this material that I would begin discussion of the dedication and accomplishments of Oscar Lathlin, and those many accomplishments have already been noted by other colleagues today.

Mr. Speaker, never at any time during my teaching had it occurred to me that I would be fortunate enough to be a colleague of such an impressive leader. It was not until the morning of May 23rd, 2007, as I came into my classroom at the William Norrie Centre and began my lecture on social justice and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that I was struck by the fact that in discussing Oscar's role in Aboriginal social justice that I was now privileged to consider myself a colleague of such a great leader, role model and educator.

From his role as a band chief at Aboriginal Justice Inquiry hearings in The Pas, through his critiques in opposition of the dust gathering on the findings of the inquiry, and to bringing forth changes with coming into government in 1999, Oscar's leadership and thoughtfulness were always evident. It was these kinds of examples that I shared with my students to demonstrate the true nature of leadership:

often quiet and always grounded, but also tenacious and based in social justice.

His willingness to confront racism wherever it occurred was another example of Oscar's leadership that had resonance within the classroom. I know that his actions in this regard still serve as examples about challenging ongoing colonizing practices that, unfortunately, still exist in Canadian society. His words and actions continue to serve as inspirational examples that are cited in academic and teaching materials as well as being central to classroom discussions. He has left us all a powerful legacy with these actions and with these teachings.

In closing, I would like to express my condolences to his family, and to thank them for sharing Oscar with so many Manitobans and with members of this Chamber. I would also like to thank Oscar for being a leader and a role model and an inspiration. I thank him for what he gave me, as a non-Aboriginal academic, and what he gave to my students, young Aboriginal people who looked up to him. I only wish I had more time with him as a colleague, and I know I had much more to learn from him. Thank you, Oscar. Meegwetch.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I want to just be relatively brief as I think—in the spirit of Oscar Lathlin. He was brief and to the point.

He was a great teacher, and I think back to so many circumstances where he would put aside other pressing issues, timetables, to share insights about his community, his perspective. I remember once going to OCN with him and he took me around to different homes in the community, getting to meet some of the families, taught me some of the traditions, some of the stories. But always here in government, it was Oscar's place to ensure that we were sensitive to his immediate constituency and the broader constituency of northerners and Aboriginal people in particular.

* (17:10)

But I have this recollection that I wanted to share. I met Oscar during the Meech Lake constitutional crisis, and I was working with Elijah and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. And Oscar, at that time, was the chief of OCN. Many people outside of that circle may not know his power, his respect by his—by the other chiefs of Manitoba. He held, he held tremendous sway and around that table, in making decisions about Meech Lake, Oscar

played a key role. But it was on one of the days when we're, we were discussing strategies when Lowell Murray was going to come to Manitoba as Brian Mulroney's emissary, that he was sitting near me and he turned to me and was talking about some of the achievements that he was able to obtain for the people of OCN. He was one of, he was a great chief in Manitoba, and he brought a lot of economic development to that community, and he talked about the role of sewage and running water in the community. And he said to me, he says, you know, Gordie, when you get up in the morning and you can take a shower, you know, you feel like going to work. You feel better about yourself, and you'll go out there and make a difference. And I thought wow, now that's an insight that I think most of us wouldn't have in this day and age.

It was only months later, after Meech Lake, that Oscar Lathlin was elected to this Chamber, and I thought to myself, wow, has this province ever been enriched. Because the people of this province, with that part of the province, have elected someone to this House with insights like never before—that have seen things that others can't even imagine. We have been so enriched as a province, not just as a Chamber, because of Oscar Lathlin's presence.

And then, of course, for the Premier (Mr. Doer) in 1999 to appoint Oscar to very influential positions in Cabinet and even though those positions were influential, I can tell you that Oscar far exceeded even the boundaries of those particular departments and the ministerial leadership role that had been assigned. He had an interest in every aspect of government. He had a built-in racism detector that he was constantly reminding us of when the beeps were going on and off, and we learned a lot about what it is like to walk, indeed, in his moccasins.

But with that insight, I thought, he, indeed, enlivened our public affairs and adjusted it in a better way for the needs of, particularly, Aboriginal Manitobans and there was a strong person on the side of Aboriginal Manitobans in Oscar Lathlin.

I, again, express condolences to the family and Amanda. Thank you.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I think, according to the list, I might, through some bizarre twist of fate, be the last one to speak and I'll try and do justice to that.

I'm very lucky to have known Oscar and, in fact, it was Amanda who joins us here today, was the first

member of the Lathlin family that I met. And it was during an election campaign for Tim Sale, now retired member of this, of this Chamber, and it was, it was actually through Tim that I, that I first met Oscar. It's not a, it's not a dramatic story that I have to share, and I wish there were more of them, but time and circumstance didn't allow for more, but I'm happy to share, to share this one.

I was lucky to be asked by Tim to be his special assistant for what was then the new ministry just created to work on climate change and energy issues. And my first day of work was the day of the Throne Speech, which I don't recommend to anyone looking at sort of a political career. Oscar's timing was much better than mine. And on the—I think it was the second or third day on the job, I was to join Tim and Oscar on a trip up north to Cross Lake to celebrate the opening of the new bridge—it wasn't open yet, but to celebrate the agreement that had been reached with all the parties to build that very important infrastructure in the north. Well, it's important symbolically and in real terms.

And my colleagues on this side of the House will not be surprised, I'm sure, to learn that I didn't have a whole lot of formal clothing 48 hours into my new job here at the Legislature, and I managed to find a suit in time for that trip, but I had no overcoat whatsoever, and this is in early December. And I notice everyone else is bundled up pretty good and I'm not, and I froze the entire day that we were up there. And no one said anything to me about it. I didn't—I figured it was just my own stupidity that had created this circumstance. But it was some weeks later that Tim, actually, gave me a small token from that trip. Tim was and is 10 times my intellect, but he's only about half my size. And Tim had been given a vest up in The Pas. It was an OCN Blizzard fleece vest, and it didn't quite fit him, so I got it and I loved it. I wore it every chance I had. And some weeks later after that, we had a meeting in Oscar's office and I happened to be wearing it and I walked in and without missing a beat or anything, Oscar said: oh, so now you've learned how to wear warm clothing. And, I mean, I'm just one of hundreds of staff people that would have walked into his office at different times, but, you know, it was just a small measure of his cleverness, of his humour and his compassionate nature that he would call me out like that in such an appropriate way.

And I don't know if Oscar ever knew it, but I—just the depth of respect that I have for him, and really for anyone who has managed to conquer such

incredible obstacles to get to this Chamber. I've been—born and raised with a ridiculous number of privileges, and part of my goal in being here is to see that more people, regardless of their starting point, have the same opportunities that I've had in my life.

And Oscar was a trailblazer. He was a bridge between a community that had been ostracized and oppressed and deliberately disadvantaged by this very Chamber, by our predecessors who sat here and made decisions that deliberately set apart and put down Aboriginal and First Nations people in this province. And for Oscar to manage to not only capture the idea that it was possible, but that it was important for someone from that group to actually become part of this institution and then to continue to be a bridge for all the trauma on both banks that come with trying to play that role is really quite remarkable. And I think he was both a reflection of the progress that has been made and also a key driver of the changes, the positive changes that have—have occurred.

We are a long way from where we need to be but, in no small part because of the efforts of Oscar and our acting Minister for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and others, we have seen some—like, I have been privileged to see, just in my short time here, some remarkable events. That a formal apology would be issued by this Chamber to all people who suffered under the residential schools issue, that there would actually be a Cree sitting in the Chamber, sitting on the front bench as a Cabinet minister, was unheard of at the time when I was born.

And I mean, in my—in my own family, my parents adopted my brother, who's Ojibway—his home community is Little Black River on the east side of Lake Winnipeg—and so within our own family we have seen the impacts as my—I mean, I would never claim to have been the victim of racism, but our family has certainly experienced it differently than other white families would have because one of our own members is treated differently by the rest of us—by broader society.

* (17:20)

And Oscar managed to—through his work, he was here and he was speaking out against those issues and he, along with the acting Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and—to you, Sir, to you, Mr. Speaker—when I—you accomplished something quite remarkable. Some might consider it a footnote of history, but when I was elected, I wasn't

allowed to say the word "racism" as an MLA in this Chamber. I could say "sexism," I could say "ageism," I could say "homophobia," I could talk about all those issues. I could not say the word, "racist," I couldn't say the word "racism," because of, I view, flawed ruling that had been made by a previous Speaker, and the people I just mentioned have changed that. I mean, how on earth are we going to address a problem if we can't even name it, and Oscar understood the importance of naming it in any of the forms that were possible.

And so he made it here, he made a difference. We saw that formal apology in this Chamber. We saw, you know, in that chair right over there on the front bench, we saw his headdress placed after his passing and a special ceremony that all MLAs of all parties participated in, and that would not have happened at the time that Oscar was born. That would not have happened at the time that I was born.

And I just hope in the future that, that we manage to continue that legacy, that we continue that real progress that he spoke so passionately about. And whether he's with us in a physical sense or not, I firmly believe that Oscar is still guiding all of us in, in our decisions and reminding us that what we accomplish, we accomplish as a team, and how we

accomplish it is—really speaks to our own individual choices, and Oscar was a, was a credit on both fronts.

And I'll just add my thanks to so many others here—for Amanda and Leona and the extended family for sharing your dad with us, and he'll be remembered and respected as long as I'm here. Thank you.

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

Would honourable members please rise and remain standing to indicate the support for the motion.

A moment of silence was observed.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I'd like to remind members that it was announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard). The title of the resolution is 100th Anniversary of B'nai Brith in Manitoba.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, September 29, 2009

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