

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Speaker*

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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, Hon.	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.
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, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, 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, Hon.	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, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Introduction of New Member

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a letter indicating the election of Matt Wiebe as the member for the constituency of Concordia. I thereby table the motion of the return of the member elected.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to present the member for the constituency of Concordia. The member has taken his oath, signed the roll, and now claims his rightful seat as a member of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: On behalf of all honourable members, I wish to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and to wish you well in your parliamentary career.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Long-Term Care Facilities—Morden and Winkler

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Many seniors from the Morden and Winkler area are currently patients in the 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 to ensure that patients who are awaiting placement in a personal care home are not moved to distant communities.

And 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.

And this is signed by Helena Wall, Katie Wiebe, Marion Harder and many, many others.

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

PTH 15—Twinning

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 collisions on PTH 15 continue to rise and have doubled from 2007 to 2008.

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation 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 fulfil the current nor 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 PTH 15 floodway bridge for the safety of the citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by Ronald Wroblewski, Leona Moroz, Clara Sigurdson and many, many other Manitobans.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

This is signed by Naomi Neufeld, Verneece Eggie, Joanne Harvey and many, many others.

MPI—Independent Claim Representative

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Several citizens of Manitoba who have been injured in automobile accidents are being denied by Manitoba Public Insurance the right to choose who may be their agent or their personal representative when appealing a decision to terminate benefits.

This has created serious challenges for claimants who feel they need someone to represent them. The choices suggested by MPI are: a lawyer, claimant adviser, or someone of their choosing, such as a family friend—family member or friend, who is not being paid.

MPI suggests it's the Law Society which is advising it not to accept independent claim representatives who are paid a fee. However, The Legal Profession Act specifies that only claims founded in tort are subject to these provisions regarding the unlawful practice of law, and The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act confirms that claims for compensation are non-tort claims.

Furthermore, neither The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act nor MPI's Web site specifies that claimants may not hire an independent claim representative who is not a lawyer. Consequently, claimants feel that their rights have been arbitrarily discriminated against.

Claimants in all provinces under similar non-tort Workers Compensation legislation and claimants in other provinces with public auto insurers are allowed the right to choose and/or hire an independent claims representative.

As MPI is a Crown corporation and a monopoly, it has a profound duty of care to ensure that citizens' rights and freedoms are not discriminated against.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister charged with the administration of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act to consider instructing MPI to allow claimants the right to select an independent claim representative of their choosing, whether paid or unpaid, whether a lawyer or non-lawyer, as claimants with similar claims in other provinces are permitted to do.

And this petition is signed by Marcy Young, Fabiana Patriarca and Marciana Jimeno and many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Education Funding

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon West): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition.

Historically, the Province of Manitoba has received funding for education by the assessment of property that generates taxes. This unfair tax is only applied to selected property owners in certain areas and confines, including but not limited to commercial property owners.

Property-based school tax is becoming an ever-increasing burden without acknowledging the commercial property owner's income or owner's ability to pay.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider removing education funding by school tax or education levies from all property in Manitoba, including commercial property.

To request that the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth consider finding a more equitable method of funding education, such as general revenue, following the constitutional funding of education by the Province of Manitoba.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by W. Oberding, A. Kovacs, Keith Grant and many, many other fine, concerned Manitobans.

Provincial Nominee Program–90-Day Guarantee

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Reuniting families through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program should be the first priority in processing nominee certificates.

Lengthy processing times for PNP applications causes additional stress and anxiety for would-be immigrants and their families here in Manitoba.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider establishing a 90-day guarantee for processing an application for a minimum of 90 percent of applicants that have family living in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by R. Bambrah, E. Aquino and E. Barairo and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Second Report

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the Second Report on the Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following—

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions:

- November 28, 2005
- December 7, 2005
- December 8, 2005
- March 15, 2006
- December 6, 2006
- December 14, 2006
- March 8, 2007
- October 21, 2009
- February 17, 2010
- March 3, 2010

Matters under Consideration

- *Auditor General's Report – Examination of the Crocus Investment Fund – May 2005*
- *Auditor General's Report – Study of Board Governance in Crown Organizations – September 2009*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the November 28, 2005 meeting:

- Mr. CALDWELL
- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF
- Mr. REIMER (Chairperson)
- Mr. SANTOS
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER

Committee membership for the December 7, 2005 meeting:

- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Ms. KORZENIOWSKI
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. REIMER (Chairperson)
- Mr. SANTOS
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Substitutions received during committee proceedings at the December 7, 2005 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. GERRARD for Mr. LAMOUREUX

Committee membership for the December 8, 2005 meeting:

- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. DEWAR
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Ms. KORZENIOWSKI
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. REIMER (Chairperson)
- Mr. SANTOS
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Committee membership for the March 15, 2006 meeting:

- Mr. AGLUGUB
- Mr. CUMMINGS

- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. REIMER (Chairperson)
- Mr. SANTOS
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Committee membership for the December 6, 2006 meeting:

- Mr. AGLUGUB
- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. DERKACH
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. SANTOS
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Your Committee elected Mr. DERKACH as the Chairperson at the December 6, 2006 meeting.

Committee membership for the December 14, 2006 meeting:

- Mr. AGLUGUB
- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MALOWAY (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. SANTOS
- Mr. SCHULER
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Committee membership for the March 8, 2007 meeting:

- Mr. AGLUGUB
- Mr. CUMMINGS
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. SALE

- Mr. SANTOS
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Your Committee elected Mr. SWAN as the Vice-Chairperson at the March 8, 2007 meeting.

Committee membership for the October 21, 2009 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MAGUIRE
- Ms. SELBY
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Committee membership for the February 17, 2010 meeting:

- Ms. BLADY
- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. HAWRANIK
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Ms. SELBY
- Mrs. STEFANSON
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Committee membership for the March 3, 2010 meeting:

- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Ms. BRICK
- Mr. DERKACH (Chairperson)
- Mr. DEWAR (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mrs. DRIEDGER
- Mr. JHA
- Mr. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTINDALE
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Ms. SELBY
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Officials Speaking on Record

Officials speaking on the record at the December 7, 2005 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines
- Hon. Mr. RONDEAU
- Jon Singleton, Auditor General

Officials speaking on the record at the December 8, 2005 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines
- Hon. Mr. RONDEAU
- Jon Singleton, Auditor General

Officials speaking on the record at the March 15, 2006 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Industry, Economic Development and Mines
- Hon. Mr. RONDEAU
- Jon Singleton, Auditor General

Officials speaking on the record at the December 6, 2006 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade
- Bonnie Lysyk, Deputy Auditor General and C.O.O.
- Hon. Mr. SMITH

Officials speaking on the record at the December 14, 2006 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade
- Bonnie Lysyk, Deputy Auditor General and C.O.O.
- Hon. Mr. SMITH

Officials speaking on the record at the March 8, 2007 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Hon. Mr. SMITH

Officials speaking on the record at the October 21, 2009 meeting:

- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Deputy Minister of Competitiveness, Training and Trade
- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. SWAN

Officials speaking on the record at the March 3, 2010 meeting:

- Carol Bellringer, Auditor General
- Hon. Mr. BJORNSON
- Maria Capozzi, Audit Principal
- Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade and Deputy Minister of Finance
- Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Auditor General's Report – Examination of the Crocus Investment Fund – May 2005
- Auditor General's Report – Study of Board Governance in Crown Organizations – September 2009

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member of Springfield, the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Russell, seconded by the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), that the report of the committee be received.

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

Standing Committee on Crown Corporations First Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- October 25, 2007 (1st Session – 39th Legislature)
- December 19, 2007 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)
- June 1, 2009 (3rd Session – 39th Legislature)

- November 17, 2009 (3rd Session – 39th Legislature)
- March 8, 2010 (4th Session – 39th Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007
- The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008
- The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the October 25, 2007 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. ASHTON
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. FAURSCHOU
- Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. JHA
- Ms. MARCELINO
- Mr. MCFADYEN
- Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. REID (Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER
- Mr. SWAN

Committee membership for the December 19, 2007 meeting:

- Mr. ALTEMEYER
- Ms. BRAUN
- Mr. CALDWELL
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. GOERTZEN
- Ms. MARCELINO (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. MCFADYEN
- Mr. REID (Chairperson)
- Mrs. ROWAT
- Mr. SARAN
- Hon. Mr. SELINGER

Committee membership for the June 1, 2009 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. BLAIKIE
- Mr. BOROTSIK
- Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. JHA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. MARCELINO

- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*
- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Mr. WHITEHEAD*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Committee membership for the November 17, 2009 meeting:

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Ms. BRICK (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Mr. JHA*
- *Hon. Ms. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SARAN*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Committee membership for the March 8, 2010 meeting:

- *Mr. BOROTSIK*
- *Mr. CALDWELL*
- *Mr. CULLEN*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Hon. Ms. IRVIN-ROSS*
- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. SARAN*
- *Mr. WHITEHEAD*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

Your Committee elected Mr. WHITEHEAD as Vice Chairperson at the March 8, 2010 meeting.

Officials Speaking on the Record

- *Mr. Bob Brennan, President and Chief Executive Officer*
- *Mr. Vic Schroeder, Chairman*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008*
- *The Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009*

Mr. Reid: I move, seconded by the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Whitehead), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Second Report

Mr. Daryl Reid (Chairperson): I wish to present the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

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

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- *December 22, 2004 (3rd Session – 38th Legislature)*
- *May 2, 2006 (4th Session – 38th Legislature)*
- *July 10, 2008 (2nd Session – 39th Legislature)*
- *May 25, 2009 (3rd Session – 39th Legislature)*
- *March 10, 2010 (4th Session – 39th Legislature)*

Matters under Consideration

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2003 including the conduct of the 38th Provincial General Election June 3, 2003*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2004 including the conduct of the Minto and Turtle-Mountain by-elections June 22 and June 29, 2004*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2005 including the*

conduct of the Fort Whyte by-election December 13, 2005

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2007 including the conduct of the 39th Provincial General Election May 22, 2007*

Committee Membership

Committee membership for the May 2, 2006 meeting:

- *Mr. DERKACH*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Hon. Mr. DOER*
- *Mr. HAWRANIK*
- *Hon. Mr. LEMIEUX*
- *Hon. Mr. MACKINTOSH*
- *Mr. MARTINDALE*
- *Mrs. MITCHELSON*
- *Mr. REID (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. ROCAN*
- *Mr. SCHELLENBERG (Vice-Chairperson)*

Committee membership for the July 10, 2008 meeting:

- *Hon. Mr. ASHTON*
- *Ms. BRICK (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Hon. Mr. DOER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Mr. HAWRANIK*
- *Ms. HOWARD (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Hon. Ms. MCGIFFORD*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Mrs. TAILLIEU*

Committee membership for the May 25, 2009 meeting:

- *Hon. Mr. CHOMIAK*
- *Mr. DERKACH*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Hon. Mr. DOER*
- *Mr. MAGUIRE*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Ms. HOWARD (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. NEVAKSHONOFF*
- *Mrs. TAILLIEU*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Hon. Ms. WOWCHUK*

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

Committee membership for the March 10, 2010 meeting:

- *Hon. Mr. BLAIKIE*
- *Ms. BRICK*
- *Mr. DERKACH*
- *Mr. EICHLER*
- *Mr. GOERTZEN*
- *Hon. Ms. HOWARD*
- *Mr. MCFADYEN*
- *Mr. REID*
- *Hon. Mr. SELINGER*
- *Hon. Mr. STRUTHERS*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*

Your Committee elected Mr. REID as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. BRICK as the Vice-Chairperson.

Officials Speaking on Record

- *Richard D. Balasko, Chief Electoral Officer*

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2004 including the conduct of the Minto and Turtle-Mountain by-elections June 22 and June 29, 2004*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2005 including the conduct of the Fort Whyte by-election December 13, 2005*

Reports Considered but not Passed

Your Committee considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2003 including the conduct of the 38th Provincial General Election June 3, 2003*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2006*
- *Annual Report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31, 2007 including the*

*conduct of the 39th Provincial General Election
May 22, 2007*

Mr. Reid: I move, by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Ms. Brick), that the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Transcona, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert, that the report of the committee be received.

Is the pleasure of the house to adopt the motion?
[Agreed]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Tribute to Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a ministerial statement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and sacrifice of Private Garrett William Chidley, a Canadian soldier tragically killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan on December 30th, 2009.

Private Chidley was a member of the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry based in Shilo. He was a talented Light Armoured Vehicle driver who was incredibly proud of his work and service to the country. His loss has been felt deeply by his friends in Manitoba and his family in Ontario and British Columbia.

According to his friends and relatives, 21-year-old Garrett was a hard worker who always set high goals for himself and was very attached to his family. He had a mind for technology and had been passionate about flying since the—completing his first solo flight at the age of 15.

It was his love for his fellow human beings that brought Private Chidley on his first tour of duty to Afghanistan. Private Chidley was stationed in Afghanistan as part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team dedicated to supporting development within the war-torn nation. He was on a community security patrol with three other Canadian soldiers and a journalist when his vehicle struck a roadside bomb in Kandahar city.

On behalf of all members of this House, I extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Private Chidley.

We also express our condolences to the families of the other seven Canadian soldiers who have been

killed and wounded while serving our country since the House last met.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that, following the tributes from other members of the House, we stand for a moment to mark the life of Private Garrett Chidley.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I thank the Premier for his very appropriate statement today.

And I rise today, with all members of the House, to commemorate with sorrow the sacrifices of eight Canadian soldiers who have died in Afghanistan since the House adjourned in December. These individuals took on challenges that most of us cannot imagine and gave their lives to protect and improve the well-being of others.

The Premier has discussed the background and the sacrifices of Private Garrett Chidley, who was based here in Manitoba at Shilo, and we share his extension of condolences to Private Chidley's family, and also to those other soldiers and their families based here in Manitoba at Shilo, many of whom have suffered loss and have made great sacrifices on behalf of our country and province.

In addition to Private Chidley, we extend our condolences to the families of Lieutenant Andrew Nuttall, Sergeant Kirk Taylor, Sergeant George Miok, Corporal Zachery McCormack, Sergeant John Faught, Corporal Joshua Baker and Corporal Darren Fitzpatrick, all great Canadians who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our country. Our sincere condolences go out to all of their families and friends.

We know that the death of a soldier is a sad event for all Canadians. As a result of the service they provide, they have become important people in the lives of all of us.

With these eight deaths, the number of Canadian soldiers lost in Afghanistan has now reached 141, a sobering reminder of the dangers faced every day by our men and women in uniform who are fighting to share the values of democracy and human rights with others.

As a Canadian, I am thankful for the sacrifices of our troops, and we all join together today to honour their lives and to pay tribute to their supreme sacrifices. Thank you.

* (13:50)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the Premier's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join the others in this Chamber to recognize Private Garrett William Chidley. I join all others also in extending my condolences to Private Chidley's family and friends.

It is sad, particularly, that he was a part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, the team that was dedicated to improving conditions and to making life easier to live and improve it in Afghanistan. He now joins—I think it's 140 other Canadian Forces soldiers who have died in Afghanistan. It's certainly a huge commitment, and certainly we can learn from Private Chidley's example, setting high goals and, in what we do here, aiming high and looking for the very best for Manitoba and Canada, just as Private Chidley aimed in his life for the very best. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for a moment of silence? [*Agreed*] Will you please rise for a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

Tribute to Olympic and Paralympic Athletes

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister responsible for Sport): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I also have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, as the Minister responsible for Sport in Manitoba, to recognize Canada's and Manitoba's athletes who competed as members of Team Canada in the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games this past February and in the Vancouver 2010 Winter Paralympics that concluded this past weekend.

Manitoba had 10 athletes on Team Canada and they brought home three of our country's 14 gold medals. I'm also pleased to note that in the Winter Paralympic Games, Team Canada athletes won 19 medals. The total includes 10 gold medals, five silver medals and four bronze. Our country won the most gold medals of any country at the Olympic Games and ranked third in the total medal count for both the Olympics and Paralympics.

I'd like to mention several outstanding Manitoba athletes: Jennifer Botterill, who contributed to Canada's gold medal in women's hockey; Clara Hughes, who took home bronze in speed skating and has reaffirmed her status as one of the most decorated athletes in Olympic history; Jonathan Toews, whose opening goal helped Canada—Team Canada bring home gold in men's hockey as well; and of course, Russell's Jon Montgomery, who made all Manitobans extremely proud with his gold-medal performance in skeleton.

These are—there are other athletes from Manitoba who posted stellar performances and I congratulate them all. Every one of them makes us proud. Our young athletes will continue to build a legacy for Manitoba at future games.

Please join me in thanking the families and the coaches of our athletes for their dedication and commitment. Athletes in Manitoba benefit from some of the best coaches and support in the country.

In addition to our athletes' performances at the games, I would like to also highlight the private sector contributions to CentrePlace Manitoba, which was a huge success. The pavilion spotlighted Manitoba's vibrant culture and diverse business opportunities.

I'd like to ask all members in joining me in recognizing the achievements of these fine Manitobans and Canadians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our Progressive Conservative caucus and all members of the Legislative Assembly, it is with great enthusiasm and pride that I stand in the House today and join with the minister in expressing our most sincere congratulations to Manitoba's 14 Olympic athletes who competed at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic winter games in Vancouver.

It is a great honour to represent one's country at the Olympics, and I know all Canadians are proud of our winter Olympians. Mr. Speaker, all Manitobans were overcome with pride when we watched our champions compete at the highest level, and we all shared in the celebration when Jon Montgomery won gold or when Clara Hughes took home the bronze in the last race of her long and celebrated speed skating career.

It was hard not to feel the overwhelming joy watching fellow Manitobans Jonathan Toews, Duncan Keith, Jennifer Botterill lead Canada's hockey teams to gold or when curlers John Morris

and Carolyn Darbyshire climbed onto the Olympic podium to accept their gold and silver medals.

Manitoba's Olympians have demonstrated dedication, athleticism and a commitment to their sports that places them amongst the best athletes in the world, but their success is also a reflection of a strong community. The dedication of coaches, parents and volunteers make sport in Manitoba great, and it is the effort of all of these individuals that give our athletes the opportunity to reach their potential.

I am pleased to be able to stand here today and thank all the Manitobans who helped make the dreams of 14 Olympians come true. We are all very proud of our Manitoba Olympic athletes: Clara Hughes, bronze in 5,000 metre speed skating; Jonathan Toews, gold in men's hockey; Duncan Keith, gold in men's hockey; Jennifer Botterill, gold in women's hockey; John Morris, gold in men's curling; Carolyn Darbyshire, silver in women's curling; Jon Montgomery, gold in men's skeleton; Cindy Klassen, speed skating; Shannon Rempel, speed skating; Brittany Shussler, speed skating; Mike Ireland, speed skating; Kyle Parrott, speed skating; Megan Imrie, biathlon; Danielle Poleschuk, ski cross. Also, congratulations to the winter Paralympic game Team Canada athletes who won 19 medals. The total includes 10 gold, five silver, four bronze.

Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and Paralympics was a celebrated event in Canada and Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Our rules state that members' statements should not be longer than what the minister has taken and the member has now gone on longer. So the member—the honourable member for Springfield?

Mr. Schuler: I ask for leave to continue.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted. The honourable member for Springfield to continue.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics and Paralympics was a celebrated event for Canada and Manitoba, and on behalf of our Progressive Conservative caucus I want to again congratulate our 2010 winter Olympians. Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the Olympics and the Paralympic games were really golden moments for all of us in Canada, an extraordinary time for us to recognize the athletes of our country and the athletes of Manitoba.

Certainly, the athletes have contributed and shown a high level of excellence in even getting to the games, and their excellence is built on a high level of participation and activity in sports here in Manitoba.

I'd like to recognize, of course, in particular, Jon Montgomery and the men's skeleton gold, hockey, Jennifer Botterill, Jonathan Toews, and the women's and the men's hockey and their gold medals, Clara Hughes' efforts, the efforts of the curlers and many others who have contributed and made this such memorable games here in Canada in which Manitobans played a significant role. Thank you.

* (14:00)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my right where we have with us, we have Becky Barrett, who is the former member for Wellington; Harry Schellenberg who was the former member for Rossmere and Muriel Smith who was the former member for Osborne. And also, on my loge to my left, we have Reg Alcock who's also the former member for Osborne.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Budget Projected Deficit

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, almost exactly a year ago today, this NDP government tabled a budget projecting a small surplus. Nine months later, in a shocking Christmas eve disclosure, the government disclosed, after its reports were released, that there would be no surplus at all this year, but instead a

deficit of more than \$600 million, making a mockery of the projections contained in last year's budget.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for today's budget, what assurances can the Premier provide that the new Finance Minister is more competent than the old one?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that last year we went through the largest recession since the Great Depression. Manitoba's shortfall, even though it was balanced under the four-year rolling average, Manitoba's shortfall was one of the shallowest in the country at 1.2 percent of GDP. Our economy performed relatively well among—in the top two, for sure, across the country. And what I can assure the member opposite is is that today's budget will be another example of how this government will move Manitoba forward to prosperity and a better quality of life for all Manitobans.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled last year was tabled five months after markets melted down, years after the projection started, that we would eventually go into a downturn.

So I want to ask the Premier: Since they were five months into it last year and they missed by \$600 million, more than the amount of money that's spent by some government departments, can he assure Manitobans today that the new Finance Minister will be more accurate than the old one?

Mr. Selinger: The member himself seems to have a problem with numbers. He missed the last quarterly report where our deficit came in \$30 million less than projected for '09-10 and, the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that it was one of the shallowest and smallest operating shortfalls of any province in Canada at 1.2 percent of GDP.

I mean, there are many other Conservative governments in the country; they overshot their budget estimates by a far greater margin. I would like to say that this province is more accurate than any other province in terms of predicting its outcome whether it's federal or provincial. The member knows that; he should just admit it.

Mr. McFadyen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Finance Minister last year, he couldn't hit the side of a barn when it came to last year's projections.

Following the budget, they rolled out a taxpayer-funded advertising campaign that required Manitoba taxpayers to fork out hundreds of thousands of

dollars of their own money to run ads that said that the budget was balanced only to find out nine months later that it was a cruel hoax on the part of the government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier today indicate how much taxpayers' money he plans to spend attempting to dupe Manitobans this year about what's contained in the budget to be tabled this afternoon?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that last year's budget was balanced under the laws passed in this House, and the member knows that, and if he wants to change the law on the fly, that's entirely up to him.

Manitobans will get good communication of what's in the budget because the budget will have many things in it that move Manitoba forward, and I anticipate that we will have a very interesting debate about that budget because it will have within it the kinds of things that make Manitoba a more prosperous place, and the member knows that.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago, the Finance Minister came out saying that she was going to try to report two different deficit numbers for 2009-2010. One deficit number was smaller in order to try to protect ministerial salaries and then there was the real deficit number that actually contained the government shortfalls.

I want to ask the Premier: Why are they running two sets of books and which set will we be shown today?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the members voted against the law which puts one bottom line in this government, and they should recall that.

We operate on a full summary budgeting basis now as recommended by the Auditor General. The members opposite demanded that we go to a full summary budget and then when they did—when we did, they voted against it. When it comes to inconsistency, the members opposite are a paragon of virtue, when it comes to inconsistency.

**Manitoba Hydro
Bipole III West-Side Location**

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to vote

against smoke and mirror bills like Bill 38 because we want one set of books. And when you have a shortfall, when you've got a deficit, let's just call it a deficit and be straightforward with Manitobans.

I want to ask the Premier, as the budget comes in today, in addition to concerns about the accuracy of past budgets, we're concerned that this Premier's pet project to overspend by \$640 million on a west-side power line is still part of the government's plans at the same time as they're delaying or cancelling other projects through the province including personal care homes in Morden and other projects throughout the province that Manitobans need.

Why is this Premier putting his pet project of the west-side bipole line ahead of other projects that Manitobans need?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most accurate—inaccurate statements the member opposite has made. He knows full well that there is only planning being—money being spent by Manitoba Hydro right now. Bipole III has not actually been started yet. They're going through the siting and environmental review process.

There is no significant expenditure on the operating side of this budget that will be crowded out by a Manitoba Hydro expenditure. That is loan authority; it's completely separate from the budget that we are providing today in terms of operating money for core programs.

And, by the way, Mr. Speaker, there has never been the ability to use Hydro loan act authority to fund hospitals and schools. The member knows that. He should just be straightforward with Manitobans and tell them the truth.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, after two different definitions of the word deficit, we've got a brand new concept introduced in the Legislature today by the Premier: planning money versus other kinds of money.

I want to ask the Premier—we are aware the \$640 million is over several years, but we've got a multiyear—we have a multiyear problem that we're going to be dealing with here in Manitoba. It starts this year; it carries on for the next generation of Manitobans. We're not just thinking about the short term. We're thinking about the long term as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to ask the Premier though: Since he's introduced his new concept, can he explain to the

House, what is the difference between planning money and real money?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think we're making progress here. He admits that the \$640 million is spread over several years. I think this is a flash of insight that we haven't seen before. He was trying to suggest that it would crowd out spending for health and education and family services in the budget. He knows that's inaccurate.

He knows that the money in the capital budget for Manitoba Hydro is money that is completely separate from operating money for the regular budget. He knows that, and I'd like him to actually stand up and admit that for the first time in the last several months.

Highway 75 Flooding Forecast

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, in 1997, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2009, we saw flooding along the Red River Valley here in Manitoba. And now, in 2010, we are facing another high-water event along the Red River.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to update the House on any expected closures of Highway 75 this spring, and when will public hearings commence on the future upgrades to Highway 75?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Well, first of all, in terms of flood forecast, Mr. Speaker, we've seen some encouraging developments last week or so. With weather actually being fairly dry and fairly cool, that has lowered the flood prediction. Currently, it's been trending towards the 2006 flood, it may be even less than that. In terms of impacts on highways, a lot of it, of course, will depend on when the crest comes through. It's anticipated over the next week or so—a week to ten days—coming up the valley.

And we are working very diligently in terms of Highway 75. We've invested \$75 million in upgrading Highway 75 including flood protection. And there's more to come, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:10)

St. Adolphe Bridge Project Status

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, and not only are people concerned about the Highway 75 closure, but they're also worried about access in and

out of St. Adolphe for emergency services and for protection in the event that there's road closures there.

Can the minister update the House on the status of the St. Adolphe bridge, and does the minister plan to use a temporary ramp structure over the bridge, and can he ensure that that is a safe option?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, we've been working on a number of contingency plans, as I indicated. There has been some encouraging developments in the last period of time. Now I want to stress, as we all know, that even one severe weather storm could change that forecast. The latest trend results that Water Stewardship and the Minister of Water Stewardship (Ms. Melnick) have reported are that it's actually not only trending to a 2006 flood but below that. But we have been looking at contingency plans throughout the valley, including 75, including the St. Adolphe bridge.

But I want to stress, again, no matter what happens in terms of the highway access, we are anticipating some flooding at really—at this point in time. It's a question of how much it's trending to 2006 levels or possibly even lower, and that's very good news for Manitoba.

Red River Floodway Gate Operation

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, every spring, with high-water events, this causes anxiety for the residents living south of the floodway gates, and it was reported on March 19th that the floodway gates could be in operation as early as tomorrow.

Can the minister indicate if there are indeed any immediate plans to operate the floodway gates and under what rules will this operation commence?

Hon. Christine Melnick (Minister of Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, we're watching the water flows very closely. There will be an updated forecast this afternoon from Alf Warkentin. We're working with the Floodway Authority. The floodway gates could be rising within the next few days. We are watching as the water moves up north from the United States. We are, as my colleague said, somewhat encouraged by the lower peaks that have been experienced south of the border, but are watching very closely.

Eating Disorder Treatment Patient Wait List

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, constituents of mine are very concerned about their daughter who suffers from an eating disorder. She has been in and out of the emergency ward at Health Sciences Centre twice since December, but because she was not in immediate danger of dying, they were not able to admit her to the eating disorders ward. They have now been told that due to backlogs at the Eating Disorders Clinic, their daughter will not be admitted into the system until May 15th, unless, of course, she is bumped once again.

Can the minister explain why this young woman is forced to wait months for the treatment that she desperately needs today?

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we've moved forward on eating disorders. We've moved forward on mental health. I know there's other issues there. If there's particulars in the case, I'd be happy to hear from the member opposite.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, my constituents have sent a letter to the minister. My constituents have been told that their daughter has a 20 percent chance of dying from this illness, and each day that she does not receive treatment that number increases.

Will the minister agree to meet with this family immediately in order to ensure that their daughter gets timely access to the care she so definitely needs and so that there's not further delay, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, and I'd be pleased to meet the family as I have also read the letter.

But I am also pleased that we are moving forward with addictions. We're moving forward with the whole idea about eating disorders with the association and with family supports, and I am pleased to see that this government is moving forward on the whole issue of mental health.

We need to have appropriate mental health services. We are investing with mental health services, we'll continue to do that. And I would meet with the family, I'd be happy to do that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, and I will be sure to make arrangements with the minister and the family. But I am very, very concerned that the minister has

received this letter and didn't act on it until I had to come forward in question period today, and this is unfortunate that things have to be done this way.

And I'm hoping that the minister, in this meeting, will ensure that my constituent is able to get the care immediately that their daughter needs.

Will he ensure that that takes place in this meeting, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, but I would not be directing the health care. We leave that to the professionals. What I will do is I will listen. I will make sure that the appropriate professional support will be in the meeting. And I had directed previously that the person be directed to the appropriate medical supports, the appropriate mental health services, the appropriate food disorders—eating disorders services, and that's the appropriate way to have it.

I, as a minister, do not direct medical care. I make sure that the appropriate services are there and appropriate people make the appropriate decisions.

Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Rural Driver Testing Service Cuts

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Residents of rural Manitoba are again facing service cuts to pay for this NDP government's wasteful spending decisions. In January MPI cut services for driver licence testing in dozens of communities throughout the province. Many communities are losing written testing sites, while others no longer offer tests for class 1, 2 and 3.

I would like to ask the minister responsible for MPI why he is treating rural Manitobans like second-class citizens.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): It's a pleasure to put on the record some of the improvements that MPI is making to service across the entire province of Manitoba. And, as the member for Minnedosa may know, MPI has been enhancing its services across the province. Back in 2004 there were only five communities that had full-time service locations. The members opposite will know that since that time we've added full-service centres in Steinbach, Winkler, The Pas, Selkirk, Beausejour and Arborg, all full-service centres which allow people to take all types of classes of drivers' testing, to make sure that we operate those services as efficiently as possible,

allowing as many people in Manitoba to be as close as possible to those services.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, and it's a long way from a resident in Souris making it to Steinbach. My constituent, Mylan Dunbar, has been trying since November to obtain his class 3 driver's licence. MPI has cancelled his appointment four times and relocated his testing site from Souris to Brandon. Last week MPI rescheduled Mylan's appointment to an earlier date but failed to tell him of the change in dates. This is the fifth time that this young man has had to have his appointment rescheduled or relocated.

Can the minister justify cutting driver testing sites in rural communities and then failing to provide timely and fair service, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Swan: The majority of tests, of course, being taken by Manitobans are the class 5, the basic driver's licence, which continues to be offered across the province. But the facts are, Mr. Speaker, that for classes 1 to 3, which is bus licences and commercial trucking licences, in many communities there are very small numbers of people who want to take those tests. For—as an example, in the member's own constituency in Minnedosa, in all of 2008 there were only five individuals who wanted to have a higher class test. Unfortunately, it's very inefficient for the corporation to have to send out one individual to drive to that community for an appointment which may or may not go ahead. It will require some rural residents to travel further into other communities, but we can guarantee better service and a better schedule.

Mrs. Rowat: What we're talking about is Mylan Dunbar's situation where his appointment was cancelled five times by MPI. Mr. Speaker, Mylan Dunbar is a young Manitoban trying to earn a living. For a government that identifies youth retention as a priority, they don't seem to be giving young people any reason to stay in Manitoba. Mylan's employer needs him to have his class 3 licence by the beginning of April. Last week, after rescheduling his appointment for the fifth time, MPI has told him that he can't get an appointment till late April. This is absolutely unacceptable. Mylan has been waiting five months. He's been proactive in getting his appointments started in November.

Will the minister commit to ensuring Mylan Dunbar can finally get his class 3 driver's licence testing before the April deadline, Mr. Speaker?

* (14:20)

Mr. Swan: I can certainly guarantee the member opposite that there will be better service, more schedule opportunities and more chances for people to get their licence with these service changes.

I should also point out to the members opposite that MPI has identified—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Members may do well to remember the dignity of this House. I expect the co-operation of all members, please.

The honourable minister has the floor.

Mr. Swan: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that's been pointed out by MPI officials is the need to make sure that the testing is actually appropriate for driving anywhere in the province, and MPI has mentioned it's been a long-standing challenge to design and develop suitable road tests in many small communities.

Somebody who obtains their class 3 licence is going to be certified to drive not only in their community but, as we expect, across the province and across North America, and MPI has identified the need for the best possible training, for the best possible safety for all Manitobans.

If the member would like a more in-depth briefing, I will be more than happy to provide that to her.

Manitoba Developmental Centre Project Status

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it has been more than five years now since this government made its announcement that it would be investing approximately \$40 million in a multiyear plan to redevelop the Manitoba Developmental Centre in Portage la Prairie.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister responsible if he or she could provide to this House an update as to the MDC upgrades.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member dutifully has been raising questions about MDC and, of course, its role in Manitoba society in supporting many families and

individuals. In Estimates, I'm more than happy to provide some further information and some updates.

The member should know that over the last four years or so, 49 individuals have moved into the community. We've made significant investments in greater community living for Manitobans with intellectual disabilities.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows from our discussions in Estimates, it's time now to take a longer term view of the future of MDC, both for the residents but also for the workers and the community itself, and there'll be some consultations that we will have with stakeholders this spring. It's important, though, that any adjustment that might take place eight to 10 years out, or 12 years out, be managed as best as possible in the interests of all stakeholders.

Mr. Faurchou: I do appreciate the minister's response. However, the question still remains.

December the 10th, 2004, Minister Lemieux and Minister Melnick—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Faurchou: —the minister responsible—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When members are addressing other members in the House, it's members by their constituency or ministers by their portfolios, not by name.

So I ask the member to withdraw that, please.

Mr. Faurchou: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the specific—by name, and former minister of Family Services and former minister of Infrastructure were in Portage la Prairie on December the 10th, 2004, heralding that this government's plans to invest \$40 million in Portage la Prairie's Manitoba Developmental Centre facility.

I am sure that the minister can at least provide the House as to the amount of investment that has already taken place and how much is anticipated in the next few years. Thank you.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows from our discussions in Estimates—and we provided not only figures but descriptions to the member about the upgrades at MDC—those life-safety upgrades are continuing and will continue.

We want to complete the life-safety upgrades that were identified in a risk-assessment report. So that is ongoing.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, it will be important, particularly for the stakeholders, of course, that we ensure that any investments at MDC are made with a longer term view. And that is why we will have consultations and we will also engage the MLA for Portage, as well as the municipality, the union and we've discussed—had some discussions with the union but, very importantly, the families, representatives of the residents there in looking at how we can look at a long-term view of MDC, eight to 12 years out.

Budget Expenditure Management

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, each year now for 10 years, the NDP have overspent the budget that they presented at the beginning of the year. This last year, the overspending reached a record of almost half a billion dollars. Accumulative overexpenditure is almost 1.7 billion over 10 years.

I ask the Premier why it is that his government has never been able to keep expenditures within the budgeted amount. Will the Premier make a commitment today, that the budget presented today, he will actually keep the expenditures within those frameworks rather than overspending?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would say three things to the member opposite.

Was he against the extra \$100 million plus that we spent on H1N1 last year that wasn't budgeted for? If he is, let him stand up and say that right now. We made an expenditure there in the best interests of all Manitobans.

Also, was he against the additional money we put into the flood last spring to protect Manitobans? If he was, let him stand up and say so.

And then thirdly, I would just point out to him that in the last decade, the growth in per capita spending in Manitoba was the second lowest in the country.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, you might excuse one year of bad planning, but 10 years of over-expenditures is too much.

Last year, right after the budget was presented, I told the Minister of Finance that he was overestimating corporation income tax revenues by

50 to 100 million dollars. Indeed, it was something like \$88 million. His 2009 budget was hocus-pocus from the start. It ignored economics 101. The minister then said he expected his budget to stay on track, but, in fact, last year's budget went off track faster than you can imagine and more than you would ever expect.

I ask the Premier: Will he agree that if this year's budget goes off track like last year's budget, that all the Cabinet members' salaries should be reduced drastically?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think the member may have missed what happened globally last year in the economy. There was—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think the member may have missed what happened in the global economy last year. Inspired by the machinations of Wall Street, the entire financial system in the world went into crisis, which then affected the global economy, and revenues went down everywhere, all across the world last year.

And at the same time as an economy weakens, government plays a unique role. They step up to the plate to provide services to people that lose their jobs. They step up to the plate to put stimulus into the economy, which we did: 12,000 direct jobs last year and 10,000 indirect jobs as well as issues like H1N1 and flooding.

We did those things that kept Manitoba moving forward, which had some of the best economic outcomes in the country last year and the shallowest of deficits as a percent of GDP. The member opposite knows that.

Government Cabinet Increase

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Premier, and I'll tell him what it is that I'm against. I'm against the 150,000-plus dollars that he has in his budget that's coming up this afternoon, that he's going to be spending just on propaganda telling Manitobans how wonderful of a job he's doing as Premier of the province. I'm against that 150,000, and we know that'll be a minimum.

* (14:30)

Let's be clear on this Premier's track record. What is the very first thing he did when he was the

chosen one from within the New Democratic Party? He increased the size of Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, that's one of the first actions he had taken when he became Premier of this province. Then he tells the civil service, expect a pay freeze. Then he tells the civil service, expect to hold the line. Is that not a little bit of hypocrisy or a double standard?

Is it not one thing that this Premier should have an expectation of demonstrating leadership? How does he justify in his mind increasing his bureaucracy in terms of his own Cabinet while, at the same time, shafting the civil service in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate on this side of the House of having many talented members to serve the public, and I'm pleased that we were able to bring new talent into Cabinet to add to the contribution we can make.

I can tell you this, we have less deputy ministers than when the members opposite were in office, and we have less assistant deputy ministers when the members opposite were in office, but we have more people that are elected serving the people of Manitoba.

Women's Health Clinic Maternity and Birthing Clinic

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, every child is unique, even if they look a lot alike, and their birth is also unique.

Mr. Speaker, every woman has a vision of how that birth should go, and I wonder if the Minister of Health could now share with us how women in Manitoba have more choice in how they will give birth.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, they certainly will have choice about where they will give birth, this I can say, Mr. Speaker.

We were very pleased earlier this year to announce the first ever, in Manitoba, birthing centre with our fantastic partners at the Women's Health Clinic and at the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. We have been able to, through consultation with mothers, with families and, importantly, with midwives, been able to make this announcement and fulfil this commitment that we're going forward on a birth centre that will be led by midwives here in Manitoba.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when we came into office we had no funded midwife positions but, of

course, today we have 45 funded positions. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, Manitoba had the highest proportion of births attended by a midwife, at 6.5 percent. We're going to climb at that rate, especially with the creation of the new birth centre in south Winnipeg.

Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home Expansion Project Status

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the northeast health authority has identified the expansion of the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home as a priority for our region. For the last two years, the minister's advised our community that she agrees. So I ask the Minister of Health, since she agrees it is a priority, will the expansion be part of this year's health capital budget?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I had the privilege of meeting people from his community who outlined the importance of moving forward on health capital infrastructure.

We're going to work together with the region on priorities, working to ensure that we're not only looking at this important capital project but working to improve the continuum of care, increasing home care, increasing other supports that we provide.

I can let the members opposite know that in a deficit, under their watch, they made a declaration about freezing health-care spending. I believe in their news release they said, we have no choice. You know what? We disagree. We think we have choices about the care we provide to Manitobans. We're not going to freeze health-care spending, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, the government also has another choice that they could make. They could run the line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg and save another \$640 million. That's what they could do.

The waiting list for the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home is the longest in the constituency, Mr. Speaker, and, as a result, Lac du Bonnet residents have been forced to move out of their community, away from their family and friends, in order to obtain personal care home accommodations.

So I ask the minister once again: Will the expansion be part of the health capital budget this year?

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, as a point of clarification, I think he just asked us to run the line down the west

side. I think that would represent a significant policy shift on their part. But I digress.

I can certainly say that in contrast to what the members opposite said during times when they were running governments—running the government in a time of deficit, they issued a news release saying they would freeze health capital spending and the minister of the day was quoted as saying, well, we have no choice.

On this side of the House, we believe we have a choice. We know that in tough economic times we're going to need to prioritize, to work with all of our partners and regional health authorities, community members, to go forward with health capital spending. We're going to continue to work on many projects that we've made commitments to do. We're not going to make the choices they made and Manitobans are going to be thankful for that.

Neepawa Personal Care Home Sale and Development Proposal

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, in June of 2009 the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority sent a resolution to the Minister of Health recommending the sale of the former personal care home in Neepawa to the Town of Neepawa.

Would the minister explain to the House why she rejected that resolution?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I've spoken to the member opposite on this issue. There was a proposal that came forward concerning the disposition of this property, and we know that we had to work in consultation with the community to ensure there was a fair and open and transparent process so that any interested parties that would wish to make a bid on the properties could indeed do that.

We have to continue to keep a fair and open process and that's what we're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, Neepawa and area is extremely short of housing and they had a proposal on the table to use—to upgrade the building to housing.

The minister was advised that Neepawa had a developer ready to start renovation on September the 1st, 2009. Because of the delays, created by this minister, the developer backed out.

Will the minister today admit that she made a bad decision?

Ms. Oswald: Well, I can inform the member, as I have done in the past, that even the developer, Adler Properties, said, and I'm quoting: I think the government had to make the decision they made. It had to be an open process and transparent. They had to look after the greater good of the public interest ahead of just the Town of Neepawa's or just the developer's interest.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, we want to work with the Town of Neepawa in developing capital projects like the beautiful personal care home that we completed there despite the fact that the Health critic for the opposition says, we shouldn't waste money on bricks and mortar, again, kind of a policy shift within their own caucus.

But I digress. We will continue to work with the community in providing a continuum of care for people that need that support.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, on the earlier questions, the minister was referring to tough economic times and what the government's doing in those times.

The personal care home has actually been empty since April of 2009. The cost of maintenance to the RHA and the Province has been \$23,000 a month—over \$200,000 to date. The housing project has been delayed or lost.

Will the minister today apologize for costing Manitobans over a quarter of a million dollars in waste and mismanagement?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly make no apologies for ensuring that the infrastructure is maintained and remains safe. I'll not apologize to the people of Manitoba for not giving away an asset prior to having a fair and open and transparent process—one, incidentally, that the Adler Properties themselves and, again, I'll repeat to the member, says they had to make the decision that they made—an open, transparent process. They had to look after the greater good of public interest while at the same time maintaining an asset. We're going to continue to work with the community—methinks the gentleman doth protest too much—while at the same time, bringing even more services to the people of Neepawa.

Russell District Health Centre Dialysis Unit Project Status

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Well, Mr. Speaker, today is budget day, and about 10 years ago or so, a dialysis unit was promised for the Russell

and district hospital. Well, as time went on, we continued to hear these promises time and again.

In the last three Throne Speeches and Budget Addresses in this House, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Finance Minister reiterate that comments of an immediate construction of a dialysis unit in Russell.

Last year, just about February, we saw the snow removed from the site because there was going to be construction of the dialysis unit in Russell.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to make light of this situation, but many people have been waiting for 10 years and more for this dialysis unit. Many have died when they have been having to travel and relocate to places like Winnipeg and Brandon for their treatment. But all of them still have hope that this will become a reality.

* (14:40)

I want to ask the Minister of Health whether, in fact, we're going to hear another announcement today or whether the tender has been let on the dialysis unit in Russell.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Again what I'm hearing in the last few questions from the members opposite is strong encouragement for spending in health care. I support their view in that, may I say. Further, Mr. Speaker, I can also say to the member opposite that, consistent with the conversation that we had some weeks ago when I heard the melodious tones of his voice on this subject, I can tell him that the tender indeed has closed. As we spoke about on the phone, expect to break the ground this spring.

Mr. Derkach: I'm sorry to be cynical about this whole issue, Mr. Speaker, but we've heard that promise not once, not twice, but on at least five occasions, and the ground has not been broken yet. So I'm happy that the minister stood up in the House today because I will remind her of that.

And I want to know exactly when the minister is intending to make the announcement on the groundbreaking ceremony. In about two or three weeks we will be able to break ground. Is she going to be able to make that announcement then?

Ms. Oswald: I believe when we spoke last about this, not only did I commit to the member that the ground would break this spring, but that, indeed, I would invite the member to come with me there.

That invitation, embossed and all, is wide open. I look forward to the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, Sunday March 21st, marked the 50th anniversary of the massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa, where we remember the 69 men and women who were killed for standing up against racial discrimination. They were protesting the apartheid and dreaming of a future where every person can embrace their human rights irrespective of race or the colour of their skin.

Ms. Marilyn Brick, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The United Nations has marked March 21st as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to honour the memories of these individuals. It also reminds us to face head-on the challenges that prevent our society from being a place where all people are treated with respect and dignity.

Globally, we have overcome many acts of racial discrimination: the Holocaust, genocide in Cambodia and the residential schools here in Canada. Each tragedy has pushed the world to emerge stronger on the other side. Collectively, we have built the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Canada, we have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Manitoba will be home to the Museum for Human Rights. We can and should be proud of the steps that we have taken to eradicate racial discrimination.

Of course, there is more work to be done. Manitoba is a province of diverse people and many face racial discrimination on a daily basis. Every day newcomers must confront barriers created by language or cultural differences that prevent them from participating fully in society as equals. International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is a reminder to us that we must continue to work hard to combat racial discrimination. Each Manitoban can make a difference by embracing the opportunities that a diverse social fabric presents. Choosing to co-operate with rather than to fear those who are different than us is the only way that we can build a true multicultural society free of racial discrimination.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): In view of the fact that the lockup has locked up a lot of people for a long time already, I ask leave of the House to have today's allotment for members' statements by government members to be applied to tomorrow's members' statements and then have the schedule resume as normal on Thursday. This would mean that there would be three members' statements today and seven members' statements tomorrow with the understanding that the two extra statements tomorrow would be used by members on the government's side.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader has asked leave of the House to have today's allotment for members' statements by government members to be applied to tomorrow's members' statements and then have the schedule resume as normal on Thursday. This would mean that there would be three members' statements today and seven members' statements tomorrow, with the understanding that the extra—the two statements tomorrow would be used by members from the government side.

Is that—agreement? [*Agreed*]

Northwest Winnipeg Health Centres

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I must say I'm very disappointed in the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald). In fact, on four different occasions, I've challenged the Minister of Health to come out to Winnipeg's North End to debate some of the issues that are facing northenders from Winnipeg in regards to decisions that this department is making.

An Honourable Member: Did she come?

Mr. Lamoureux: I want to put a new challenge—no. I've got a nice letter from her, but she's never challenged.

On April the 26th, I'm going to go to the south end Winnipeg. Maybe it's her riding; maybe it's St. Norbert, Madam Deputy Speaker. We're going to pick one of those ridings, and I challenge the Minister of Health to come out to the south end, in and around her area, and have a debate on health care.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to recognize that the decisions that her department is making is having an impact on the people of our province. In northwest Winnipeg, we have seen decisions that

have been to the detriment of those that live around and use the Seven Oaks Hospital. We now see a government that's in complete denial, complete silence, on the issue of the Westbrook Medical Clinic.

These are the types of issues that are important. These are the type of issues in which the government needs to get out of the Chamber, go into the community and not be scared to debate the issue. If they believe what they are doing is right then, surely to goodness, they'll come out and they'll have the discussions in the communities, Madam Deputy Speaker. In both—or all four occasions, we had dozens, 50; last night's meeting there was over 50 people that show up at Cecil Rhodes School. Just as an example, concerned seniors wanting to see and hear first-hand what it is the government is wanting to do. Not just to hear, well, that's something in which the private sector will have to resolve or, yes, maybe we'll have the access centre expanded in Winnipeg through Nor'West.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, what the residents of Weston and Brooklands want is a community health clinic. This minister has to take responsibility and show some leadership on that issue. The residents around the Seven Oaks hospital want to see a full-service emergency ward, that if you have a bleeding ulcer, you can go there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Jon Montgomery

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, today I'm extremely pleased to congratulate all of Manitoba's Olympic athletes but, more specifically, I'm so proud to congratulate Russell's own Jon Montgomery, whose gold medal win in men's skeleton and his electrifying character sparked an energy right across this entire nation like we have never—we have not seen in a long, long time.

Quickly dubbed as the prairie golden boy, Jon became a hero to all Manitobans and Canadians alike. He proudly exclaimed that his medal was won on behalf of all Manitobans and Canadians but, specifically, his home town of Russell. Jon was most appreciative of the support of his parents, Joan and Eldon, his sisters Jodi and Jill, his extended family and all the support of his entire community. His home town responded with a huge celebration upon his return on March 14th, where up to 5,000 people gathered for a huge parade and welcome. After the

ceremonies, Jon, patiently but enthusiastically, greeted everyone who wanted an autograph or a photo with him. At 7:30 that evening, Jon was still signing autographs and meeting young Manitobans.

In many ways, Jon is a very ordinary kind of person with a special place in his heart for young people and those who are less fortunate than he. His priorities in life are clear and well defined. Though his—through his personality, Jon brought together people from all walks of life at his welcome back to Russell. It was fitting that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) presented Jon with the Order of the Buffalo Hunt, and the mayor of the City of Winnipeg presented Jon with a key—with a symbolic key to the City of Winnipeg.

I must also add that Jon and his family have been close friends of Margie and I and our family, and we are very proud of his tremendous accomplishment. Jon, we in Manitoba and beyond are proud of you, and we wish you the very best as you begin a new and exciting career and a new chapter in life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that the House take a five-minute recess to allow preparation to be made for the reading and introduction of the budget.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it the will of the House for—to take a five-minute recess? *[Agreed]*

Okay. Prior to taking the recess, I'd like to remind our guests in the public gallery that only members with budget passes will be allowed to stay for the budget presentation. All others, sorry, but must leave the gallery. So now we will take a five-minute recess.

The House recessed at 2:50 p.m.

The House resumed at 3:01 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS
BUDGET ADDRESS

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policies of the government.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable First Minister, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, *tansi. Dobruy den. Bonjour.* Good afternoon. I am honoured today to present Budget 2010.

From our smallest communities to our largest cities, Manitoba continues to be an extraordinary place to live, work and learn. The hard work of Manitobans has created a diverse and resilient economy.

The effects of the global market downturn that began in the fall of 2008 have had a ripple effect on the economies around the world. In the past year, we've seen the worst global recession since the end of the Second World War.

Since October of 2008, almost 260,000 jobs have been lost across the country and more than 1.5 million Canadians are now out of work. Housing starts have declined by more than 34 percent since 2007, and manufacturing sales have declined for three years in a row, with a 17 percent decline in 2009 alone.

Our stable economic base has helped Manitoba fare better than most, but our province is feeling the effects of the downturn. Our economic decline in 2009—we had an economic decline in 2009, but less than the Canadian economy as a whole.

Manitoba also faced almost \$150 million in unexpected costs over the past year. We dealt with the second largest flood in over a hundred years, as well as the H1N1 flu pandemic.

Across the country, economic pressures have forced federal and provincial governments, including Manitoba, to wrestle with the challenges of budget shortfalls.

Governments across Canada have learned hard lessons from short-term decisions made during the last major recession. Crown corporations and other public assets were sold to balance the books. When we emerged from the last major downturn, we faced critical nurse and doctor shortages, higher taxes, crumbling roads and a shortage of skilled workers. Repairing the damage took more than a decade and billions of dollars.

Today's governments are responding to the worldwide recession with a more responsible and balanced approach that meets today's challenges and

invests in tomorrow's opportunities. Governments are restoring fiscal balance with multiyear plans that invest in economic growth and innovation while protecting front-line services.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's five-year economic plan fakes this approach.

With our plan to move Manitoba forward, the Province will take strong action in Budget 2010 to invest in vital front-line services by targeting more than 90 percent of new spending to health care, education and training, family services and justice.

We will stimulate economic growth by investing nearly \$1.8 billion in infrastructure and capital renewal stimulus, creating nearly 29,000 direct and indirect jobs.

We will manage government spending by reducing spending in one-half of government departments to focus new spending on front-line services.

We will restore balance by returning to a surplus within five years and paying down debt from the Fiscal Stabilization Account, preserving current revenues to pay for priority services, and we will keep Manitoba affordable and in the top three provinces in Canada for combined living costs and taxes.

There are no quick solutions to the issues we face, but together, we will meet these challenges and implement our plan to bring Manitoba through the global economic recession and into a bright and prosperous future.

Supporting Vital Front-Line Services for Manitoba Families and Communities

During the last recession, governments made deep cuts to key services. While these cuts may save dollars in the short term, the cost of repairing this neglect is much greater in the long term.

Steady, stable investment today will make sure we protect the services Manitobans rely on the most. Manitoba's five-year plan not only maintains these services, but includes investments to move our province forward.

Sustaining Health Care and Focussing on Families

Manitobans continue to tell us that health care is a top priority. We agree. Budget 2010 invests 60 percent of all new spending in health care.

Even with the advancements that we have seen in medical technology and pharmaceuticals, dedicated professionals remain the heart and quality of health care. Compared to a decade ago, there are 2,000 more nurses and almost 350 more doctors caring for Manitoba patients.

This has been achieved in large part by expanding doctor training spaces by close to 60 percent and by almost doubling the number of nurses training spaces.

This year, we will increase our investment in health care education, with additional funds for:

- more doctors in training, with support to the third intake of 110 students in the Faculty of Medicine's undergraduate program at the University of Manitoba;
- Brandon University program for licensed practical nurses who want to become registered psychiatric nurses;
- converting the nurse diploma program at Collège universitaire de St. Boniface to an accelerated degree program;
- converting the licensed practical nurses program at Assiniboine Community College to a nurse diploma program; and
- accepting the first intake of students from southern Manitoba into the University College of the North midwifery program.

The right tools help health care professionals provide quality care. Budget 2010 continues to fund new and replacement equipment for hospitals throughout the province.

Our investment in medical equipment has included high-technology instruments like the Artiste, which offers new hope for patients who—otherwise inoperable cancer. Budget 2010 will fund the operation of this life-saving equipment when it comes on line this year at the Health Sciences Centre.

A new, computerized radiology system is being implemented in dozens of hospitals across the province. This means that diagnostic imaging results, such as X-rays and CT scans, can be instantly shared with other hospitals. This avoids duplicating tests and improves convenience for patients waiting for results, especially patients in rural communities where the sites are coming on line, such as The Pas, Eriksdale and Killarney.

During the last major recession, the health capital program was frozen. Budget 2010 keeps construction and planning in major hospital projects moving forward, including:

- ongoing construction to the regional cancer centre and the redevelopment of the Westman Laboratory in Brandon;
- designing and planning a new facility in Pine Falls and in Selkirk;
- the launch of construction of a mental health crisis response centre in Winnipeg, the first of its kind in Canada
- investments in needed repairs and upgrades to hospitals across the province.

We're also continuing to improve emergency health care, with additional emergency departments upgrades at Health Sciences Centre and opening new emergency medical services stations in Neepawa and West St. Paul, and a new emergency medical station will be built in Arborg.

Site preparations will soon be under way for the planned women's hospital in Winnipeg. The design for the new birth centre in south Winnipeg is under way, and construction will begin later this year on the maternity upgrades at St. Boniface General Hospital.

In Budget 2010, we are introducing a new provincial tax credit to support fertility treatment for Manitoba families. This makes us the second jurisdiction in Canada to do so. We will also consolidate specialized services for children and youth with disabilities, or special needs, in a one, easy-to-access facility, improving access for children and their families.

We remain committed to help deal with health care consequences of tobacco use. To help deter smoking, the tobacco tax will raise by two cents per cigarette at midnight tonight.

We remain committed to investing in children and providing supports to Manitobans in need.

Last year we successfully launched All Aboard, Manitoba's poverty reduction strategy. We are now creating the Premier's Advisory Council on Education, Poverty and Citizenship to give us front-line advice on the complex issues of poverty.

Today's budget includes new investments in housing, education, training and child care.

Manitobans have told us that quality child care services are needed, and we agree. Budget 2010 provides new funding to open hundreds of new child-care spaces across the province, targeted to happen this fall.

Mr. Speaker, we will also create a pension plan for early childhood educators, honouring the work they do and the—and supporting recruitment and retention.

Our government is committed to the safety and security of children in need right across the province. To further support child protection, Budget 2010 continues to implement Changes for Children, a multiyear plan to act on external review recommendations and strengthen foster care.

Further supports for Manitobans include other investments, such as:

- increasing funding to support-supported living for residential, respite and day services for Manitobans living with mental disabilities;
- increasing funding for the Manitoba Shelter Benefit; and
- providing more resources for Manitoba's long-term housing strategy to ensure vulnerable Manitobans have access to stable housing options.

New investments will also be made in addictions services and education, as well there will be new resources for the prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome disorder.

Healthy living remains an important priority for our government. We will continue to support food security, health promotion and prevention efforts, including:

- further increasing the northern allowance to ensure families in the north have access to affordable, healthy food; and
- expanding the successful Northern Healthy Foods Initiative to another 17 communities.

Safety and Security

Safe communities are strong communities, and despite the current economic conditions, we remain committed to investing in public safety across the province.

To support the safety and security of Winnipeg residents, we will provide ongoing operating funding for the police helicopter, getting this project off the ground.

Budget 2010 includes continued funding to support police services across the province, including new officers for Winnipeg and Brandon. To further enhance police services in Manitoba and support all aspects of the justice system, we are:

- funding nine additional full-time prosecutors;
- adding five new sites to our successful Lighthouse youth program;
- creating a police commission to advise on police standards, training and other public issues;
- establishing an independent unit to investigate major incidents involving police officers; and
- expanding correctional capacity in Manitoba.

Manitoba has become a leader in protecting workers' safety and health. In the last decade, workplace injuries were reduced by close to a third. This year we are hiring more health and safety officers to further reduce workplace injuries.

Manitoba Communities

Across the province, we have strong, vibrant communities where people come together to work towards a brighter future.

Some provinces have cut back or held their support for municipalities. This is not happening in Manitoba. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our support for municipalities is increasing this year.

In addition to the funding of police officers, the police helicopter and cadets, we continue to support the City of Winnipeg with new funding for public transit and ambulance service.

As part of our four-year commitment, we are providing continued support for the development of rapid transit in Winnipeg. We are also investing in two other major projects—the redevelopment of the Disraeli Freeway and the infrastructure improvements as part of bringing IKEA to Winnipeg.

This year, the tripartite Winnipeg Partnership Agreement is coming to an end. To make sure that ongoing programs are able to continue, we have dedicated resources to a new Winnipeg Regeneration Strategy.

We have allocated new funding to the successful Neighbourhoods Alive! program for a community-led project in the Elmwood area of Winnipeg.

This year, we are also supporting rural and northern communities and municipalities by increasing unconditional operating funding.

Last year, we introduced the Waste Reduction and Recycling Support Levy on large landfills to promote recycling. The successful program is being expanded to smaller landfills across the province. Revenues from this levy will continue to be rebated to municipalities based on the amount of waste recycled.

To combat forest fires, Mr. Speaker, we are purchasing four new water bombers over the next three years.

To support social and affordable housing in the North, we are implementing community-based delivery of housing services and increasing investments to upgrade social and affordable housing in northern communities.

We recently announced the establishment of the Consultation Participation Fund. This supports First Nations, Métis and other Aboriginal communities as they take part in consultations on provincial decisions and actions that may affect Aboriginal and treaty rights.

To enhance community development opportunities in Métis communities, we are working with the Manitoba Métis Federation to finalize and to launch a long-term economic development fund to support community projects.

We will increase our funding commitment to the Manitoba Métis Federation for public housing units in southern rural Manitoba communities under a first-of-a-kind agreement in western Canada.

Budget 2000 maintains support for cultural organizations, for museums and historical societies right across the province.

This year, we will upgrade our polar bear holding compound and provide new interpretive resources to enhance the tourism experience in Churchill.

We recently celebrated our province with the world in Vancouver at the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics, and I would like to extend my congratulations to all of our athletes who participated, and all of those who won medals. To support greater participation of Manitoba athletes in sports in the future, and future Olympic opportunities, we will provide \$3 million in funding over the next four years.

More than 100,000 people attended the Manitoba pavilion at the games, and we invite them to join us for Manitoba Homecoming 2010, at events scheduled throughout the year right across the province.

Manitoba will host a number of important events in 2010. For the first time in more than 20 years, the Assembly of First Nations will hold their annual general meeting in Winnipeg in July, bringing hundreds of representatives to our province.

Manitoba has been named the host site for the first-ever World Indigenous Games, to be held in 2012. Hosting these games builds on Manitoba's success as the host of the 2002 North American Indigenous Games.

Managing Government Spending

Manitoba has made significant progress renewing public services and rebuilding our infrastructure since the last downturn in the economy. This progress has been made with modest growth in provincial spending.

Manitoba's per capita spending growth over the last decade has been the second lowest of all provincial governments in Canada.

Today's pressures on our budget make it more important than ever to manage our spending strategically and set priorities. This means that in some areas we will need to move more slowly than we had planned on delivering new initiatives.

To free up these resources for front-line services, we are taking responsible steps to better manage costs.

Minister's salaries are being reduced by 20 cents–20 percent. *[interjection]* I will repeat, Mr. Speaker. Minister's salaries are being reduced by 20 percent. And we are asking all members of this House to approve our proposal that all members of the Legislative Assembly will not receive a general salary increase for the next two years.

Managing expenditures without cutting jobs and reducing services requires realistic expectations about wage costs that we can afford. Over the past decade, we have made public service–sector wages more competitive, but we will now negotiate for a pause in wage increases. We will find further savings by leaving some positions unfilled, but only where vital front-line services will not be affected.

Over the past decade, we have made significant investments in reducing income tax and enhancing both education property tax credits and farmland school tax rebates. Further enhancements will come when the economy improves. This allows us to maintain resources for the vital front-line services.

Similarly, our planned reduction of the corporate income tax rate to 11 percent will also be implemented when the economy strengthens.

Cost savings have already been achieved by renegotiating contracts with computer and telecommunication providers. We will continue with this approach and implement more on-line services, building on Manitoba's leadership in development and providing innovative services without increasing costs.

Science innovation is a top priority. We will establish a new Health Innovation Network to link health system leaders, local health providers, researchers and the business community and seek their expert advice and ideas. We will use lean management and develop better processes to improve the patient journey and create a stronger health care system.

Restoring Balance

Manitoba's economic growth rate has been the most stable in all of Canada over the last 10 years. And this is in thanks to the diversity of our economy. Manitoba was only one of three provinces that had more people working in 2009 than in 2008, and Manitoba consumers remain optimistic about our economy.

While the resilience of the Manitoba economy has shielded us from the worst of the world-wide economic storm, our finances will continue to face pressure for some time.

That is why governments across Canada, and indeed, the world, are all taking a multiyear approach to restoring budgetary balance. The federal government has a six-year plan to restore surplus and

other provinces are projecting shortfalls for several years.

Manitoba's five-year economic plan builds on our strong economic foundation with a multiyear strategy to restore budget surplus. At 1.1 percent of Manitoba's gross domestic product, our projected 2009 shortfall was the smallest in Canada.

This budget complies with balanced budget legislation, projecting a four-year positive balance of \$9 million and a summary net loss of \$545 million for 2010-11.

Manitoba will return to surplus by budget 2014.

Continuing to meet the requirements of today's balanced budget legislation in the current environment would require the cancellation of stimulus spending, short-sighted cuts to front-line services, and new taxes.

Our responsible plan to restore balance over five years includes amendment to legislation, including balanced budget legislation, that would require the budget shortfall to be eliminated over four years and to return to surplus in year 5 of the plan. It would keep the legal requirement to have balanced budgets into the future. It will exceed the debt payment requirement under the current legislation. It will retain restrictions that prohibit increase to major taxes without a referendum, and it will reduce ministerial salary and freeze pay to members of the Legislative Assembly.

By restoring balance over several years, our plan is both financially and socially responsible, balancing priority investments in vital services and infrastructure with sound fiscal management.

Maintaining vital services means Manitoba will not face the huge costs of rebuilding our health care and education system experienced after the last major recession. And today's investment in the national stimulus plan will support economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's Five-Year Economic Plan aggressively pays down debt incurred as a result of the economic downturn. We will draw from our rainy day savings account for this purpose, preserving investments in vital front-line services.

Since 1999, we have nearly quadrupled the amount in the Manitoba Fiscal Stabilization Account with a balance of over \$800 million. Budget 2010 dedicates \$96 million from the account to start paying down the principal and interest.

Over the next four years, an estimated \$600 million from our rainy day fund savings will be dedicated to debt payments. By the end of the five-year plan, we will have retired almost one-third of the principal on debt resulting from the economic turn down, and exceeded debt payments required under the current legislation.

With a significant reduction in Manitoba's debt burden over the past decade, Manitoba's net debt to GDP ratio remains well below the 1999 levels, projected at 26.8 percent in Budget 2010, down from 32.9 percent in 1999. In Budget 2010 the share of total revenue spent on debt servicing is forecast to be six cents of every dollar, down from 13 cents in 1999.

Addressing the pension liability supports workers and their families. We are the first government since 1961 to pay the employer's current service contributions for all civil servants and teachers across the province, to ensure pension funds are available in the future.

Stimulating Economic Growth

Manitoba's plan to stimulate economic growth has three components.

First, we are investing in infrastructure projects to create jobs now and make our economy more productive and competitive into the future.

Second, we are expanding education and training to make sure we have the skilled workers for our economic needs.

Third, we are supporting research, innovation and environmentally focussed projects to position our economy for the global recovery.

Smart investments today will bring continued growth and prosperity into the future.

Investing in Infrastructure

Manitoba has been an active partner with other provinces and the federal government in the national economic stimulus program.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba's nearly \$1.8-billion commitment to infrastructure and capital renewal this year is almost double the amount invested two years ago before the stimulus program was launched.

This year, we are investing nearly \$600 million in roads and bridges:

- improvements to Highway 1 East, Highway 75 South, the pavement works in Highway 6 North;
- there's work on single-access roads, provincial roads into Pelican Rapids, Norway House and Cross Lake;
- there's surface rehabilitation on No. 2 Highway near Reston, Highway No. 1, Highway 45 east of Oakbank in the southwest region;
- there's funds to replace and repair bridges, including the bridge over the Red River at St. Adolphe; and
- there is further progress on the CentrePort Canada Way.

Climate change is shortening our winter road season—and that was very obvious a few weeks ago—particularly on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, making an all-season road a necessity. This year we will significantly increase our investment in the construction of an all-weather east-side road.

The Floodway and East Side Road Authority will proceed with this project in a way that provides jobs and training and business opportunities for east-side communities.

Budget 2010 will support the construction of a tourism interpretive centre near Hollow Water First Nation to support their growth in their tourist industry. This year the Province will contribute an additional \$30 million to the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure program to support projects across the province, bringing the total provincial contribution to nearly \$72 million in Budget 2010.

This fall, construction on the Len Evans Centre for Trades and Technology at Assiniboine College in Brandon will be completed. Construction is scheduled to begin this year at the University College of the North projects in Thompson and The Pas, and work is also planned for satellite sites, including Swan River.

Social housing provides low-income Manitobans with affordable shelter, and Budget 2010 continues our support for important projects.

Mr. Speaker, we will add 1,500 new social housing units over five years, with a significant investment this year; and there will be an upgrade—

significant upgrades to our existing social housing stock.

Work on many of these projects will be done by people who live in social housing and in the surrounding neighbourhoods, and this will provide training opportunities.

We will also provide funding to undertake the stabilization of the historic Display Building at the Keystone Centre in Brandon.

This year is the 50th anniversary of Manitoba's parks system. Budget 2010 funds campgrounds expansions and upgrades at Asessippi, Winnipeg Beach and Wellman Lake.

Supporting Education

In the last major recession, school divisions had their budgets cut.

Despite the challenging economic times, we are providing overall increases of almost 3 percent to public school funding this year, well above the rate of economic growth. Every school division will receive at least a 2 percent increase in grant.

To support our children's schools, we are maintaining the balance between residential and commercial contributions to public education.

This year's education funding investments brings a total increase over the past nine years of \$276 million. Mr. Speaker, this is 15 times the increase we saw in the same period during the '90s. We are doubling capital investment in schools. Construction work will continue this year in schools across the province, including new schools at Steinbach, Winkler and La Broquerie.

Despite fiscal pressures, overall operating support for our colleges and universities will increase by 4.5 percent.

To ensure our institutes have the resources they need to provide quality service, tuition fees will increase by 5 percent at universities and \$150 for college.

I am pleased to announce that, starting in 2010, we will provide college and university students with fast access to part of the Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate while they are still in school. This means a student paying \$3,000 in tuition fees will receive a \$150 refund per year while they are still enrolled in school, providing an estimated \$7.5 million each year to students when they need it the most.

Government has a continued commitment to increase opportunities in apprenticeship training, despite the challenges of the current recession.

Meeting the training needs of Manitoba workers and business requires a collaborative approach. The provincial sector councils act as a key link between Manitoba education, business and the labour communities.

Since 1999, the number of registered apprenticeship has more than doubled, and Apprenticeship Manitoba is anticipating a further 35 percent increase over the next two years.

Budget 2010 increases apprenticeship training support by \$2 million, and six new designated trades are being developed.

Innovation and the Environment

Manitoba needs to continue investing in innovation so that our businesses are strong and more adaptable and ready to complete—continue in the changing economy.

We need to build on the progress we have made in recent years. Manitoba is a leader in real business labour productivity with a total increase of 9.5 percent over five years, almost triple the national growth.

The Industrial Technical Centre helps small- and medium-sized business access the innovative engineering and technical services that help their companies grow. This year, we'll invest more than \$1 million to support this work.

Budget 2010 provides continued investment in the Manitoba Research and Innovations Fund, which has supported hundreds of science and health research projects since it was established in 2003.

The Churchill North Studies Centre is internationally recognized as a hub of arctic research and education. The Province is supporting the centre's capital campaign to raise funds to replace the main facility, enabling further research in the north.

This spring, the Premier's Economic Advisory Council will host an economic summit involving leaders from business, labour, aboriginal and community groups as well as the education sector. Together, we will discuss strategies for expanding economic growth so Manitoba is ready to seize new opportunities and stay in the forefront of innovation.

This fall, the business-to-business forum Centrallia 2010 will be held in Winnipeg, attracting

more than 500 business leaders from around the world to network in English, French and Spanish.

Plans are under way to host an Arctic summit with key national and international stakeholders to kick-start discussions and encourage innovative ideas about how to use Manitoba's northern sea access to better distribute goods and services, further building our economy.

Despite global economic conditions, the number of Manitobans working in the mining and oil industries grew by 3.8 percent over the previous year. As we move closer to economic recovery, Manitoba will be well positioned to respond to the sector's employment needs with the establishment of a new mining training facility in Flin Flon.

We will continue to invest in environmental clean-up in abandoned mine sites.

Budget 2010 includes a strong focus on the environment and we are acting on our commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are making investments to further reduce these levels.

Manitoba Hydro has designed and built one of the most energy-efficient office towers in the world, winning international awards for its environmentally friendly design.

Following this example, we are greening our building codes to improve water and energy efficiency in new homes and in other buildings, helping Manitobans save money on these costs while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I was very pleased that, yesterday, we were able to announce that construction will begin this year on the wind farm in St. Joseph, Manitoba, which will add clean and green wind power to our system.

This past year Manitoba Hydro signed an agreement with four Cree Nations partners to develop Keeyask Generating Station.

The Wuskwatim Generating Station, being built in partnership with NCN and Manitoba Hydro, is scheduled to be in service next year and yield more than \$250 million in annual gross domestic product for Manitoba. Work is also proceeding to ensure that Bipole III is built on time to meet our export commitments, generating revenues that will keep rates low for Manitobans into the future.

We are also undertaking a joint study with Saskatchewan to look at enhancing our transmission

capacity and exploring ways to increase renewable energy development for both our provinces.

Other initiatives that focus on the environment include:

- continued support for low-income residential retrofit programs in Winnipeg and Brandon;
- continued work to restore the health of Lake Winnipeg, including a new WaterSmart initiative to promote water conservation; and
- the elimination of sales tax on shredded tires used in municipal road construction to encourage the use of recycled products.

The protection of our streams, rivers and lakes is important, and we are increasing funding to help farmers meet water protection objectives. Budget 2010 also continues major investments in drainage capital works and maintenance.

We are working with cattle producers to create a more responsive pasture insurance program, and we continue to work with the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council, which supports the Manitoba cattle industry, including investments in Keystone Processors facility located in St. Boniface.

We have provided—we are providing new financial support to help farmers hardest hit by flooding in the north Interlake in the last two years.

We are also providing provincial support through Agri-Opportunities program for the development of a hemp fibre processing facility in the Parkland region.

We will continue to invest in other priorities, including food safety, the environment and agri-food innovations. Plans are under way for a facility expansion for the Food Development Centre to support rural economic development through additional technological capacity and improved services for our clients.

In 2009, we saw first-hand how investments in new equipment and other flood mitigation resources helped protect our province. Budget 2010 provides further funding for flood mitigation efforts, including:

- increasing investment in flood forecasting equipment and operation; and
- continuing to work with First Nations communities, such as Peguis and Fisher

River, and the federal government to develop long-term flood mitigation plans and agreements.

Maintaining Manitoba's Affordability

Manitoba is one of the most affordable places in Canada to live, work and raise a family. When you look at the total combined living costs and taxes, Manitoba is among the top three for families.

Manitoba's Five-Year Economic Plan will keep our province's affordability advantage.

We have made great progress reducing the tax burden for Manitoba families over the last decade, with \$725 million in annual tax relief. Manitoba has been the only province in Canada where residential property taxes have, on average, stayed flat since 2000. To further protect Manitoba families, we have declined invitations to harmonize our sales tax with the GST.

Despite budgetary pressures, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 will not increase personal income tax and will not increase sales tax.

A critical component of affordability is keeping the cost of government in check. Budget 2010 keeps government affordable by increasing core government spending by just 1 percent related to the projected spending levels of last year.

We will shield families from rising drug costs. For the duration of our five-year plan, Pharmacare deductibles—deductible increase will be limited to the rate of inflation while 100 percent of all eligible drug costs above deductibles will remain covered.

Medical experts tell us the health risks of using tanning beds. To address the consequences of these risks, the provincial sales tax exemption will be removed from tanning services, beginning in July.

Budget 2010 will also:

- extend the fitness tax credit to Manitobans aged 16 to 24, beginning in 2011;
- introduce a new tax credit to support fertility treatment costs;
- include a 5 percent advance on Tuition Fee Income Tax rebate;
- introduce new regulations to improve the security, flexibility and greater transparency of pension plans to better meet the needs of today's workers; and

- support another year of free access to provincial parks.

Manitoba is also an affordable and competitive place to do business. Budget 2010 provides \$14 million in new tax reductions for business, bringing the total amount of annual business relief to \$422 million.

Since 1999, the small-business tax rate has fallen from 8 percent to just 1 percent today. Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our promise to completely eliminate the small-business tax, effective December 1 this year, the first jurisdiction in Canada to do so permanently.

The general Corporation Capital Tax is also being eliminated at the end of 2010 to encourage needed investment that improves business productivity and competitiveness. By 2011, the phase-out of this tax will have freed up more than \$80 million for companies to reinvest and innovate for the future.

Mr. Speaker, we are phasing in partial refundability of the research and development tax credit, reducing tax bills for companies that invest in new ideas by \$12 million annually by 2012.

We are also reducing red tape by eliminating the requirement to register and collect provincial sales tax for small businesses with less than \$10,000 annual taxable sales. This affects 3,500 businesses in Manitoba.

We are expanding the Film and Video Tax Credit until 2014 and enhancing the credit to include production costs in addition to labour.

We are making it easier for businesses to hire high school students taking apprenticeship training by extending the Co-op Education and Apprenticeship Tax Credit, and we're providing a new tax credit for co-op enterprise development.

Conclusion

We have worked hard to make sure Budget 2010 keeps Manitoba's future in focus while managing today's challenges. Strategic and responsible decisions had to be made. Manitoba's Five-Year Plan guides our decisions as we move Manitoba forward.

We will manage government spending while focussing on the priorities of Manitobans and return to surplus by budget 2014. We will maintain our

quality of life by keeping Manitoba affordable, both now and in the years ahead.

Investments in front-line services will strengthen health care, education, training, public safety and support to families. Continued economic stimulus will create jobs, renew infrastructure and grow the economy.

There are challenges to face, but we are on our way to recover. We will keep moving forward to make our province an even better place to live, and together we will build a stronger future for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a moment and say that I want to thank all of my colleagues and my Premier (Mr. Selinger) and all the staff at Treasury Board and Finance who have worked so hard to put this budget together.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a challenge. I want to thank Manitobans for the advice they gave me when I did my budget consultations, and I certainly want to thank my family for the support that they have given me through this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, *meegwetch. Dyakuy. Merci.* Thank you very much to all of you.

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), that debate now be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:50)

Messages

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I have two messages from His Honour, the administrator, as well as the budget documents, which I would like to table.

Mr. Speaker: Please rise for the reading of the messages.

The Lieutenant-Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for capital expenditures and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And the other message is: The Lieutenant-Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services

of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2011, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable member for

Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), that this House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: This House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 23, 2010

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>